

## **Evaluation of the CHANGE Program at Michigan Reformatory**

Evaluators: Dr. Nancy L. Hogan, Associate Professor, Ferris State University  
 Dr. Shannon Barton, Assistant Professor, Ferris State University  
 Dr. Eric Lambert, Assistant Professor, Ferris State University

**The evaluation of the CHANGE program is funded by the National Institute of Justice, grant # 99-CE-VX-0006. The views in this report are of the above-named authors and do not reflect the views of the Department of Justice or the National Institute of Justice. This report is submitted in accordance to the guidelines requiring semi-annual progress reports.**

This is the second semi-annual report of the "Evaluation of the CHANGE (Cognitive Housing Approach: New Goals Environment)". During the past six months, all goals set forth in the Task Outline Plan of Operation (see attached) were accomplished or are in progress. The following summarizes these goals, the implementation problems and corrective actions taken, changes in the grant procedures, technical assistance, and preliminary findings of the data collected.

**1. Below is a summary of each goal that was set for the to be completed in this 6 month period.**

a. Maintain databases.

Several databases have been developed in SPSS for this preliminary analysis. For each inmate in the treatment or control group, information has been entered pertaining to demographic information and charges, pre-test/post-test results, present and past misconduct history going back 2 years, and cell history movement for the past 2 years. These databases are updated on a regular basis.

b. Review official inmate misconduct files.

Files for all the inmates in both the treatment and control group are reviewed regularly and updated. These include demographic information, pre-test/post-test results, misconduct history, institution placement, security level, and cell history. This goal is completed for all current inmates in the treatment or control group and is ongoing to new admissions.

c. Develop Inmate Interview Form.

The Inmate Interview is currently being developed and incorporates many of the questions asked in the Cognitive Skills Development Program Survey (1996). This form will allow the interviewer to combine both open-ended and close-ended questions in assessing the inmates' view of the CHANGE program and any positive outcomes from participating in the program. This is scheduled to be completed in January, 2001 with random inmate interviews beginning in February. According to the proposal, 25 inmates who have successfully completed Phase I will be interviewed.

c. Program Observations.

Program observations will continue to be conducted in February, March, and April. Differences in both the inmate interactions and staff interactions have been observed in prior observations. During the above months, each investigator will do three observations with the same group to see how the group develops over time.

d. Cognitive Staff Surveys

The original staff surveys were to provide a section for CHANGE staff only. The investigators felt that a qualitative approach would be more feasible. A random selection of CHANGE staff will occur and face-to-face interviews will be conducted. The form that will be developed will ask specific questions about the CHANGE inmates, the program operation, and improvements needed. Further, the staff will be asked about the inmates interviewed (b) in order to assess any actual behavior changes.

e. Staff Surveys

Staff surveys were conducted to over 400 employees at the Michigan Reformatory. Employees were encouraged to fill out the 16 page survey by participating in a raffle. A 63 percent return rate was accomplished and prize money from the raffle was distributed. A database has been set up and the surveys have been entered. Preliminary analysis is being conducted.

f. Submission of Financial Reports

Financial Reports have been submitted in a timely manner for June, 2000 and September, 2000. The current "Financial Status Report" is being compiled by the budget office.

### **3. Implementation problems and corrective action taken.**

Originally the investigators had expected that groups of inmates would be going through the CHANGE program at specific entry points. Due to pressure within the department of corrections, as soon as there are 7 inmates who meet the CHANGE qualifications, a group is formed and the program is administered. This has created several database problems, particularly with before/after dates. Currently, the databases are being cleaned up manually, to adjust for so many different start dates. These different dates effect the misconduct and cell history data as well as the matching with the reserve (control) group.

### **4. Changes in grant procedures to overcome implementation problems**

No changes in procedures have been needed during this six month period.

## **5. Technical Assistance needed.**

No technical assistance is needed at this time. MDOC is working hard to overcome the deficit in program/control numbers.

## **6. Initial Findings**

The staff at the Michigan Reformatory were surveyed. The staff were asked 176 questions which covered a wide array of areas, such as job stress, job satisfaction, intention to quit, organizational commitment, instrumental communication, demographics, attitudes toward CHANGE inmates, etc. There is a wealth of information contained in the staff surveys that will take a significant period of time to fully analyzed. However, for the purposes of this interim report, a brief analysis of the staff survey data will be presented in terms of demographics and views towards CHANGE inmates at the Michigan Reformatory. Two hundred seventy two completed surveys were returned. This is about a 63 percent response rate. Among those who responded, approximately 76 percent were males and 24 percent were females. About 6 percent of the respondents were black, 2 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Native American, 84 percent white, and 5 percent other. The mean age was 42.5, with a standard deviation of 8.3. The median age as 44. The ages of the staff ranged from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 61. About 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they were correctional officers. The remaining 50 percent held a multitude of positions in the prison, such as industries worker, counselor, case manager, teacher, or business office person. Most of the respondents had been in their current position at the Michigan Reformatory for a significant period of time. The mean number of years in current position was 7.7, with a standard deviation of 5.9. The median was 6 years and ranged from a minimum of less than a year to a maximum of 25 years. Furthermore, most of the respondents have worked at the Michigan Reformatory for a long time. The mean number of years employed at the prison was 9.6, with a standard deviation of 6.8. The median number of years at the prison was 9 and ranged from a minimum of less than a year to a maximum of 26 years. While the education level of the respondents also varied, most of the staff had some type of college educational experience. Only about 9 percent indicated that their highest educational level was a high school degree or GED. Almost 50 percent stated that they had college experience but had not earned a degree. Twenty percent had an associates or vocational degree. About 16 percent indicated that their highest educational level was a bachelors degree. Finally, 5 percent indicated that they had a graduate or professional degree. In sum, the demographic data indicates that a wide and diverse group of staff responded to the survey, and most of them have worked at the Michigan Reformatory for a long time.

Most of the staff who responded were aware of the CHANGE program. When asked if they were familiar with the CHANGE program at the Michigan Reformatory, 66 percent indicated that they were familiar with the program. Of those 179 staff who were aware of the program, 67 percent have daily contact with inmates in the CHANGE program or inmates who have completed the CHANGE

program. Of those 123 staff who have daily contact with CHANGE inmates, 46 percent stated that CHANGE inmates were different than non-CHANGE inmates. Thirty-five percent felt that there was no difference, and 19 percent were unsure if there was a difference. While 46 percent felt that there was a difference, the majority of the respondents (i.e., 54 %) felt that there was non-difference or were unsure. For those 56 staff who felt that there was a difference, only 13 percent felt that CHANGE inmates were much better or better than non-CHANGE inmates in terms of behavior. Twenty-two percent felt that CHANGE inmates were slightly better in their behavior than non-CHANGE inmates. In other words, 35 percent of the respondents indicated that CHANGE inmates were to some degree better in their behavior than non-CHANGE inmates. About 25 percent felt that CHANGE inmates were slightly worse in their behavior than non-CHANGE inmates at the Michigan Reformatory. Forty percent felt that CHANGE inmates were worse or much worse in their behavior than non-CHANGE inmates. Therefore, the majority of the respondents felt that CHANGE inmates were worse in their behavior rather than better when compared to non-CHANGE inmates at the Michigan Reformatory. There are four major reasons for this staff view. First, the program may not have had sufficient time to impact the behavior of the inmates involved. Second, the inmates in the program had before the start of the program a higher security level and institutional misconduct history than those in the general population at the Michigan Reformatory. Therefore, even if the CHANGE program had reduced misconduct by the involved inmates and improved their behavior, the CHANGE inmates' behavior may still be higher than that of the general population. Third, the CHANGE inmates may be held to a higher standard than the non-CHANGE inmates. Staff may feel that since they are involved in the program there is little excuse for their negative behavior. Fourth, the CHANGE program has little impact on the daily behavior of inmates who participate in the program. This does not mean that the program is a failure, since the major goal of the program is to reduce institutional misconduct, not to improve the staff view of CHANGE inmates. All these reasons will be explored in more depth at the end of the research study.

From the staff survey results, one observes not only do most staff view the behavior of CHANGE inmates to be lower than non-CHANGE inmates, but also that most staff feel that the CHANGE program does not reduce inmate misconduct. When asked if they think that the CHANGE program reduces misconduct, 33 percent stated yes, 30 percent stated that they were unsure, and 43 percent stated no. However, when asked if they think that inmates who have successfully completed the CHANGE program were more cooperative now as compared to prior to starting the program, 41 percent indicated yes, 34 percent no, and 25 percent unsure. Therefore, there appears to be some impact of the CHANGE program on the participating inmates in the view of the responding staff. Nevertheless, the CHANGE program has not had a dramatic impact on the attitudes of staff who interact with the inmates.

Data from the observations of the CHANGE meetings are still being collected. The analysis of this data will not be completed until all the data on the observations of the CHANGE meetings has been collected.

Only the misconduct before the start of the CHANGE program is available. The misconduct after completion of the CHANGE program is still being collect. As indicated in the last interim report, there

is a wide range of frequency of misconduct by the inmates one year prior to the start of the CHANGE program. The number of misconduct reports range from a low of 2 to a high of 34. The median number of misconduct reports for the year prior to the start of the CHANGE program is 11. The mean is 12.72 misconduct reports, with a standard deviation of 8.9. This implies that there is a fairly high rate of misconduct of the inmates in a given year. This misconduct not only effects the quality of life in the institution for inmates and staff, but it generally negatively effects the security level of the inmate. The more misconduct reports, the higher the number of security points. The higher level of security points results in the inmate being confined in a more secure environment rather than a less restrictive one. This ultimately limits the inmate's programming opportunities and increases the cost of incarceration for the state. Therefore, from the preliminary results, it is evident that there is a need to reduce the level of misconduct among the inmates in this study.

A Cognitive Development survey developed by the Colorado Skills Development Program (1996) was administered to the selected group of inmates before the start of the CHANGE program. This group of inmates included both the CHANGE group and the reserve group. The reserve group are inmates eligible for the program but not selected to participate in the program by random chance. The CHANGE group is the experimental group, while the reserve group is the control group. The Cognitive Development survey is a series of 78 questions in which the respondent answers by marking a 5-point Likert response scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These 78 questions are combined to form 15 indexes measuring the different areas of cognitive development. The specific questions that comprise the 15 indexes are presented in Appendix A. The indices were formed by summing the responses of the questions that make up the index and dividing by the total number of questions summed. The indices range from 1 to 5, where 1 means a strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neutral, 4 disagree and 5 strongly agree. The pre-test mean responses for the 15 indexes for the entire group, the CHANGE group, and the reserve group are presented in Table 1 (see next page). Looking at the results in Table 1, one observes that there is little difference between the CHANGE group and the reserve group for all 15 cognitive development indexes. Using the Independent t-test, it was found that there is no statistically significant difference at a probability level of 0.05 between the two groups on any of the 15 indexes. In other words, the two groups are equal to one another on each of the 15 cognitive development indexes in the pre-test (i.e., before the start of the CHANGE program). The second point that Table 1 illustrates is a need for cognitive development for the selected group of inmates. Many have cognitive weaknesses. There is room for increased cognitive development among this group of inmates.

A post-test of the same Cognitive Development survey was given to inmates who completed phase 1 of the CHANGE group and to a selected group of inmates in the reserve group. The questions were used to form the same 15 indexes. The post-test mean responses for the 15 indexes for the entire group, the CHANGE group, and the reserve group are presented in Table 2. A total of 46 inmates completed the post-test Cognitive Development survey. Of these 46 inmates, 28 were in the CHANGE group, and 18 were in the reserve group. Looking at Table 2, one observes that for several indexes there is a difference between the CHANGE and reserve groups. An Independent t-test was conducted to see if these differences are statistically significant. On 10 of the 15 indexes, there is no real difference between the two groups. On 5 out of the 15 indexes, there is a statistically significant

difference at a probability level of 0.05 between the two groups. Specifically, there is no difference between the two groups on the post-test indexes of: Self-Control, Normlessness, Powerlessness/Fatalism, Problem Solving Ability, Rigidity and Closed-Mindedness, Empathy, Acceptance of Rationalization for Criminal Behavior, Awareness of Existence of Victims, Positive Labeling Now in Prison, and Exposure to Criminal Peers. There is a difference between the two groups for the following indexes: Susceptibility to Peer Influence Toward Deviance, General Susceptibility to External Influence, Positive Labeling Before Coming to Prison, Commitment to Socially Acceptable Goals, and Attitudes Opposing Criminal Behavior. While not sweeping, there is some change between the CHANGE group and the reserve group in the post-test in terms of cognitive development.

In summary, there is limited support to suggest that the CHANGE program may have a positive impact. From the staff survey, there is some support that many staff feel that the CHANGE program has had a positive impact. However, it is clear from the staff survey results that it is not a view held by the vast majority of staff, nor do most staff feel that it has been a significantly large positive impact. Additionally, there is limited support from the Cognitive Development survey that the CHANGE program has had an impact in certain areas of cognitive development. However, the findings must be tempered with the fact that this is just a preliminary analysis. Not all the inmates in the study have completed the post-test of the Cognitive Development survey. The conclusions may change once all the data is collected and analyzed.

**Table 1 – The Pre-Test Mean Responses for the Cognitive Development Indexes for the Entire Group, the Change Group and the Reserve Group**

Index	Mean for Entire Group (N=130)	Mean for Change Group (N=75)	Mean for Reserve Group (N=55)
Self-Control Index	3.13	3.11	3.17
Normlessness Index	3.02	2.94	3.06
Susceptibility to Peer Influence Toward Deviance Index	4.02	3.91	4.08
General Susceptibility to External Influence	3.37	3.31	3.47
Powerlessness/Fatalism	3.11	2.98	3.24
Problem Solving Ability	2.99	2.96	3.03
Rigidity and Closed-Mindedness	3.41	3.44	3.36
Empathy	2.94	2.88	3.06
Acceptance of Rationalizations For Criminal Behavior Index	3.60	3.54	3.65
Awareness of Existence of Victims Index	3.21	3.13	3.31
Commitment to Socially Acceptable Goals Index	1.88	1.89	1.87
Positive Labeling Before Coming to Prison Index	3.12	3.13	3.08
Positive Labeling Now in Prison Index	3.14	3.18	3.08
Attitudes Opposing Criminal Behavior Index	2.18	2.19	2.15
Exposure to Criminal Peers	3.62	3.50	3.72

**Table 2 – The Post-Test Mean Responses for the Cognitive Development Indexes for the Entire Group, the Change Group and the Reserve Group**

Index	Mean for Entire Group (N=46)	Mean for Change Group (N=28)	Mean for Reserve Group (N=18)
Self-Control Index	3.39	3.60	3.14
Normlessness Index	3.33	3.52	3.22
Susceptibility to Peer Influence Toward Deviance Index	4.41	4.70	4.13
General Susceptibility to External Influence	3.54	3.84	3.22
Powerlessness/Fatalism	3.48	3.71	3.20
Problem Solving Ability	3.22	3.39	3.17
Rigidity and Closed-Mindedness	3.56	3.76	3.32
Empathy	3.11	3.321	2.82
Acceptance of Rationalizations For Criminal Behavior Index	3.83	3.964	3.65
Awareness of Existence of Victims Index	3.43	3.62	3.15
Commitment to Socially Acceptable Goals Index	1.72	2.10	1.26
Positive Labeling Before Coming to Prison Index	1.72	2.10	1.26
Positive Labeling Now in Prison Index	3.23	3.36	2.88
Attitudes Opposing Criminal Behavior Index	2.24	2.69	1.54
Exposure to Criminal Peers	3.92	4.10	3.65

