Overrepresentation of minorities in youth correctional confinement in the United States: A promising aftercare approach for ameliorating this problem

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Summary: This paper details one of the major crises currently facing juvenile justice professionals in the United States and explores one of the more promising strategies that has been piloted recently to help solve this problem. A large number of states that are currently housing delinquent youth in secure confinement are facing a situation in which the majority of inmates are drawn from several minority populations, most notably African-American and Hispanic. Over the past decade the Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP) project has developed and tested a model of reintegrative intervention to reduce the rates of recidivism of high risk juvenile
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offenders released into the community. Results achieved at the pilot sites and subsequent replications in other jurisdictions have been promising. This paper explores the tailoring of this programming framework to the circumstances and needs of minority youth in confinement and its efficiency in reducing failure among these populations once they have reentered the community. Emphasis focuses upon the design and operation of one such program in the State of Oregon.

Key words: reintegration, intensive aftercare, parole, program model, reduced recidivism, minority youth, cultural sensitivity

I. Introduction

Juvenile justice systems throughout the United States continue to be impacted negatively by the presence of excessive numbers of minority youth at all points in processing. A particularly distressing aspect of this pattern is that the deeper these youth penetrate into the system the higher the degree of over-representation. This phenomenon has made the fact of disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) a concern of crisis proportions in the field of juvenile justice, especially with youth correctional agencies that are most directly affected by the problem. Resultingly, the issue of minority over-representation, particularly among African American youth, in the nation's secure juvenile facilities has received considerable attention in recent years. The search for solutions to DMC has been intense and ongoing.

To promote reduction in minority over-representation of confined youth various promising strategies have been identified and adopted for testing in a number of states nationwide. One widely heralded strategy focuses upon a reduction in the level/rate of penetration by minority youth into secure settings. This approach entails the development of community-based programs, usually operating under the auspices of probation departments, that serve as alternatives to incarceration. Another strategic approach that has received somewhat less attention and has not, to date, benefited from extensive application and testing involves steps that can be taken to reduce the numbers of minority youth returning to confinement as a result of new
offenses or major technical violations being committed following release. Of course, the dilemma immediately facing efforts to reduce the level of failure experienced by minority youth on parole/aftercare status is that success has been elusive for most youth correctional agencies responsible for supervising youth regardless of race, ethnicity or cultural considerations once these offenders have returned to the community. This situation poses a double challenge in that, on the one hand, it will be necessary to first identify and operationalize innovative, promising parole/aftercare practices that can begin to reduce substantially the level of failure that has plagued this segment of the juvenile justice system in the past. On the other hand, if this immediate goal is achieved, it is then necessary to mesh these more effective practices with state-of-the-art knowledge about how best to respond to the special problems and needs of minority youth in this segment of the system. This is truly a dual challenge that is formidable in scope since both of these areas have not lent themselves historically to easy solution or quick success.

The purpose of this paper is to present a descriptive account of the transfer of knowledge in program design and operation from a long-term research and development initiative, Intensive Aftercare Programs (IAP), for use with a specialized programming approach to reduce the high rates of recidivism previously experienced by minority youth (African American adolescents) in confinement in the State of Oregon. Over the past several years this novel aftercare program, the Minority Youth Transition Program (MYTP), has begun to show positive results in terms of reducing rates of recidivism and thereby reducing the degree of minority over-representation in Oregon's juvenile correctional facilities. The following account of program design and development hopefully will add insight into why one of the primary strategies for reducing the problem of DMC appears to be working through a blending of principles, philosophies, and practices characterizing the IAP and MYTP into a comprehensive framework for successfully transitioning minority youth from secure settings into their home communities. In this effort to detail the underlying reasons behind positive outcomes the paper will delineate precisely the design features that have been integrated into an effective intervention for community reintegration.
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II. Minority Overpopulation in the United States
Juvenile Justice System

Initial concern over the emerging problem of minority overrepresentation in
juvenile justice systems across the United States surfaced in a 1988 Annual
Report to Congress submitted by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and
entitled, A Delicate Balance (HSIA & HAMPARIAN, 1998). The study
suggested the problem was widespread and was occurring at all major points
in juvenile justice processing, i.e., arrest, detention, prosecution,
adjudication, transfer to adult court, and commitment to secure facilities.
The United States Congress responded by including in its 1988 amendments
to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act of 1974 the requirement that
states were obligated to address this problem in all of their plans for federal
formula grants funding. A subsequent amendment by Congress to this Act in
1992 raised minority overrepresentation to a core requirement in formula
grant applications, tying eligibility for all future funding to state compliance
in seeking reduction in the level of this problem.

The severity of the problem at the deepend of the system, i.e., correctional
confinement, was indicated in a prevalence study (SICKMUND, SNYDER, &
POE-YAMAGATA, 1997) that showed while minority youth only constituted
32 percent of the youth population in the United States in 1995, they
represented 68 percent of all youth being held in secure institutional
confinement. Equally alarming was the fact that these statistics reflected
significant increase in this problem since 1983 when minority youth
constituted 56 percent of those in secure correctional confinement. Stated
somewhat differently, the magnitude of this problem of incarceration of
minority youth, particularly African American adolescents, was revealed in
another prevalence study (DECOMO, 1998) where he asserts that based upon
1995 census populations estimates this population has a 3.33 percent (or 1 in
30 odds) chance of being taken into state custody by age 18. This rate for
African American youth is almost three times that of Hispanic youth (1.21
percent or 1 in 83 odds) and more than five times (0.66 percent or 1 in 151
odds) that of White youth.
Another critical finding in the research on minority overrepresentation in juvenile justice was the fact that the farther one traced the prevalence of various ethnic groups in the system the higher the rate of minority presence (POPE, LOVELL & HSIA, 2002; BISHOP & FRAZIER, 1996). This progressive increase results in a situation where the point of processing marked by the highest rate of overrepresentation is commitment to secure confinement. With this finding firmly established, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, made the decision to award eleven discretionary grants to jurisdictions nationwide in 1995 and 1996 to develop new, promising interventions to reduce disproportionate minority confinement (HSIA & HAMPARIAN, 1998). Clearly, strategies to begin impacting minority overrepresentation at this advanced point in juvenile justice processing have assumed a role of major importance in program development and innovation among professionals in this field. It is this challenge that is explored in considerable detail in the remainder of this paper with reference to two important pilot programming initiatives, the Intensive Aftercare Programs and the Minority Youth Transitional Program.

III. The IAP Initiative

A. The System Challenge

It has repeatedly been stated over the past two decades that greater emphasis should be placed upon transitional and aftercare services for confined juvenile offenders, but progress in this area has been slow for a number of reasons. A matter of particular irony is the fact that although this "deep-end" population of delinquents, given their high-risk behaviors and propensity for repeated illegal acts, should supposedly be receiving the beneficial, cumulative effects of residential treatment and community-based follow-up, the reality is one where this programming arena has been given, at best, short shrift and, at worst, has simply been overlooked or ignored. Programs designed to respond to the needs and difficulties of youth reentering the
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Community have, historically, been assigned low priority on a regular basis in the competition for scarce resources.

One of the most common problems besetting juvenile justice professionals working to provide effective transitional and aftercare services has been the difficulty of supervising the transition of confined youth from a closely monitored and highly regimented life in a secure residential placement to a relatively unstructured and often tempting life in the community. The inability of staff (located both in facilities and in the community) to provide continuity of service delivery and supervision from the point of confinement to reinsertion in the community has long plagued efforts to achieve successful long-term adjustment for juvenile offenders. The lack of communication, coordination and collaboration among professionals representing the wide array of involved agencies ranging across residential facilities (both public and private) and community-based social institutions such as schools, neighborhood organizations, the family, mental health agencies, drug and alcohol treatment centers, employment and training programs, churches, business associations, and individual employers has posed problems for successful outcomes in collaborative endeavors. Fragmentation of effort and miscommunication have been persistent impediments to the development of appropriate policies and procedures for assigning services and resources to the appropriate youth, as well as monitoring the delivery of these services in a timely and efficient manner.

Although recommendations for improved communication, shared decision making, coordinated planning, and clear lines of authority are certainly not new, these promising strategies have met with only a modicum of success. A number of factors can be readily identified as contributing to a lack of progress; they include limitations on funding, bureaucratic and professional intransigence, turf battles, understaffing, community fears and resistance, and a general reluctance to enter into actively functioning, working partnerships. Clearly, any programming framework designed to achieve successful reintegration must devise strategies with an orientation toward system impact for overcoming such problems of linkage and connectedness. Two other ongoing problems identified or major obstacles to behavioral normalization
and emerging from justice practice are: 1) the experiences and interventions during residential confinement do not adequately prepare youth for the vicissitudes of daily life upon community re-entry and 2) those valuable lessons learned and skills acquired while in confinement are being sufficiently built upon and reinforced in the community following release. As Altschuler and Armstrong have noted, the key service areas around which both residential facilities and community-based providers need to organize their respective efforts in tandem are family, peers, schooling, work and drug involvement, i.e., drug use/dependency and sales (1999:6).

B. The Research and Development Project

In July, 1987, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice, announced a competitive bidding procedure to conduct a research and development project, Intensive Aftercare Programs (IAP). This step was taken largely in response to a perception of growing national concerns about institutional overcrowding, high rates of recidivism and escalating costs of confinement. The IAP project was designed to assess current knowledge and programs in the field of juvenile aftercare, to develop a promising program model, to disseminate information about the proposed model, and to test this model in selected jurisdictions. The Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Policy Studies, in collaboration with California State University at Sacramento's Division of Criminal Justice, was funded in the spring of 1988 to conduct this multistage project. After a number of years of assessment, model development, and testing of four pilot sites, the demonstration phase of IAP was concluded in June, 2000. The final results of the outcome evaluation conducted by an outside organization are still awaited.

The IAP model (Figure 1) that resulted from the research and development process and was tested in four pilot sites nationwide represents a carefully designed attempt to combine in a coherent fashion the most innovative strategies and techniques identified nationally to facilitate effective transitioning of high-risk adjudicated offenders back into the community and
Figure 1

Intervention Model For Juvenile Justice Aftercare

An Integration of:

Strain Theory    Social Learning Theory    Social Control Theory
to offer a reasonable chance for long term normalization of behavior and reduced recidivism. The model is grounded in a set of assumptions about the need to specify clearly the range of factors that generate and are highly correlated with serious delinquency. This identification process logically suggests promising strategies of intervention that are theoretically linked with these factors. Consequently, the model is theory driven and provides a framework of differential responses designed to meet the problems and needs of individual juvenile offenders. It is our impression that when the basic conceptual or theoretical principles of a program model either have not been stated or are ambiguously stated, it is difficult if not impossible for staff, program participants, or any other observers to understand with any degree of clarity what practices, services and procedures should be pursued and why, how they should be conducted and when, with which particular youth, and under what circumstances.

The design of the model was driven by a growing recognition arising largely from the assessment phase of the research and development process that a small set of goals must be incorporated if reintegration was to be successful. In the broadest sense, the implementation and management of effective aftercare services depends upon operationalizing programmatically four central goals. They are:

1) Defining the overall aftercare function in a fashion that guarantees the inclusion of staff and interlocking programs across the entire continuum from the point of judicial commitment and residential placement to the termination of community supervision;

2) Designing the network of community-based service provision in a way to respond comprehensively to the problems and needs of chronic, multi-problem delinquents;
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3) Devising a framework for case management that insures the continuity of supervision (surveillance and social control) and service delivery (treatment and competency development), which matches clients scientifically with appropriate interventions, and that brings the most objective procedures to inform decision making in the areas of risk and need;

4) Focusing upon collaborative, inter-agency approaches and solutions to the challenge of supervision and service provision for a high-risk, high-need population.

In light of these requirements a model was configured to span four distinct but linked conceptual levels extending from the most abstract and theoretical to program operations and service delivery (see Figure 2). In terms of descending levels of abstraction this framework consisted of:

1) An integration of social control, strain and social learning theories,

2) Underlying principles of programmatic action,

3) Program elements, and

4) Service delivery areas.

The key structural conceptualization of the IAP model's design and implementation is the reintegrative framework across which the model must be operationalized and managed. Here, the continuum for aftercare intervention is best viewed as consisting of three distinct, yet overlapping segments (See Figure 3). They are:

1) Pre-release and preparatory planning during confinement,
Figure 2

The Four Conceptual Levels That Configure the IAP Model

Integrated Theory - A Synthesis of:
- Strain Theory
- Social Learning Theory
- Social Control Theory

Underlying Principles of Programmatic Action
- Progressively Increasing Responsibility & Freedom
- Facilitating Client-Community Interaction & Involvement
- Working with both Offender & Targeted Community Support Systems
- Developing New Resources, Supports, & Opportunities
- Monitoring & Testing

Program Elements
- Organization & Structural Characteristics
- Overarching Case Management
  - Assessment & Classification for Client Selection
  - Individual Case Planning with a Family and Community Perspective
  - Surveillance/Service Mix
  - Incentives and Graduated Consequences
  - Service Brokerage & Linkage with Social Networks
  - Management Information and Program Evaluation

Service Areas
- Special Needs & Special Populations
- Education and Schooling
- Vocational Training, Job Readiness, and Placement
- Living Arrangements
- Social Skills
- Leisure and Recreation
- Client-Centered Counseling (Individual & Group)
- Family Work & Intervention
- Health
- Special Technology
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Figure 3

The Structural Configuration of Juvenile Aftercare Across the Institutional-Community Programming Continuum

Critical Structural Considerations in Aftercare

The Continuum of Intervention for Youth Corrections

CONFINEMENT  TRANSITION  NORMALIZATION

Institution Community

Commitment  Community  Successful
Pre-release Planning Reentry  Termination

Structured Reentry

A. Pre-Release Planning
B. Structured Reentry
C. Long-term Normalization of Behavior
2) Structural transition requiring the participation of facility and community-based aftercare staff prior to and following community re-entry, and

3) Long term, normalizing activities that ensure adequate service delivery and the necessary level of social control during the community phase.

This tripartite conceptualization represents a structural response to the systemic dilemma of being unable to smoothly transition youth with any major degree of success across the institution/community boundary. The review and analysis of promising juvenile aftercare approaches nationwide by the IAP staff, as well as the result of model building in the IAP project, have indicated the value of dividing the critical points of processing and movement across the continuum into three overlapping phases (ALTSCHLER & ARMSTRONG, 1994a; ALTSCHLER, ARMSTRONG, & MACKENZIE 1999).

An extensive published literature on the IAP research and development project is readily available for the interested reader. Issues explored in these publications range across a number of topics including model design, implementation, pilot program characteristics, lessons learned, and promising practices (see ALTSCHLER & ARMSTRONG, 2002; 2001; 1997; 1996; 1994a; 1994b; 1993). For the purposes of issues being addressed in this paper, it is important to note that, by design, pilot sites where the IAP model was implemented and tested for effectiveness were chosen, in part, on the basis of substantial numbers of minority youth being confined in the targeted juvenile correctional facilities. The distribution on the basis of percentages of minority youth represented in substantial numbers across the three pilot sites that participated in the full five years of program demonstration was as follows:

- Colorado: 39% Hispanic
- Nevada: 39% African-American
- Virginia: 83% African American
IV. Specialized Application of the IAP Model in Oregon: The Minority Youth Transition Program

Under the auspices of the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), the Office of Minority Services (OMS) has evolved over the past few years into an innovative, multi-dimensional programming division charged with the responsibility of introducing policies and practices to promote cultural competency and sensitivity for confined minority youth. This primary focus extends across organizational design, staffing, and agency decision making, as well as managing the actual transition and community follow-up of minority youth being held in OYA correctional facilities. This youth correctional agency has statewide responsibility in Oregon for secure housing, provision of institutional treatment, and community-based supervision and service provision for all youth adjudicated delinquent at the county level and committed to the state for secure confinement and care. Through this set of activities OYA is responsible for delivering rehabilitative services, holding youth accountable for their delinquent acts, and assuring higher levels of public safety by reducing recidivism among released youth.

In 1996 the Minority Youth Transition Program was designed and implemented by OMS with a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice (JACKSON, 2002). From its very beginning this program drew heavily upon the basic approach being utilized by the Intensive Aftercare Programs (IAP) initiative that was testing a comprehensive reintegrative model for high risk juvenile offenders returning to their home communities from secure confinement. A number of important findings, insights, and results had emerged from this long-term research and development project that operated pilot programs in four states. The Minority Youth Transition Program adopted a number of features of the model and then tailored these principles, components, and procedures to the circumstances, problems, and needs of their targeted offender population initially composed exclusively of African American youth. There was an almost immediate and dramatic impact upon the prevalence of African
American male youth being confined by OYA, largely as a result of a substantial reduction in the number of these youth being returned to confinement because of a major dampening of reoffending behavior in their communities.

Positive outcomes resulting from this intervention were reflected in the fact that while African American males represented twelve percent of OYA's total confined population in 1996, by 2001 this particular offender group had decreased to seven percent of the total in OYA custody (JACKSON, 2002, 158). Tracked on an individual case basis for respective outcomes, performance of youth in the program showed that among the 143 participants entering the program beginning in 1999 and through the summer of 2003, 76 offenders had successfully completed all requirements of the program and had been released from aftercare status. Only 14 youth had failed to complete either as a result of new law violations or were terminated due to non-compliance or serious technical violations. This performance level constituted a 84 percent success rate, far higher than usually experienced by OYA in working with this population in the past (personal communications with the staff from the Minority Youth Transitional Program). The remaining 63 youth who entered the program during this timeframe are still active in the program either participating in the institutional phase or having been released onto aftercare status in the community where they are currently being supervised. Beginning in 1997, this transition program for minority youth -given promising results- had been expanded to include Hispanic male offenders and 1999 was further extended to include Native American males and all minority females.

Operationally, the Minority Youth Program relies upon the following design features and program activities to prepare youth for release from confinement and then monitor and shape their behavior in the community. Each youth has an individualized transition plan that is developed prior to the youth leaving the facility. This plan is developed in collaboration with the transition specialist, the parole officer, the treatment manager, other facility staff, community providers, the youth, and their families. Culturally specific and language appropriate program services include: mentorship, drug and alcohol
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treatment, mental health services, family support, anger management, grief counseling, conflict resolution, gang intervention/mediation, bus passes, clothing vouchers, employment/job readiness training, educational assistance, and twenty-four hour per day crisis response (JACKSON, 2002).

The organizational mandate under which the Office of Minority Services operated was further strengthened in 2000 when the Oregon Youth Authority adopted a set of cultural competency principles to guide decision making, staff perceptions and behavior, and program activities as they related to issues of race, ethnicity and culture (See Table 1). This step served to define more clearly culturally specific policies and procedures already in place in the program. For example, the position has been taken at the point of initial program operations that in order for cultural competency to be achieved with the participating youth issues of culture and ethnicity must be identified, addressed, and incorporated as a core part of the treatment process. Cultural competency derives from a set of personal values and enhanced skills internalized and inculcated from treatment, enabling each youth to interact and cope more successfully in a variety of community contexts and situations. The challenge for correctional staff working with minority youth inside the juvenile correctional facility or during community supervision is that they must be knowledgeable about and skilled in addressing issues related to dress, language, beliefs, history and daily life experiences in culturally diverse settings. Effective transmission of knowledge and understanding about these matters to participating youth is a critical programming goal.

Effective communication methods incorporating an understanding of cultural factors become key parts of staff skills and job duties since positive interactions must acknowledge and respond to the importance of these differences in shaping outlooks and behaviors. Such flexibility and insight in communication is grounded in three primary requirements of the program; they are:
### OYA Organizational Cultural Competency Principles

- The Oregon Youth Authority Mission, Policies, and Cultural Competency Principles provide the framework that supports a culturally competent organization.

- All OYA employees, contractors, and partners understand these principles and the value of culturally competent efforts.

- The OYA values a culturally diverse workforce, which reflects the diversity in our youth offender population.

- Support from OYA administration and management continues and is a key ingredient in implementing our competency goals and plans.

- Resources and funding are made available to support OYA Cultural Competency Goals and Plans.

- OYA strives to create an environment and work site that is welcoming, safe, free of discrimination, and is supportive of all cultures, race, ethnic groups, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, and persons with disabilities.

- OYA implements and reinforces Civil Rights mandates in all aspects of the organization.

- Equal access and equal services benefit all OYA youth and staff.

- Changes in population and new trends are evaluated and incorporated into the way Oregon Youth Authority does business.

- Best practices in cultural competence and treatment services are adopted to benefit youth in the OYA system.
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1) **Cultural Acknowledgement**, in which cultural differences are recognized and readily accepted as valid, rather than denied, derided, or ignored.

2) **Openness to Learn Transculturally**, is a desired quality that is expressed in a healthy curiosity, interest, and openness to learn about and appreciate the intrinsic values of another's culture.

3) **Acceptance**, is a desired quality that is expressed through a willingness to support mutually beneficial interactions across cultural and ethnic boundaries.

In any program setting that is characterized by some level of cultural diversity the possibility always exists that newly recruited staff will resist or not understand the value of inculcating cultural competency into the treatment regimen and promoting the use of culturally specific services. To preclude this possibility the Office of Minority Services has sponsored annual cultural competency/diversity training institute statewide and to schedule on-going educational sessions that stress the benefits of a cultural competency orientation when minority youth are being targeted for participation.

V. **Application of Underlying Principles of Programmatic Action to Confined Minority Youth**

All five of the underlying principles of programmatic action that constitute the second conceptual tier of the IAP Model are consistent with and supportive of steps to be taken in achieving cultural competency and community acceptance of minority offenders once techniques for successful reentry are initiated. Following is a discussion of the five principles and how they can be operationalized to facilitate decision-making and program activities for promoting minority youth reintegration.
A. Preparing Juveniles for Progressively Increased Responsibility and Freedom in the Community

Each youth participating in the Minority Youth Transition Program must meet with his case manager who has primary responsibility for explaining program goals, delineating expectations for youth, and developing the critical individualized transition plan sometime 60-90 days prior to release. In this plan a major emphasis is placed upon issues of culture and ethnicity that may serve to promote or impede the successful reentry of youth into the community. Part of this planning process that is started long before release occurs is for community-based treatment and service provider agencies to begin developing face-to-face relationships with these youth and to understand fully their specific problems and needs, especially as pertaining to culture and ethnicity. Clearly, treatment and service provision should be tailored around such considerations. In addition, a concerted effort is made to link each of these minority youth with a capable and experienced mentor drawn from a similar background who possesses those skills to address issues of cultural competency and sensitivity as youth return to their home communities and neighborhoods. Again, contact with these key individuals is begun before youth are released from confinement.

Under the most favorable circumstances, youth in this program are being directed to test and probe their amenability to successful community reentry through a series of home and community visits prior to formal release. This procedure allows for a reality-based check to be run of the degree of street readiness being exhibited by these youth. Each visit to the community should be followed by a comprehensive, in-depth assessment of what occurred and what was accomplished or faltered during these highly structured, but brief stays in the community.
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B. Facilitating Interaction Between Juveniles and the Community

The Oregon Youth Authority is fully cognizant of the value and ultimately the need to develop positive relationships with agencies and their staffs in the community. This situation is probably even more critical in regard to linkages with minority groups and organizations that have or could have important roles to play with minority youth transitioning from confinement. Not only are linkages critical but collaboration in the area of case planning and joint decision-making to facilitate smooth reentry into the community are also essential aspects of effective reintegration.

Concepts that are regularly identified as fundamental for community normalization of high-risk juvenile offenders include advocacy and overcoming stereotypes. A large part of achieving positive results in promoting meaningful interactions between serious offenders emerging from confinement and these community-based agencies that have something to offer these youth is convincing such organizations and their staffs that these youth are workable and will respond to appropriately matched interventions. In American youth corrections over the past several decades there has been a strong tendency to demonize juvenile offenders who have reached the deep-end of the correctional system and have been highly visible and extremely troubled while in the community. The challenge to change this image and convince agencies to accept these youth into their treatment programs is formidable but must be addressed if community correctional strategies are to produce positive outcomes. Concerns about these problems and impediments appear to be even more pronounced for minority youth being released from secure confinement.

In the process of linking youth to key community players, effective case management must incorporate substantive roles for family members, peers, schools, employees, and other essential service providers. Sometimes strategies must also assume a non-traditional character. For example, one way of developing positive relations and ongoing rapport with families of color in single parent households is to arrange to meet with these moms in the evening, recognizing the difficulty of taking time off from work in order
to meet during regular business hours. Trust is built by being flexible and accommodating the families’ needs whenever possible.

C. Working with Both the Offender and Targeted Community Support Systems

In communities plagued with high levels of social disorganization, economic marginality, and limited resources it is often the case that core institutions such as the family, the workplace, the school, and support services are fragmented, in disarray, or simply not present. Under these conditions it is contingent upon youth correctional agencies to target community problem areas and through a strategy of working alliances and partnerships seek change and an improvement in the general quality of life and/or service delivery/availability. This step should begin to occur while youth are still in confinement. Only by making marked improvements in the home environment and neighborhood settings can one hope to transition youth back into the community with expectations of improved results.

D. Developing New Resources and Support Services

Minority communities, especially inner-city urban locales, are historically troubled by shortage of resources, limited availability of economic opportunity, and weakened infrastructure. This dilemma becomes an even greater problem when the goal is to reintegrate and normalize juvenile offenders through the cooperation and involvement of key organizations and individuals in these geographic areas. Addressing issues of personal identity, skill acquisition, reduction of personal problems, and engagement in meaningful activities is a difficult assignment for anyone living in these communities, but can pose an almost insurmountable obstacle for troubled youth, especially those deeply involved with the juvenile justice system. Enhancement of resources and specialized program development incorporating themes of cultural competency and sensitivity must be part of
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the reintegrative approach and must extend across critical areas that include housing, employment, vocational training, education, and treatment.

E. Monitoring and Testing Interaction Between the Youth and Community

This principle is directed toward tracking what is occurring interactively between youth and community once release from confinement has been achieved. It relies upon a mix of formal, instrument-driven assessment and personal observation and insight. From the IAP perspective the aftercare experience must entail a carefully structured decompression process, marked by each youth’s movement across a number of interlocking stages. Movement is driven by acceptable levels of performance and compliance with conditions of aftercare/parole; progression to the next stage is initialed by a comprehensive reassessment of accomplishments and positive behaviors exhibited during the previous stage. These procedures are a generic dimension of the IAP framework and are required for all youth participating in IAP-derived programs regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural background, or other demographic factors.

This design feature (structured decompression) of the IAP model is augmented by a high degree of oversight over contracted service agencies and other organizations working with youth at the grassroots level. It is here that attention should be directed toward issues of cultural competency and sensitivity on the part of groups and individuals working with youth released into the community. Case managers who serve as a point of reference in coordinating service delivery and supervision for all participating youth and have a brokerage responsibility in monitoring contracted services are pivotal in assessing the appropriateness of interaction with and service delivery to minority youth.
VI. Overarching Case Management

Much of the impetus and guidance for operationalizing the five underlying principles of programmatic action resides at the third conceptual level of the IAP Model, i.e., Overarching Case Management. In an IAP approach to the reintegration of confined youth, case management consists of five components that collectively drive all decision-making and subsequent activities, collectively focusing on the goal of successful reentry and normalization of youth in the community. This management strategy extends from the initial point of a youth’s commitment to secure confinement until the point of termination of aftercare/parole status after a number of months of supervision in the community. It is the operational centerpiece of any well-designed aftercare system since without the presence of coherent case management any attempt would be futile to identify, coordinate, deliver, and monitor the delivery of appropriate services, as well as to assure the imposition of an adequate level of supervision and social control. Within the Oregon system where minority programming has received top priority, the utilization of an IAP-derived case management framework has served well to develop and sustain effective communication, collaboration, and support to achieve the aims of individual case plans. The role of a number of public and private agencies in providing treatment and supervision is orchestrated through this approach. Quite simply, IAP Overarching Case Management is the operational configuration of specialized components that has allowed the Minority Youth Transition Program to implement and sustain a culturally competent and sensitive rehabilitative program for confined youth being released to the community. The roles of the five components of case management in this program are described below.

A. Assessment, Classification, and Selection Criteria

This initial procedure of profiling youth in terms of problems, needs, and deficits is given an overlay of additional inquiry since special attention is directed toward gaining deeper insight into issues of minority status and the role of various cultural factors in the lifeways and personal history of this
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particular subpopulation of youth. Of course, all youth, regardless of race and ethnicity, participating in IAP-derived programs will undergo this first set of screening and assessment activities since little can be accomplished in beginning the case planning process or startup of actual service delivery without these procedures being conducted. But this first component of overarching case management offers something special to minority aftercare programming because it provides the opportunity to explore in greater detail and in systematic fashion certain concerns of race, culture, and ethnicity. These factors will not be overlooked or fail to be incorporated in treatment plans if this kind of initial assessment becomes standard operating procedures within the case management framework.

B. Individual Case Planning from a Family and Community Perspective

The design of the Minority Youth Transition Program designates that all participants have a comprehensive individualized aftercare plan in effect 30 days prior to release from secure custody. The point is that a number of significant activities have already been launched within the facility prior to the youth’s release in the community. This transitional phase that begins within the institution is absolutely critical for a smooth, coordinated reentry into the community.

One vital element is requiring family involvement in the development and implementation of the aftercare plan. The primary strategy for family engagement in this process is to encourage them early on after the youth is placed in confinement to become directly involved in developing a transition plan that is driven to a substantial degree by their input and support for the preferred scheme for both treatment and supervision. Through this interactive process with families, barriers can be identified, service providers can become known and understood, expectations for youth performance can be made clear, and the element of surprise and possible resistance can be minimized.
In a similar way, steps must be taken during the development of the individualized case plan to incorporate considerations about the nature of the community to which the youth will return and to identify possible stumbling blocks at the community level, as well as coming to know organizations and agencies that may prove extremely helpful for purposes of reintegration. Part of what will be occurring is the inclusion of contracted service providers in early discussions about preferred treatment and resource provision for individual youth while the case plan is still in a developmental stage; impetus for this activity will be generated, in part, by the fact that the IAP Model insists, whenever possible, upon the backing of relevant service providers and individuals into the correctional facility long before release occurs. Also, case managers and other program staff will be exploring neighborhoods and local haunts in the community to obtain a better read on opportunities and impediments in these environments for incorporation into case planning while the youth is still at an early stage in correctional confinement. Some of the major barriers identified in the Oregon program and requiring problem solving have been gang activity, lack of transportation, widespread drug abuse and trafficking, and an overall dearth of positive, supportive role models to work with youth, especially when family systems are fragmented, disrupted, and/or dysfunctional.

C. A Mix of Intensive Surveillance and Enhanced Services

Integrating highly structured surveillance and enhanced service provision into the conditions of aftercare/parole is fundamentally important for achieving positive outcomes in behavioral/attitudinal change and daily supervision of compliance and performance. The IAP Model is grounded in the assumption that any effective intervention based upon an intensive supervision approach must simultaneously address issues of both treatment and social control. Youth need to have their culturally specific, genders specific and language appropriate needs and problems understood and met with individually matched services including but not limited to job training and placement, education and vocation training, clothing and medical services, and mental health treatment when appropriate. The collaborative
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case planning process in the Minority Youth Transition Program helps staff become aware of such behaviors and working toward resolving them. Often minority communities, given historical circumstances, have major gaps in this continuum of care and suffer major drawbacks in their ability to deliver required services and resources. Proactivity directed toward addressing these problems of gaps in the delivery system is a central feature in case management for the minority subpopulations in confinement. Obviously, all problems in the remediation of delinquency do not emanate from the behavior of the offenders, but are generated by negative characteristics of the system or the home community.

Another major element in steps to be taken toward mobilizing treatment and surveillance mixes for minority youth being released from confinement emerges from the fact that numerous service provider agencies and relevant organizations are not geared philosophically or pragmatically to work with minority populations, especially when a perception exists of these youth being serious offenders and not capable of positive change. Outreach, advocacy and transfer of knowledge are critical considerations when these difficulties arise, and it becomes essential for agencies and organizations to make adjustments in criteria for referral and relevancy of services delivered. Services must become culturally specific, language appropriate and reflect any special problems and needs being exhibited by these youth.

D. A Balance of Incentives and Graduated Consequences

Recognizing the need to operationalize procedures for provision of both positive incentives and graduated consequences for youth participating in the program, the Minority Youth Transition Program developed a framework that was especially relevant and sensitive to issues of race, ethnicity, and culture. Within this framework the area of incentives is more amenable to considerations of cultural specificity. Consequences for misconduct tend to be far more generic and represent a calibrated continuum of increasingly severe sanctions that are appropriate for responding to misconduct on the part of any youth. In contrast, incentives can be creatively configured to respond
to the values, life experiences, and expectations of individuals from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, within the program it is critical that these incentives be administered to all minority youth in a systematic and consistent fashion.

E. Utilization of Service Brokerage and Creation of Links with Community Resources and Social Networks

Service brokerage which offers a substantial input of culturally relevant and sensitive programming is essential for the success of the Minority Youth Transition Program. A similar challenge exists for insuring that issues of culture and ethnicity are addressed when linking to resources and social networks for support. These efforts can be greatly aided by the development of advisory groups and committees that are aware and strongly committed to the absolute need for providing cultural and ethnic dimensions in the daily lives of these youth. Usually membership in these kind of advising bodies is defined by relevancy in backgrounds, life experiences and interests of these individuals. The other particularly valuable trait is their involvement in diverse leadership roles. The Oregon program has also been extremely persistent in identifying minority community events and activities that can serve as point of reference for these youth as they are linked in the community to avocational, recreational, and educational opportunities that reinforce self esteem and open new vistas in adolescent development.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate the fact that the overrepresentation of minority youth at all points in processing in juvenile justice systems across the United States continues to constitute a major crisis. Perhaps the most serious manifestation of this problem can be found at the point of secure confinement where the highest level of minority overrepresentation is occurring. Although research and program development efforts have explored and engaged a multitude of issues and complexities posed by
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overrepresentation in correctional facilities, the search for greater understanding and promising strategies to solve the problem is an ongoing endeavor.

This paper has presented the argument that carefully designed intervention approaches focusing upon transition and community reentry may offer a major ray of hope. As indicated, the merging of promising policies and practices from the perspective of both strategies to enhance the effectiveness of aftercare programs generally (reflected in the IAP Model) and strategies to address the special problems and needs of minority youth in confinement (reflected in the Office of Minority Services) appear to offer excellent prospects for reduced rates of recidivism and better stabilization and normalization of these offenders in the community. Convergence of these ideas and activities occurred with the development of the Minority Youth Transition Program. Although outcome data at this point in time for MYTP are relatively scant and do not represent results generated by quasi-experimental or experimental evaluation methodologies, the preliminary findings seem to be quite promising. Rates of recidivism in the community for the targeted population are quite low and there appears to be a lessening in the level of minority overrepresentation in the Oregon Youth Authority's correctional facilities. More testing with substantial numbers of youth and a thorough, scientifically valid evaluation of this model to reduce overrepresentation of the deep end of the system are indicated.
References


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