



FINDINGS OF PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AT WOMEN'S AND MEN'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

STATE OF COLORADO, U.S.A.
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Data Analyzed By
Dean W. Collinwood, Ph.D.
Executive Director of the
Center for Advanced Research
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Based on these data, if every inmate in Colorado in 2008 had been a *7 Habits* graduate, 79% of the prison rules violations (COPD) would not have occurred.

Background

Jerry Gasko first learned about the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* while serving in the United States Army in the 1980s. In 1996, as Director of Prisons for the State of Colorado, Jerry decided to have the *7 Habits* taught to the prison warden and directors at the Fremont Correctional Facility. Eventually, he decided to try having the *7 Habits* taught to the inmates. Some people thought the course would not work on inmates, but a trial run was approved at Fremont 1997. Twenty of the most hardened criminals—street gang leaders, sex offenders, and murderers—were selected for the first class, which was taught by Chaplain Dan Matche.

“Amazingly, it worked!” said Jerry after the end of the eight-week course. He noted that the *7 Habits* inmates showed many signs of improvement as a result of the course. For instance, they started talking to each other instead of fighting each other; they got into trouble much less often; and even the “lifers” with no chance of parole found a purpose in life as helpers or “Para Pros” in the course.

The “core group” of selected inmates wanted to develop a workbook that would relate specifically to the unique characteristics of prison life. Over a two-to three-year period, the *7 Habits on the Inside* workbook was produced. It included sections on how to live in prison and how to get out on parole.

Growth of the Program

The Fremont experiment having been judged a success, the *7 Habits on the Inside* course began to spread to other prisons: to Limon, Sterling, and others. Between 1998 and 2002, approximately 500 inmates took the course. When Jerry Gasko retired, the momentum died down for awhile, but then Chaplain Matche wanted to resuscitate the program, and Gasko, as a volunteer, joined him in teaching about five courses a year.

Each class had from 20 to 30 inmates—all in attendance by choice, not by requirement. The eight-week course was taught in two-hour blocks each week, with the first hour handled by the facilitators to introduce one of the *7 Habits*, and the second hour directed by the “core group” of inmates. Each member of the “core group” worked independently with six to eight fellow inmates, encouraging them to read and to “get into it.” About 25 percent of the “core group” were “lifers” with no chance of

parole, yet teaching the *7 Habits* to others gave them a sense of purpose in their lives. Usually, by week three, the inmates would begin to catch the vision of the program, and their behavioral changes would then be noticed by the warden and others. After receiving training themselves, the wardens and deputy wardens started teaching some of the classes, usually along with a civilian. Thus, the teaching staff consisted of two teachers plus several inmates in the “core group.” Eventually, *The 7 Habits Parole Book* was written to help potential parolees. In 2008, the course was offered to a women’s prison, and in 2009, the facilitators began teaching the *7 Habits* to correctional officers and then to the Parole Board.



Results

The results of the program can be measured in several ways. First, it was noticed by the wardens that those inmates constituting the “core group” in each class were committing fewer Code of Penal Discipline violations, and that they were helping others reduce their violations. Second, it was observed that parolees were not returning to prison in the same numbers as before the *7 Habits*. This was seen as a major resource saver for the criminal justice system.

“I have been involved with corrections for 42 years,” says Gasko, “and of all the things I have done in this business, this is the best. I know this works. Inmates are lining up to get in the course, and we always have a waiting list of some 120 people for every course. You watch them develop as they go through the eight weeks, and you say, ‘Wow!’ This kind of success we have never seen before in prison.”

Wardens and others notice that *7 Habits* inmates display an entirely different persona. “There is a substantial difference,” says Paul Engstrom, once a case manager and now a project manager. “When I talk to them, I can see it in their eyes. The course makes a positive difference.” “Their uniforms are neater and cleaner,” says Gasko, “and they say great things about themselves and others at the course graduation ceremony. It knocks your socks off! The difference between the 30 graduating inmates and the 30 waiting to start the course is telling.”

In addition to observer testimonials, the Department of Corrections has started to empirically document the success of the program. As of 2009, only two sets of hard data were available, but more careful tracking of the impact of the training is being planned. One of the sets of available data is the results of a before and after survey of women at the La Vista Correctional Facility.

Setting for the Women’s Survey

In 2008, Karen de Lorenzo, a *7 Habits* facilitator volunteering at the La Vista Correctional Facility in Pueblo, Colorado, taught a *7 Habits on the Inside* course to twelve women at the facility. Attending the graduation ceremony for these women

were 16 more women who had expressed interest in taking the course the next time it was offered. Karen drafted a survey and administered it to the new group of 16 women before they took the *7 Habits* training and then again, eleven weeks later, upon completing the training. One woman did not finish the course, leaving 15 women to answer the post-survey. The course was given between January and April, 2009. It was longer by two weeks than the first course because Karen realized she needed more time to teach the concepts of proactivity versus reactivity and synergizing versus going it on your own.

Women’s Results

The follow-up survey showed an overall moderate increase in the bottom line average score and large increases on several of the individual question averages. As it happened, about the same time as the *7 Habits* training was being given, hardened convicts from another facility had been moved to La Vista, and their presence increased the fear factor among the other inmates. Nevertheless, the overall direction of influence was positive, with average scores on trust of officers and average scores of inmates seeing themselves as valuable members of society increasing the most.

Figure 1 contains a summary of four answers to the survey that produced statistically significant results. The last one is not strong, but the first three are strong enough to say that the differences in before and after answers did not likely happen by chance; the *7 Habits* training seems to be the reason that the women had better opinions of the officers, of themselves, and of the facility than they had previously had.

Fig. 1
Statistically Significant Results of
Before and After Survey

- After *7 Habits*, women inmates trusted officers and staff more than before to have their best welfare in mind. *t value = 3.06, Sig. = .005*
- After *7 Habits*, women inmates felt treated as valuable members of society more than before. *t value = 3.00, Sig. = .007*
- After *7 Habits*, women inmates felt they were being taught the skills they needed to succeed outside of prison more than before. *t value = 1.99, Sig. = .056*
- After *7 Habits*, women inmates felt that the atmosphere of the prison was one of rehabilitation and restoration more than they did before. *t value = 1.74, Sig. = .093*

Some women resisted the ideas in the course because they did not want to hear that they have power over their own futures. They wanted to blame others for their problems. Others got frustrated because they wanted to be perfect after the course but found they could be better but not perfect. Still others grieved upon realizing what they could have been had they known the principles much earlier in their lives.

There are approximately 500 women at La Vista; 28 have taken the course and some 150 have applied to take it; and while some non-takers torment those who have taken it, the course remains in big demand.

The results of the entire survey are found in Figure 2, with the most improved scores bolded in blue.

Fig. 2

La Vista Correctional Facility

16 Adult Women

Time between Surveys: 11 Weeks

January-April 2009

Question #	Survey Answers Before and After 7 Habits Training	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
1	I am treated as if I were a valuable member of society	3.25	4.67	1.42*
2	I have opportunities to change my life for the better	5.44	5.8	0.36
3	If I get out of prison, I think I can be successful and not return to prison again.	5.5	5.87	0.37
4	I trust the officers and staff to have my best welfare in mind.	3.44	4.93	1.49*
5	I am respected by my roommates (cellmates).	5.31	5.4	0.09
6	I need to look out for myself and my safety at all times.	4.94	4.73	0.21**
7	I am being taught the skills I need to succeed outside of prison.	4.69	5.4	0.71*
8	I am being taught the skills I need to have purpose in my life whether or not I get out of prison.	4.94	5.47	0.53
9	I would describe the culture (atmosphere) of this facility as one of:			
	Hope	3.75	4.2	0.45
	Fear	2.44	2.93	0.49**
	Rehabilitation and restoration	3.75	4.53	0.78*
	Housing of criminals only	3	2.4	0.06
	Opportunity	4.19	4.73	0.54
	Education and training	4.63	4.87	0.24
	Encouragement	4	4.73	0.73*
	Discouragement	2.81	2.47	0.33
10	When I consider other facilities I could be placed in, I am glad I am at this one.	5.38	5.64	0.26
	Average	4.2	4.63	0.53*

*Blue indicates 5 most-improved scores.

**Red indicates likely result of hardened convicts being moved to La Vista about the same time as the 7 Habits training.

Setting for COPD Data

The second set of hard data about the impact of the *7 Habits* comes from a review of Code of Penal Discipline (COPD) convictions.

The Colorado Department of Corrections maintains records of violations of the prison rules, i.e., the Code of Penal Discipline (COPD) by all inmates. If an inmate assaults someone or incites others to riot or attempts arson and so on, the violations and convictions are recorded.

Since 1996, approximately 28 female and 1500 male inmates have taken the *7 Habits on the Inside* through the efforts of such volunteer facilitators as Karen de Lorenzo, Jerry Gasko and Dan Matsche with support from FranklinCovey consultant Jeff Carney and others.



If every inmate in Colorado had been a *7 Habits* graduate in 2008, there would have been no engaging in riot, no inciting to riot, no arson, no dealing in dangerous drugs, no possession of escape paraphernalia, no tampering with locks, no forgery, no possession of drug paraphernalia, no interference with search, no sexual harassment, no operating a motor vehicle, and no failure to remain or return.

In 2009, Paul Engstrom, a project manager for the Department of Corrections, collected data on the COPD convictions from about January 1, 2008 to April 2009 for 467 male and female inmates system-wide known to have taken the *7 Habits* training (a sample of about 30 percent of the *7 Habits* trainees). He then randomly selected another 467 inmates who had not taken the Covey training. Together, these two sets of inmates had been convicted of 756 violations of the prison code.

We broke out selected behaviors to see what percentage of the offences was committed by the non-*7 Habits* or Random Group versus the *7 Habits* Group. Our findings are reported in Figure 3 below:

Fig. 3

**Percentage of COPD Convictions
by Random Group v. 7 Habits Group
Selected Offences***

<u>COPD Conviction</u>	<u>% Committed by Random Group</u>	<u>% Committed by 7 Habits Group</u>
Assault	79%	21%
Possession of Dangerous Contraband	67%	33%
Possession or Use of Dangerous Drugs	94%	6%
Fighting	58%	42%
Threats	84%	16%
Advocating Facility Disruption	92%	8%
Unauthorized Possession	71%	29%
Sexual Harassment	100%	0%
Disobeying a Lawful Order	76%	24%
Verbal Abuse	88%	12%
Unauthorized Absence	77%	23%
All COPD Convictions	79%	21%

***See Appendix for complete list of convictions by group**

It is clear that the 7 Habits Group was responsible for far fewer of the total COPD violations (21 percent) than the Random Group (79 percent). In fact, if we were to

speculate as to what would have happened system-wide if all inmates had behaved just as the 7 Habits Group did in this study during the 16 month study period, there

would have been twelve COPD categories in which no violations would have occurred at all: no engaging in riot, no inciting to riot, no arson, no dealing in dangerous drugs, no possession of escape paraphernalia, no tempering with locks, no forgery, no possession of drug paraphernalia, no interference with search, no sexual harassment, no operating a motor vehicle, and no failure to remain or return.

In other words, 30 percent of the 40 possible violations would not have occurred anywhere in the Colorado prison system, and another 23 percent of possible violations would have occurred only once in 16 months. In short, 53 percent of the possible violations would have happened only once or not at all.



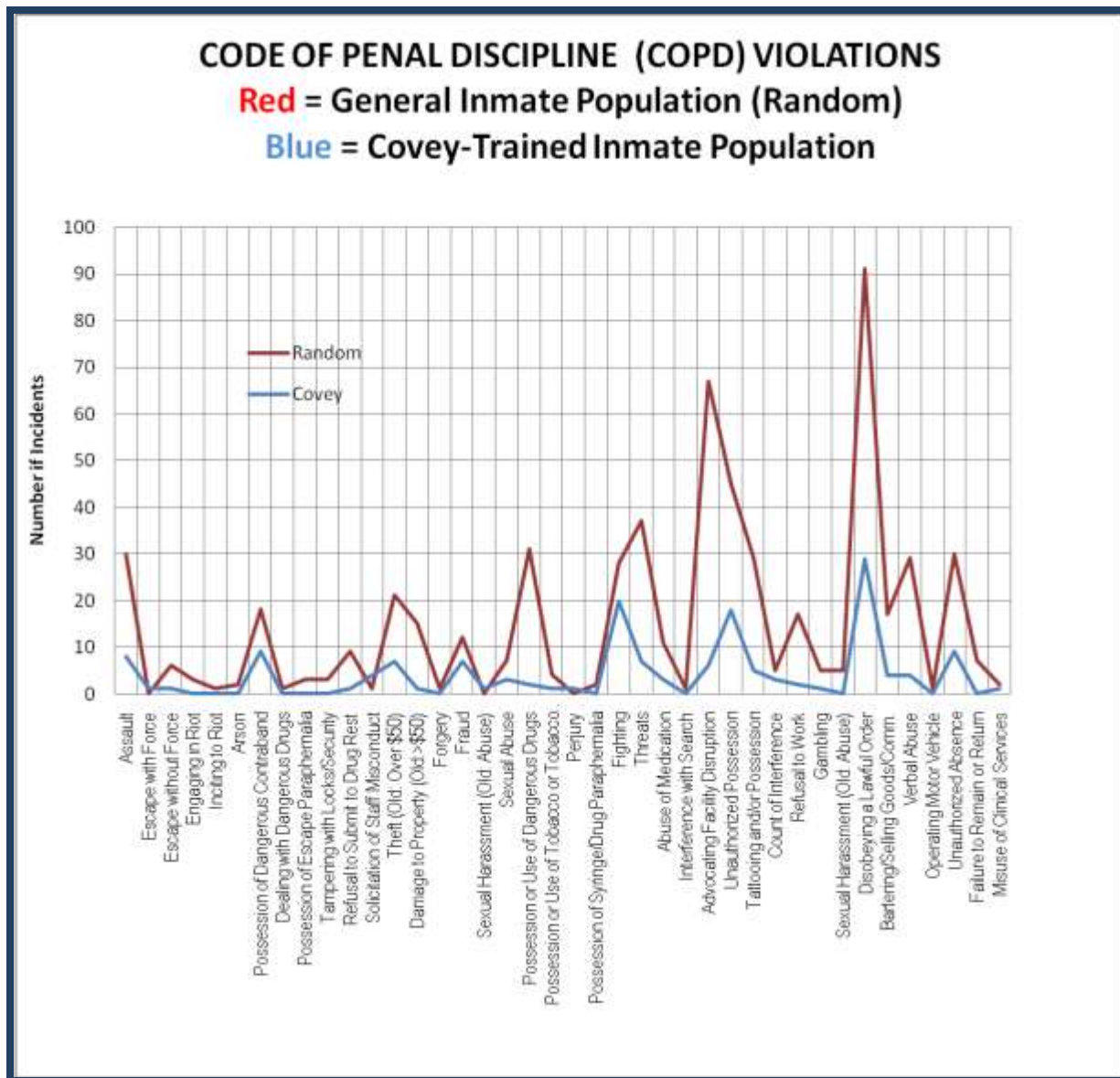
Another way of saying this is that if everyone had been a *7 Habits* group member for the 16 months covered by the data, the Colorado Department of

Corrections would have had to handle only 8 assault convictions instead of 38; only 2 drug possession convictions instead of 33; only 6 convictions for advocating facility disruption instead of 73; and only 29 instances of disobeying a lawful order instead of 120. Overall, the system would have had to handle only 159 total convictions instead of 756—or 597 fewer cases.

This, of course, is just speculation, and it must be noted that these inmates were not matched on such characteristics as reason for incarceration, gender, or other factors. Further, the *7 Habits* Group was made up of inmates who voluntarily choose to attend the FranklinCovey training and may have been, thus, somewhat more inclined to good behavior than those in the Random Group. Thus, we must regard these data as only indicative of a likely Covey influence on behavior but not proof of it.

In Figure 4 below, the red line represents all convictions for the non-*7 Habits*-trained offenders, while the blue line represents all convictions for the *7 Habits*-trained group. The improvement in prison behavior is readily apparent. If this pattern holds up when a true matched-pairs study is conducted, then it will be clear that a prison that teaches the *7 Habits* to inmates will reap substantial benefits in terms of prison safety and overall culture for wardens, guards, and inmates.

Fig. 4



Conclusion

It is important to note that a carefully controlled study of the impact of the 7 *Habits* on inmates' ultimate behavior has

not yet been conducted. Plans are underway to do such a study, matching 7 *Habits* and non-7 *Habits* inmates on a number of demographic characteristics and then tracking parolees across the entire U.S.

prison system to determine the actual recidivism rate. Since this has not been tentative. Yet, the signs are very encouraging that teaching the *7 Habits* to inmates can have a salutary effect on them and on the prison environment.

Currently, the national recidivism rate is about 53 percent. If this rate, through the *7 Habits*, could be improved by even a few points, it would represent substantial savings, because each reduction in recidivism by one point represents several

completed yet, the data presented here should be seen as preliminary and million dollars in tax savings for state corrections departments.

Sources

Telephone interview with Karen de Lorenzo, May 17, 2009.

Interview with Jerry Gasko, May 24, 2009, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Telephone conversation with Paul Engstrom, May 26, 2009.

APPENDIX: COPD CONVICTIONS—ABSOLUTE NUMBERS

COPD Conviction	Random	Covey
ASSAULT	30	8
ESCAPE WITH FORCE	0	1
ESCAPE WITHOUT FORCE	6	1
ENGAGING IN RIOT	3	0
INCITING TO RIOT	1	0
ARSON	2	0
POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS CONTRABAND	18	9
DEALING DANGEROUS DRUGS	1	0
POSSESSION OF ESCAPE PARAPHERNALIA	3	0
TAMPERING WITH LOCKS/SECURITY	3	0
REFUSAL TO SUBMIT TO DRUG TEST	9	1
SOLICITATION OF STAFF MISCONDUCT	1	4
THEFT (OLD:OVER \$50.00)	21	7
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY (OLD:>=\$50)	15	1
FORGERY	1	0
FRAUD	12	7
SEXUAL HARRASSMENT (OLD:ABUSE)	0	1
SEXUAL ABUSE	7	3
POSSESSION OR USE OF DANGEROUS DRUGS	31	2
POSSESSION OR USE OF TOBACCO OR TOBACCO PRODUCTS	4	1
PERJURY	0	1
POSSESSION SYRINGE/DRUG PARAPHERNALIA	2	0
FIGHTING	28	20
THREATS	37	7
ABUSE OF MEDICATION	11	3
INTERFERENCE WITH SEARCH	1	0
ADVOCATING FACILITY DISRUPTION	67	6
UNAUTHORIZED POSSESSION	45	18
TATTOOING AND/OR POSSESSION	29	5
COUNT INTERFERENCE	5	3
REFUSAL TO WORK	17	2
GAMBLING	5	1
SEXUAL HARASSMENT	5	0
DISOBEYING A LAWFUL ORDER	91	29
BARTERING/SELLING GOODS/COMM.	17	4
VERBAL ABUSE	29	4
OPERATING MOTOR VEHICLE	1	0
UNAUTHORIZED ABSENCE	30	9
FAILURE TO REMAIN OR RETURN	7	0
MISUSE OF CLINICAL SERVICES	2	1
	597	159