



REINVESTMENT THROUGH COLLABORATIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

BY TAMMY GAJEWSKI

Many years ago, my sister convinced me to work in a prison. I was only going to stay a few years, until things settled down in my life. The years have flown by and changes have come and gone. The MDOC has tried it all at one point or another in its history. The pendulum swings back and forth, and with it, the ideology of the Department. Collaborative Case Management (CCM) is something new. It is used to allocate resources while meeting the needs of public safety, and eventually reducing our budgetary impact on the State of Michigan. The Justice Center's recent report describing the range of policy options available to create cost savings within Michigan's criminal justice system lists *case management* as a way to expand services for offenders in all areas.

The most exciting part about CCM during the brief time I have applied it in Level V segregation is that it really works. It does not require more time than we currently use to address offender behavior and over the long run, our jobs will become easier. CCM creates opportunities for offenders to succeed and learn the decision-making tools that interrupt the behaviors that previously have led them to trouble. CCM fine tunes the techniques, soft skills, and networking already used to successfully correct socially unacceptable behaviors and promote inclusion across the jurisdictions of CFA and FOA.

Here is an example: For this story, I have chosen "Deshawn." He came to prison at age 16 with a 2 to 25 year sentence. He was an angry young adult eventually ending up in segregation for accumulating over 200 misconducts since his sentencing. Many of his misconducts were sexual misconducts and assaults on staff.

When I approached my staff about candidates for CCM practice, they smirked when handing over Deshawn's name and lock. As a custody sergeant, I was very aware of this offender's past behaviors and ten years in segregation. I have numerous critical incident reports involving him. Yet I knew if I could make an opportunity for change with my staff and Deshawn, everyone would see firsthand how CCM works instead of waiting ten years for the statistical results. While making segregation rounds one day last year, I stopped at Deshawn's cell. He met me with the usual aggressive and anti-social behaviors. I told him that I was placing him in a new program. If he wanted to be in this new program he had to be two-months ticket-free. I told him the first reward for the ticket-free behavior was moving him upstairs to the honor wing, where it is quieter. Deshawn asked me twice a week for the next two months if I was lying. I told him I was not. At the sixty-day mark he did not say anything to me as I made rounds. I knew he had completed the period ticket-free so I had staff move him upstairs with the understanding that if he received one sexual misconduct ticket, he

would be placed downstairs again.

The next day while making rounds, he smiled at me. He had never been upstairs. He still doubted this new avenue of opportunity would last but he was inquiring about the next step. I asked him where he would like to be in one year. He looked up at the ceiling and fidgeting with his hands, he said softly, "I would like to work in the kitchen and learn how to cook."

I asked him how was he going to get there and what steps should happen first. He did not know the answer so we worked through the goal setting with motivational interviewing tools.





The first goal was four months of ticket-free time. This time frame was reached as a mutual decision of fairness. During that time I encouraged Deshawn to continue improving his hygiene, keep reading books, clean his cell and set some long-term goals for his life. The school principal sent me some old discarded GED books that Deshawn valued as if they were gold. The extra five minutes a day to check his homework and give him some positive affirmations saved me two hours in writing and reviewing critical incident reports that would have been generated because of Deshawn's previous need for negative attention.

Deshawn came out for his COMPAS (an offender risk and programming assessment tool) review and TAP (Transition Accountability Plan) interviews around the six-month ticket-free mark. He was still wary of the interview process and questioning how it was going to affect him. I asked him if he would like to work as an in-house unit porter. He looked at me in amazement. He said he would be the best porter ever but he was still wary of how staff would see him or treat him. I had attempted to get him to General Population to attend school but staff felt they could not trust him yet based on his history and total time of ticket-free behavior. The unit team submitted the paperwork and the six months of ticket-free time earned him the porter job. Deshawn came out of his cell to clean the unit. He had never moved around a prison unrestrained. He followed staff directions respectfully and did a good job cleaning the unit, considering he never had a job before in his short life. He was placed on the General Population list after two months of in-house porter duties. The collaborative approach to creating intrinsic motivation with one offender created a more positive environment in the unit and many other offenders asked if they could move toward a new program of success.

This recounting is only one of many CCM success stories that I have been personally involved with. Deshawn worked through the stages of change, showing significant improve-

ment for nearly a year. What became apparent with his case is the need for continuing support and positive rewards for meeting goals and maintaining self-control. Without the support of the CCM team, Deshawn retreated to his old ways. He lost confidence in his ability to remain successful, and began doing what he was familiar with to get attention. But what Deshawn accomplished while he had the support of the CCM is something we can build on in the future. He has already proven that he can remain ticket-free with a little effort on his part, as long as we continue to provide the support tools he needs to be successful. We can't give up on the prisoner's desire to be valued and be recognized for their successes. When they slip, it's our job to help them try again to find success while working toward successful re-entry into society.

Tammy Gajewski is an Assistant Resident Unit Supervisor at Baraga Maximum Correctional Facility in Baraga, MI. Her opinions do not necessarily represent the opinion or view of the Michigan Department of Corrections.

If you have a success story that involves the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative or Collaborative Case Management, please share it with F.Y.I. We want to publicize how these two innovative and evidence-based offender success programs are working to create savings within the MDOC while creating better citizens and safer neighborhoods in our communities.

