

Inmate Council Program (ICP)

ICP Programming Sites

(4 rounds of state grant funding + private foundation resources)

Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP)
North Kern State Prison (NKSP)
Wasco State Prison (WSP)
Pleasant Valley State Prison (PVSP)
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF-CSP)
Avenal State Prison (ASP)
California City Correctional Facility (CAC)
Calipatria State Prison (CAL)
California Institution for Men (CIM)
RJ Donovan (RJD)
California State Prison, Los Angeles County (CSP-LAC)
Ironwood State Prison (ISP)
Folsom State Prison (FSP)
California Institution for Women (CIW)
Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP)
California Correctional Institution (CCI)
California City Correctional Facility (CAC)
California Health Care Facility (CHCF)
Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP)
California Men's Colony (CMC)
California State Prison, Corcoran (COR)
Deuel Vocational Institute (DVI)
High Desert State Prison (HDSP)
Valley State Prison (VSP)

Council

“Council” is a mindfulness-based practice that involves bringing individuals together in a circle, under the guidance of a trained facilitator, for candid, heartfelt and intentional conversation. Within the circle, participants learn to listen without judgment and to talk, one-at-a-time, with the intent to speak from one’s personal experience rather than opinion. This simple shift fosters a safe and intentional container for individuals to give voice to their stories and to discover commonality in the experiences and values they share, supporting community, cooperation and wellbeing.

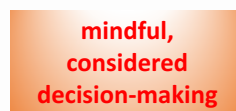
Council provides a compassionate, non-judgmental space for the emergence of empathy, understanding, healing and community. The practice of deep listening without judgment fosters an atmosphere of respect for ourselves and for others and promotes empathy, dissolving barriers to cooperation, understanding and community.

The Inmate Council Program in prisons teaches inmates to participate in and facilitate Council circles for others and has resulted in tangible and meaningful shifts in behavior, including deeper collaboration between ethnic groups, inmates taking steps to be accountable and seeking forgiveness and improved regulation of impulsive and reactive communication styles, leading to reduced incidents of violence, according to prison officials. Recent program evaluation conducted by researchers from the RAND Corporation and University of California have demonstrated that participation in Council programs decreases aggression and hostility and increases communication skills, pro-sociality and engagement.

Mindfulness

=

paying attention
to the present moment
without judgment



↑
THE GAP

5 Dynamic Criminogenic Factors

per Edward Latessa, PhD., *“What Works and What Doesn’t in Reducing Recidivism: Applying the Principles of Effective Intervention”*

- Lack of empathy
- Impulsive behavior
- Anti social attitudes
- Anti social friends
- Substance abuse (indirect)

ICP Program Objectives:

- Inmate Rehabilitative Outcomes
 - Improve Insight and Empathy
 - Improve Communication Skills
 - Decrease Impulsivity and Dysregulation
 - Decrease Antisocial Attitudes and Behavior
- Prison Culture Change
 - Safety & Security
 - Reduce Violence and Improve Cooperation with Custody Staff
 - Improve Respectful, Skillful Communication
 - Train Inmate Facilitators to Lead Council Groups and Expand Program



Watch this video @:

<https://www.centerforcouncil.org/meet-joseph.html>

ICP Research Team:

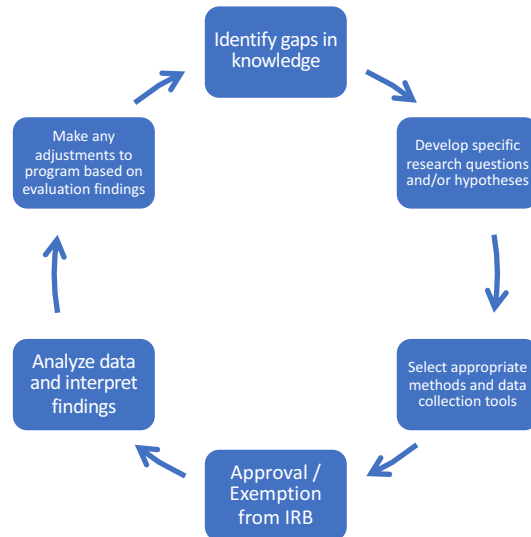
Sarah B. Hunter, Ph.D., RAND Corporation

Stacy Calhoun, Ph.D., UCLA – project lead

Claire Samuelson, UCLA

Shirley Yang, UC Santa Barbara

Evaluation Process



Phases 1 and 2

- Initial research questions
 - Do ICP participants show increases in **mindfulness, empathy, resilience, and social connectedness** after completing the program?
 - Do ICP participants show reductions in **anger/aggression** and **hostility** after completing the program?
- Research methods
 - Single group, pre- and post-intervention assessment
 - Validated, standardized scales to measure main outcomes
 - Focus group interviews to complement quantitative data

Validated Measurement Scales Used

Mindfulness	Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire and Mindfulness Process Questionnaire
Empathy	Interpersonal Reactivity Index
Social Connectedness	Social Connection Scale-Revised
Communication	Active-Empathic Listening Scale
Resilience	Brief Resilience Scale
Mental Health/Emotional Functioning	Mental Health Inventory - 5
Anger/Aggression	Short-Form Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ-SF)
PTSD	SPAN Questionnaire

Research Findings from Phases 1 and 2

Survey data results (N=98)

- Reductions in:
 - overall anger/aggression
 - hostility
 - physical aggression
 - verbal aggression
- Increases in:
 - empathy / perspective-taking
 - resilience

Focus group findings (N=48)

- Participants believed that ICP helped them to improve their communication skills, coping skills, and ability to connect with others.

Looking Ahead

Phase 3 Additions:

- **New Outcome Measurement**
 - new scales to measure mental health, dysregulation and impulsivity, emotional functioning and PTSD, *based on findings from focus group discussion*
- **Research Design Development**
 - Conducting a Randomized Controlled Trial at three-year sites that includes a waitlist comparison group
 - Longer follow-up period for the two-year sites

Planning for Future Phases:

- Inclusion of post-release assessments
- Develop metrics for assessing change in antisocial attitudes, behavior and associations
- Exploring development of biometric measures (heart-rate variability, cortisol levels, etc.)



Watch this video @:

<https://www.centerforcouncil.org/icp-video.html>



"Before Council, I would never speak in front of people, never in front of a group... And, you know, I had to prepare for my parole hearing and **Council played probably the biggest role in helping me get my parole.** Being able to open up and sit there in front of people and talk about my struggles in life, in terms of the abuse I went through, growing up with my parents, being involved in gangs. Council brought that out in me in a way that I would not have ever done had I not participated. **It helped me tremendously.**"



Edward R (released from Ironwood in 2017)

Rehabilitative Program Success: *Recidivism Figures are Not Accurate Measures of Efficacy*

mitigating factors to consider:

- Housing
- Family Support
- Employment Opportunities
- Financial Hardship
- Access to Behavioral Health Treatment
- Exposure to Multiple Rehabilitative Program Strands

...all of which impact recidivism outcomes

Program Challenges

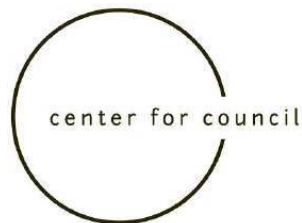
- difficultly meeting target enrollment goals, despite interested inmates
 - coordination of process regarding communication, application, selection, permission
- loss of participants due to prison transfers
- participant restrictions due to SOMS, RACs, Milestones
 - mixed-messages around credit for program participation/completion
- inconsistent Self-Help Sponsor coordination & supervision
- unclear facility/departmental resources for/commitment to continued group meetings
- strategic implementation - site operational policy impact on inmate participation
 - scheduling of ILTAG sessions around inmate movement
 - volunteer clearance policy inconsistencies
 - opportunities for inmate-facilitation outside of ILTAG sessions
 - programming consistency and communication around schedule changes
- internal organizational challenges for non-profits, sustaining and supporting programming with short-term funding commitment

one spoke of the wheel...



Systemic Context

- Center for Council is increasing programming for:
 - **Schools** / Restorative Justice Programs
 - **Courts** / Alternatives to Sentencing
 - **Community Based Organizations** / Reentry Support
 - **Faith Based Groups** / Reconciliation & Forgiveness Workshops
 - **Law Enforcement Officers**
 - Mindfulness-Based Wellness & Resiliency Skills Program for Officers
 - Local Police (LAPD, Watts Division, 2018)
 - Bureau of Prisons (Metropolitan Detention Center, LA, 2018)
 - CDCR Correctional Officers (*proposed*)



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