

BI Cognitive Behavioral Programs for Counties

Q&A with Matt Moore,
Western Regional Reentry & Supervision Services Manager



BI Cognitive Behavioral Programs can alleviate jail overcrowding, impact recidivism and improve a county's bottom line. What makes these programs effective and why do they get results? How do they tackle criminal thinking? Below, Matt Moore answers these questions and more. Mr. Moore has over 20 years of experience in community corrections with a variety of offender populations including at-risk youth, substance abusers, repeat offenders and sex offenders. Today, he oversees all BI offices on the West Coast.

Q: *How does a BI Cognitive Behavioral Program help local correctional agencies contain overall costs?*

A: We can help contain costs on several levels. First, our programs can take some pressure off the jail, thereby reducing some of the need for new jail beds and related staffing costs. Second, our programs help change negative criminal thinking. If we can turn some of these individuals around, they won't return to jail, which is costly. Third, when an individual is diverted to our program for community-based supervision, this is much less than the cost of incarceration. Finally, when individuals are supervised in the community, they often work, so they are paying taxes and supporting their family.

Q: *What types of offenders are typically referred to a BI Cognitive Behavioral Program and how long do they go for?*

A: BI has a refined structure to its programs that uses evidence-based principles, but we are also flexible with counties to support their needs. As a result, we can manage several populations, such as probationers, pretrial defendants, even sentenced inmates. We have programs for juveniles too. The typical offender is one that is resistant to treatment and training; our program helps address this negative cycle of thinking so they can turn their lives around. Typically, clients go to a Cognitive Behavioral Treatment Program for 90 to 180 days, and then go to Aftercare.

Q: *What makes a BI Cognitive Behavioral Program at the county level different from a program for parolees?*

A: The intensity and dosage of programming is less at a county program than a parolee program. The average risk level of participants at a county program is less than that of a parolee program. And the length of participation in the county program is several months versus more than half a year for the parolee program.

Q: *What steps are taken to identify what supervision, treatment and training individuals receive at a BI program?*

A: When we receive a referral, the new client is assessed with several tools, including the Level of Service Inventory-Revised® risk and needs assessment tool. Results of the LSI-R help the case manager identify the criminogenic risks and needs of the offender. We also do supporting assessments on substance abuse, parenting, domestic violence, education, and employment issues. Staff also gathers information from a number of sources such as drug screens, client observations, family, probation officers – all this information helps BI to develop and implement a Behavior Change Plan for each client.

Q: *How does a BI program support and benefit local correctional agencies and the community at large?*

A: Our goal is to enhance public safety by helping clients make decisions that help them get out of the correctional system. For example, we use a behavioral change program called Moral Reconciliation Therapy® – or MRT – to overcome treatment-resistant clients and to enhance all programming offered to clients. MRT training is designed to alter how offenders think, how they make judgments and decisions about the right and wrong thing to do in situations, and promote actions and behaviors focused on changing negative relationships. It teaches participants thinking and judgment skills in a systematic group process. It is interesting to watch how these MRT groups often self-correct others in the group as they begin to see they are responsible for their behavior.

Q: *How does BI ensure that individuals are closely supervised within the community while they attend BI cognitive programs?*

A: A big element of a Cognitive Behavioral Program is intensive supervision. Strict monitoring, especially when an offender enters the program, enhances compliance to conditions of release and ultimately, public safety. BI has the capability to combine sophisticated electronic compliance technologies, drug testing techniques, computerized data collection, immediate reporting, and intensive case management and supervision. Clients progress through levels of supervision, beginning with daily reporting when they enter the program. Over time, requirements are reduced as clients demonstrate compliance and meet certain behavioral goals. In the mean time, non-compliance is managed a contingency management system of rewards for positive behavior and sanctions for negative behavior.

Q: *Can BI adjust its model based on local agency needs?*

A: Absolutely. For example, we modified our model to meet the needs of Merced County for a juvenile day reporting center. Adjustments here included modifying class length to match the attention span of youth, and also using a change behavior training program more oriented to youth. In Napa County, we actually deliver services in the jail to clients before they are released to community supervision. In Franklin County, chronic DUI offenders were a big problem for the county, so programming emphasized substance abuse training.

Q: *How does BI link program participants with local resources, including possible employers?*

A: We know that success for many clients is based on employment. But there are many other critical factors that help individuals stabilize in the community so they stay crime-free. We have a proprietary program called Community Connections, where twice a month long-term resources in the community come to the BI center to present on employment, housing, health care, transportation, and many other important matters to clients.
