

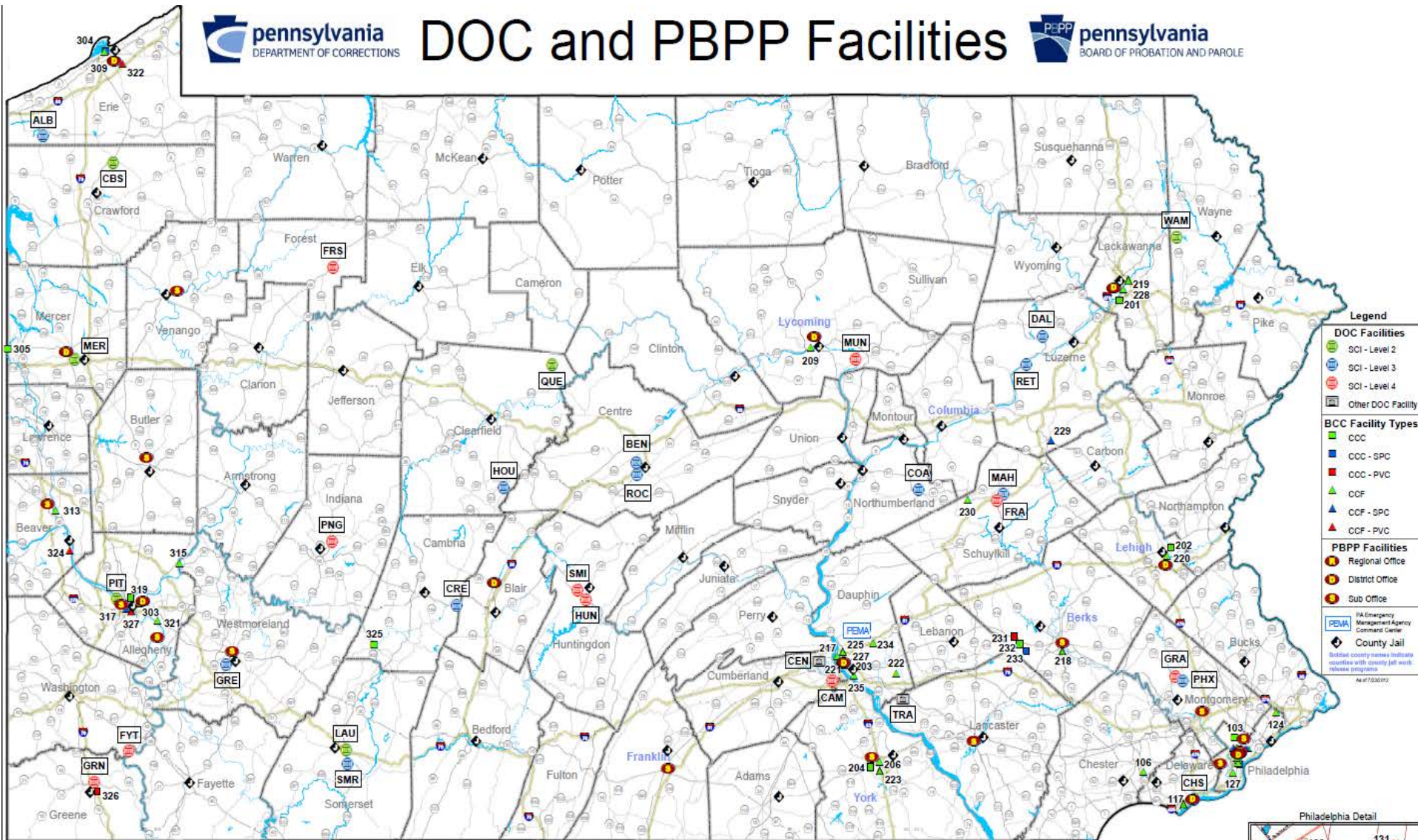
PRACADEMIC RESEARCH: ENGAGING CORRECTIONS PRACTITIONERS IN RESEARCH THROUGH INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

7th Annual ICRN/NCRP Data Providers Meeting
September 19, 2019

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Director of Planning, Research, & Statistics

Overview of PA DOC

- Eighth largest correctional system in the U.S.
- \$2.5 billion budget (approx. 8% of state general funds)
- Inmate population (June 30, 2019): 46,482
- 41,459 parolees supervised across 10 parole districts
- 24 prisons, 1 correctional boot camp, 48 community corrections centers/facilities (36 contract; 12 state run)
- 18,000+ employees



Overview of PA DOC

THREE KEY PA DOC PERFORMANCE GOALS:

1. Population Reduction

- ▶ Goal: Reduce the prison population by 2,650 inmates in the next 4 years

2. Recidivism Reduction

- ▶ Goal: Reduce recidivism rate by 5 percentage points in the next 4 years

3. In-Prison Violence Reduction

- ▶ Goal: Reduce in-prison violent incidents by 10% in the next 4 years

Evidence?

CONCERNS WITH THE “EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES” (EBP) MOVEMENT

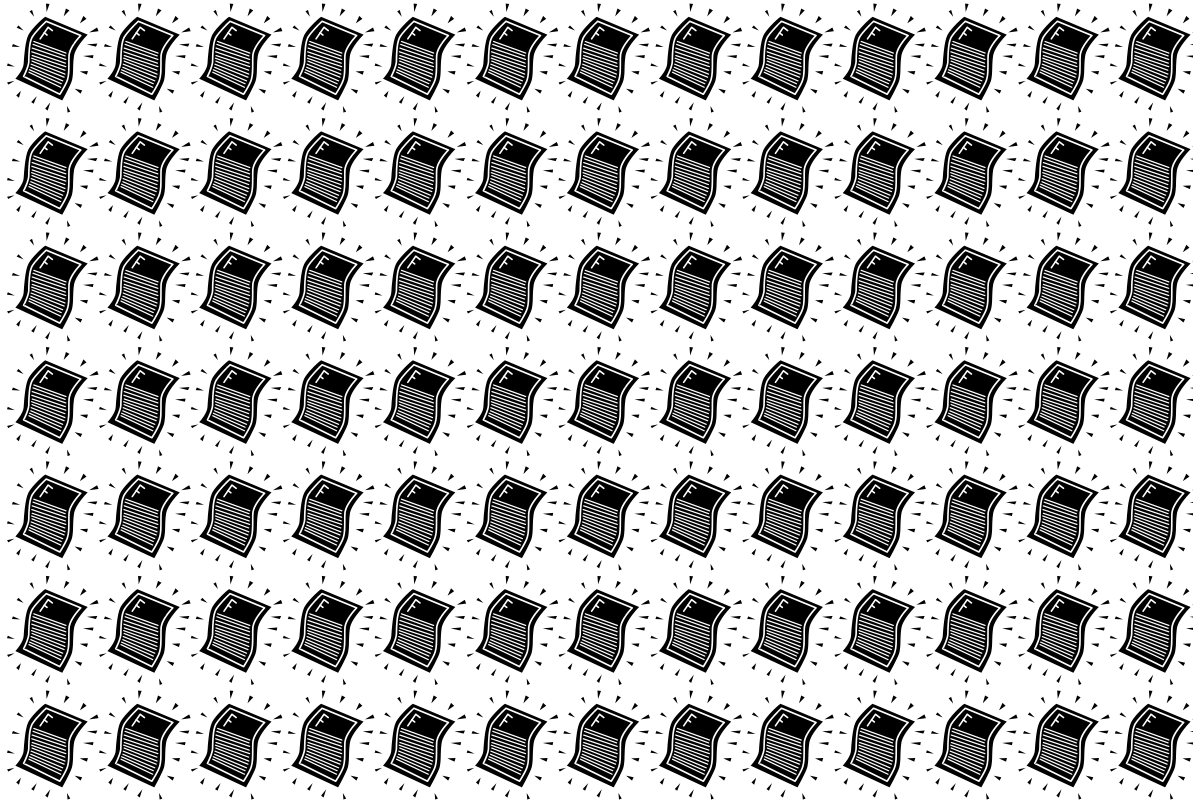


Everyone claims their program is “evidence-based.” If you want to sell a program or policy nowadays, claim that it is “evidence-based.”

What is the evidence behind “evidence-based practices”? EBPs are only as good as the quality of the evidence behind them

Evidence?

“Power in Number of Studies” Fallacy

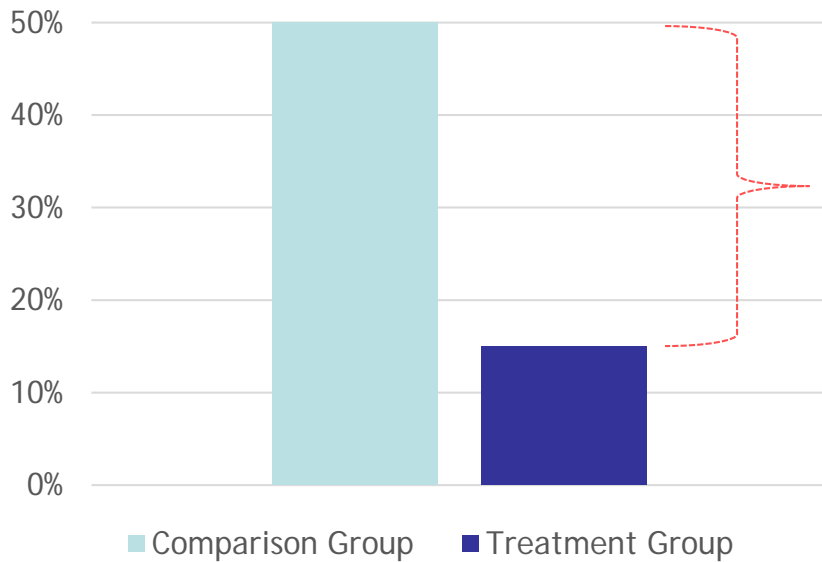


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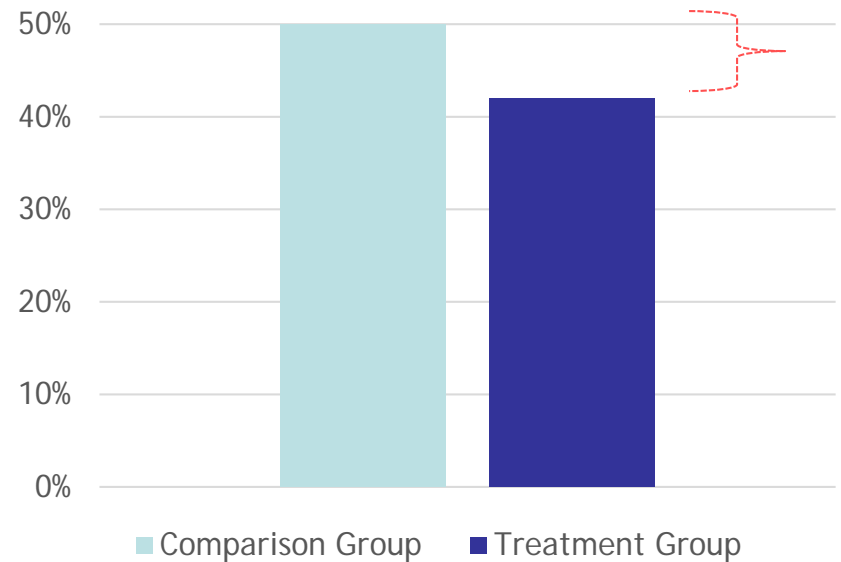


Evidence?

“Exaggerated Effects” Fallacy



↑
**LOWER QUALITY
STUDIES**



↑
REALITY

Evidence?

Some Concerns w/ EBPs and EBP Movement:

- While a lot of studies exist, many (most) of them are of lower quality. The quality of the evidence is at least as important as the quantity.
- Evidence built on lower quality studies tends to exaggerate effect sizes
- Adopting programs with “EBP” label may facilitate policymakers avoiding evaluating local implementation, which is always a good idea. Results of EBPs may not be effective in specific places/applications, and non-EBPs conversely may actually work in certain places/applications (PA DOC examples: Therapeutic Communities (TC) and Boot Camp evaluations)
- “EBP” label tends to be code for a small set of practices (e.g., assessment, CBT treatment). There’s still a lot we don’t know. Just look at high recidivism rates!
- Exclusive focus on EBPs crowds out innovation
“Evidence Generating Practices” (EGPs)

Academic Research Model?

Concerns w/ the Traditional Program Evaluation Model:

- Evaluations are too slow (a typical program evaluation could take two to three years or longer).
 - ✓ Funding timeline - grant process
 - ✓ Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 - ✓ Inter-agency agreements
 - ✓ Academic limitations
- Evaluations are expensive - this means we can do less of it.
- Evaluations are often monopolized by academics, with little feedback/input from practitioners (especially line staff).

Learning Organizations

Three Definitions:

- *Learning organizations [are] organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Senge, 1990)*
- *The Learning Company is a vision of what might be possible. It is not brought about simply by training individuals; it can happen as a result of learning at the whole organization level. A Learning Company is an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself. (Pedler et. al., 1991)*
- *Learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement, a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles. (Watkins and Marsick, 1992)*

Learning Organizations

Innovation, and fostering a “learning organization,” is a concept that has been around for a long time in the private sector (e.g., R&D departments, Amazon, etc.)....

Innovation, and fostering a “learning organization,” is a relatively new development in government



“Pracademic”



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Pracademic

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **pracademic** (or academic-practitioner) is someone who is both an [academic](#) and an active practitioner in their subject area.

“Pracademic”

- Little consensus on the origin or definition of the term
- Most typically used to refer to an academic who is also a practitioner, or who moves into a practitioner role
- More inclusive definition: “anyone who raises their hand and thinks strategically about answering a question using science.” - Angela Hawken (BetaGov)
- Key takeaway - anyone can be a part of the scientific process of generating and testing an idea, irrespective of background, training, or job title.

I.D.E.A.

**Let's create a staff
“suggestion box” at the PA
DOC that is taken seriously,
has some structure and
follow-up behind it,
empowers staff, and
translates into innovation
and learning.**



I.D.E.A.

We'll try ANY AND ALL ideas, as long as they are:

1. Legal
2. Ethical
3. Not Cost Prohibitive



I.D.E.A.

Suite of Innovation Initiatives in PA DOC

1. BetaGov - improve outcomes
2. Lean - improve processes
3. GoTIME - save money

I.D.E.A.

IDEA! - Combines BetaGov, Lean, and GoTIME

INNOVATE

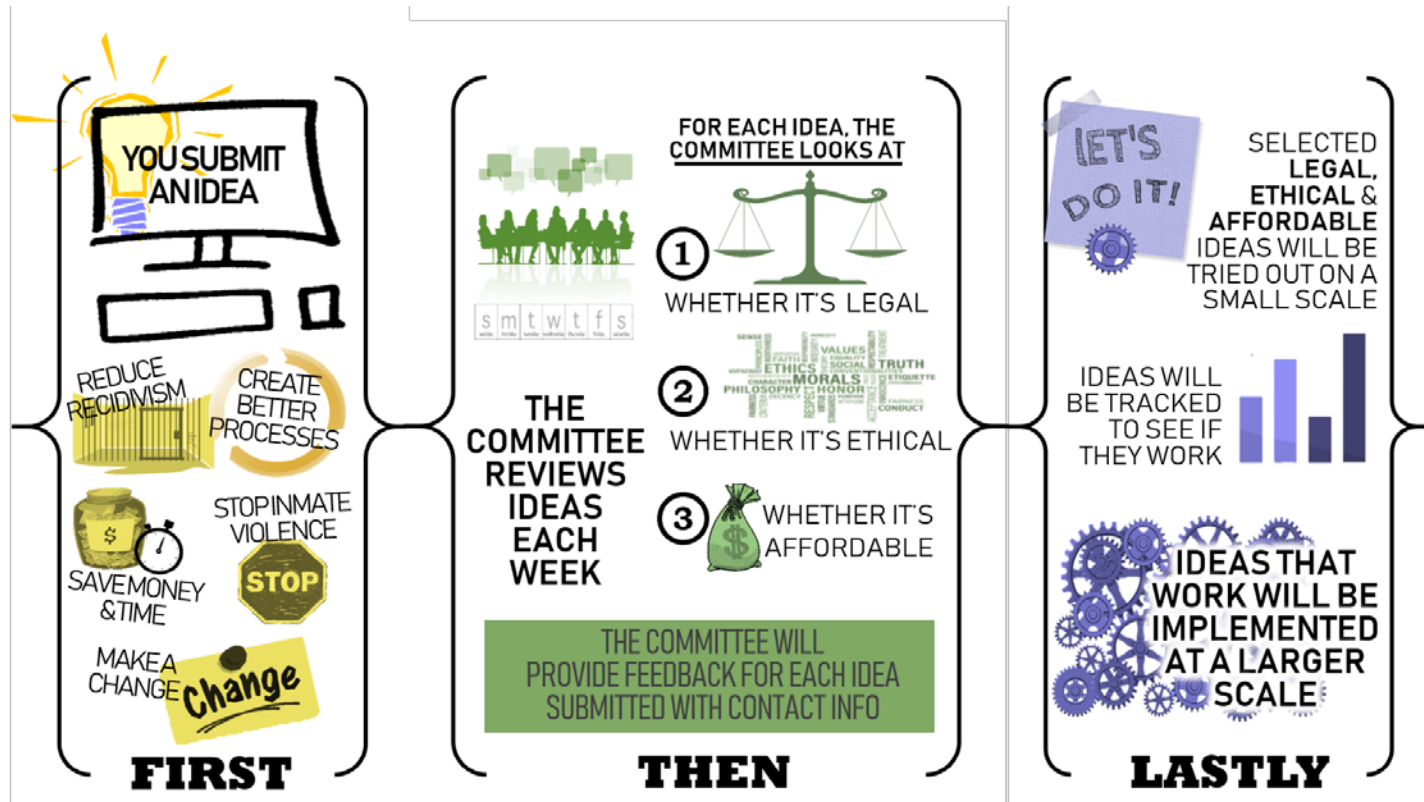
DEVELOP

EXPERIMENT

ADAPT



I.D.E.A.



I.D.E.A.

* 1. Describe your idea and what you hope it will accomplish (for example, do you think it would save money, improve processes or staff wellness, lead to less violence in prisons, improve outcomes, etc?). *(Required)*

Give as much information as you can about the idea you're proposing!

2. Do you have any suggestions for where your idea should be tested first? (i.e. a particular institution, office, program, etc?) *(Optional)*

3. Do you see any challenges to implementing your idea? If so, do you have any ideas on how to address those challenges? *(Optional)*

4. If you're willing, please provide your name, position, location and contact information. *(Optional)*

Why we're asking for your contact information: There are two reasons we like to collect contact information for idea submissions. First, we often need additional information to fully understand your idea. Second, we review the roles and locations that are submitting ideas so we can do better at facilitating them from people and places that aren't providing as many.

You can submit ideas anonymously: If you are uncomfortable providing your contact information, you can submit your idea anonymously by not filling out the fields below. However, anonymously-submitted ideas may not be accepted if we need more information about your idea but can't get in touch with you.

Name

Role/Position

Location

Phone

BetaGov

183 Ideas Proposed To Date:

- New Ideas - 5
- Active Trials - 9
- Trials in Development - 10
- Trials Approved But Need Facility/Sponsor - 107
- Completed Trials - 31
- Discontinued/On Hold/Withdrawn/Not Approved - 21

BetaGov

BetaGov Trials:

- Engaged with BetaGov (NYU) in Fall 2015
 - ▶ Rapid, staff-led trials; legal, ethical, and not cost prohibitive
 - ▶ Goals: 1) In-prison violence reduction; 2) segregation reduction; 3) staff wellness; 4) community corrections improvement
 - ▶ 100+ ideas submitted; 25 trial ideas completed (44 locations)
 - ▶ Status:
 - ➔ 8 ideas “work” (40%)
 - ➔ 8 ideas “don’t work” (40%)
 - ➔ 4 ideas “promising/mixed” (20%)

The Chill Plan

Individualized crisis management plans to reduce misconducts among inmates at State Correctional Institution, Cambridge Springs

Agency: Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC)
Trial Completion Date: 8/31/16
Pracademic*: Kimberly Sittig, Unit Manager, SCI Cambridge Springs

Context

Over 73% of incarcerated women experience psychological distress or psychiatric disorders, and would benefit from crisis management plans to help them prepare for and manage stressful events.

Key Finding

Inmates with Chill Plans had fewer misconducts than inmates without Chill Plans.

*BetaGov trains agency personnel to become research-savvy "pracademics" who lead trials.

Background

Incarcerated women often enter prison with emotional and mental vulnerabilities which may be exacerbated by the prison experience. Anxiety can escalate to misbehavior, including assaults and other violence. Coping plans may assist inmates in managing their emotions and preventing mental crisis from occurring.

The "Chill Plan" was designed by staff at the Pennsylvania State Women's Correctional Institution at Cambridge Springs as a crisis prevention program and shared with the other state women's prison. This program empowers female inmates to preemptively manage their anxiety through personalized calming strategies with the end purpose of reducing misbehavior. When stressors heighten, inmates can invoke their plan before their emotions erupt.

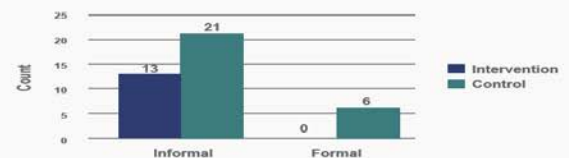
Trial Design

Two identical general population units were randomly assigned to the trial condition; women in Unit D3 (n=122) were offered participation in the Chill Plan, and women in Unit D2 (n=124) served as the control group.

Results and Implications

During the three-month trial period, 52 inmates enrolled in the Chill Plan. The Chill Plan group had better behavior compared to the control group ($p=0.02$) for both informal and formal misconducts. No data were captured on how many inmates actually invoked their Chill Plan to alleviate anxiety, but results suggest that just having the plan in place helps reduce misconducts.

Informal and Formal Misconduct Counts



BetaGov

What Works:

- Chill Plan (MUN; CBS) - personalized anxiety reduction plan
- Colored Bed Linens (FYT) - green bed linens vs. white linens
- CIT Trained COs (GRN) - RTU unit; less grievances; less informal misconducts
- Increased Pat Searches (FRS) - lower misconducts; lower contraband finds; no difference in grievances
- Unit dogs (WAM)
- Intelligence Officer (SMI) - largest suboxone seizure in history of SCI SMI
- Operation Stop Violence (FRS) - focused deterrence

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What Works:

- Motivational Messages (MAH) - post inspirational and motivational messages in common pathways
- Shining Light Ministries (DAL) - religious-based program; increased self-worth; less anger; lower grievances; lower misconducts; more church attendance

Promising/Mixed:

- Soothing Sounds in RHU (BEN) -
- Aromatherapy - three sites; mixed results
- Swift, Certain, Fair (SCF) sanctioning - 15 sites; mixed but mostly positive
- Virtual Reality (VR) for incentives

BetaGov

What Doesn't Work:

- Fish Tank Aquarium (WAY)
- Suicide Prevention training for staff (COA) - negative results but inconclusive
- Vitamin D supplements for staff (CHS; CBS) - no difference in self-reported health quality, depression, or social activities
- Shining Light Ministries (HUN)

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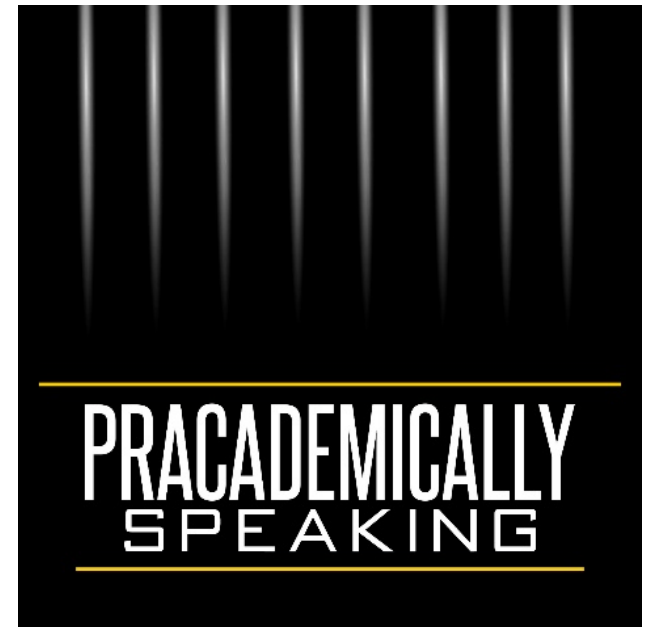
What Doesn't Work:

- Out of Cell Candy Incentive (PIT) - incentivize out of cell time for inmates on DTU
- Art Therapy (MAH) - coloring books on an RHU
- Visitor Notification (CAM; PIT) - no decrease in contraband, but decrease in visits
- Air Plants in Cells (MAH)

Systematizing & Branding

PRACADEMICALLY SPEAKING PODCAST

Each episode focuses around a topic, features an interview with an expert, and features an interview with a PA DOC “pracademic”



Systematizing & Branding

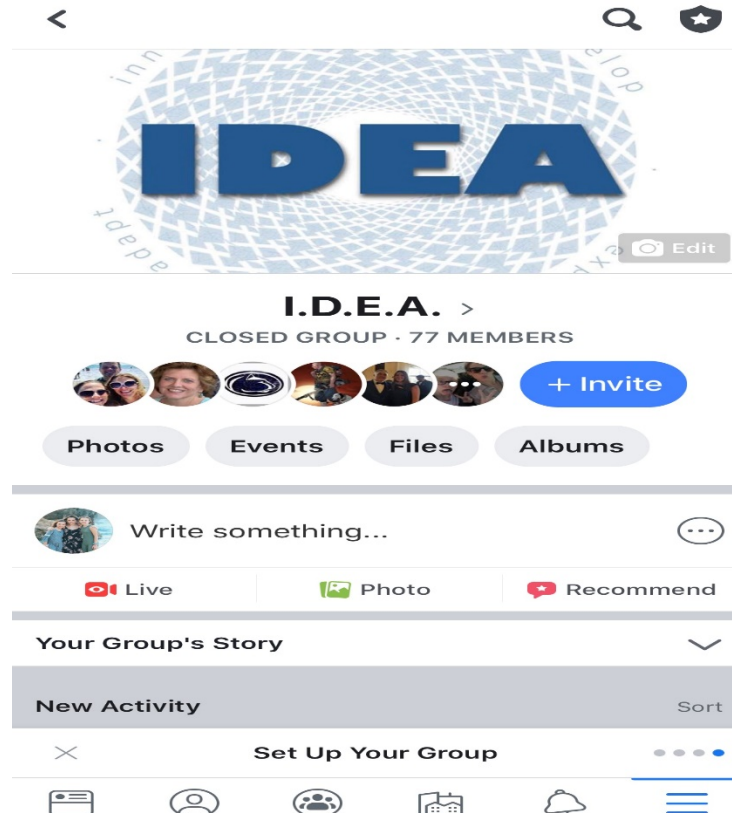
STAFF INNOVATIONS AWARD

This award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of a department staff member who has demonstrated innovation, initiative, and creativity, and whose contributions have had a positive impact on furthering the mission of the agency and the Commonwealth. In particular, this award honors an individual within the PA DOC/PBPP who has identified a problem and has proposed, developed, or implemented an innovative solution to that problem. This may include improving a process such as reducing paperwork, improving an outcome such as reducing recidivism or assaults in prison, or reducing costs. The award recipient demonstrates a willingness to challenge the status-quo through unique and creative solutions that ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the department.



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FACEBOOK PAGE



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STEERING COMMITTEE

“The scope of this committee will be to promote, encourage, and foster an organizational agency culture that embraces innovation and experimentation, in order to improve our business outcomes and effectiveness. Organizations grow through learning and experimentation, by discovering what works or what doesn’t work, and ensuring policies and practices are in place that are based on evidence of proven effectiveness.”