

From: Tania Chandler [tchandler@nycasc.org]
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To: Claire Bellerjeau
Subject: May News from EAC's TASC



FOCUS

The Newsletter of NYC TASC

May, 2011

Dear Claire,

Welcome to **FOCUS, The Newsletter of NYC TASC**. We have created this monthly newsletter to communicate with you and our partners in the criminal justice, substance abuse, mental health and public policy communities, and provide information about both our programs and innovative programming ideas. We hope you enjoy this month's focus: **"Decreasing Criminal Recidivism"** Please let us know if you have questions about NYC TASC, its programs, or have ideas for future newsletters. We are delighted to have you on our mailing list and looking forward to hearing from you.

FOCUS: *Decreasing Criminal Recidivism*

"The Journal made me think about my past situations and helped me to think about other ways to handle my problems."

- C.T., a client of the Brooklyn Mental Health Diversion Program



Of all the measures of successful community treatment for offenders with mental illness, the most consistently desired by programs, policy makers and funding agencies is **decreased future criminal recidivism**.

This one measure demonstrates both improved client stability and public safety, while delivering decreased jail costs. While there are a number of evidence-based practices with track records of effectiveness in treating serious mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse, it is not clear that these interventions, such as Assertive Community Treatment, for example, completely meet the needs of the criminal justice population, particularly in the area of criminal thinking and criminal behavior. Recent studies of mental health diversion and specialized probation revealed that lowered re-arrest among participants was unrelated to decreases in mental health symptoms. This suggests that the success of specialized programs for the mentally ill criminal justice population may be best achieved by focusing on criminogenic factors, such as controlling exposure to antisocial associates, testing for substance abuse and monitoring use of leisure time.

NYC TASC

Tania Chandler, Esq.
Regional Director

Merrill Rotter, M.D.
Medical Director

Bronx Mental Health Court

938 Sheridan Avenue
Bronx, NY 10451
(718) 538-7416

Charles Amrhein, Psy.D.
Clinical Director

Queens Mental Health Diversion Program

80-02 Kew Gardens Road,
Suite 203
Kew Gardens, NY 11415
(718) 268-5657

Virginia Barber-Rioja, Ph.D.
Clinical Director

Brooklyn TASC & Brooklyn Mental Health Diversion Program

175 Remsen St., 5th Fl.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 237-9404

Michelle A. Arcamona
Program Director

Bronx TASC & Enhanced Bronx TASC

938 Sheridan Avenue
Bronx, NY 10451
(718) 538-7416

Yolanda Cardona, J.D.
Program Director

Staten Island TASC
387 Van Duzer Street
Staten Island, NY 10304

It is for this reason that **NYC TASC**, in collaboration with its community treatment partners, has introduced two innovative interventions to its clinical case management model: **Lifestyle Change Journaling and Thinking for A Change (T4C)** as part of its mental health diversion efforts. Generally characterized as cognitive behavioral interventions, these activities target the critical factors of criminal thinking and behavior. Analyses of such interventions have revealed an 8.2% reduction in felony re-convictions for general offenders who complete the programs.



Supported by grants from the Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives and the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance, TASC clients in Brooklyn and the Bronx are participating in Lifestyle Change Journaling. Lifestyle Change Journaling is a structured, self-reflective journaling experience in which clients are taken through the process of analyzing the consequences of their choices.

TASC clients in Queens are receiving T4C, a product of the National Institute of Corrections. T4C is a manualized cognitive-behavioral intervention that teaches offenders problem solving techniques to aid them in working through difficulties without resorting to criminal behavior. TASC staff were trained on the T4C intervention and we partnered with SamaritanVillage, Harbor House and the Bridge to ensure the continuation of the T4C intervention while clients are engaged in the treatment process.

By adding these cutting-edge clinical interventions to our diversion efforts, NYC TASC is working to further improve both client functioning and community safety while generating continued cost savings due to reduced incarceration, which has been at the heart of EAC TASC's success.

Merrill Rotter, M.D.
EAC Medical Director



"Journaling helped me identify the danger areas for myself."

- R.B., a client of EAC's Bronx Enhanced TASC

EAC TASC

Since 1986 EAC has operated **Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities (TASC)**, a national program model designed to break the addiction-crime cycle of drug-involved offenders by moving the offender through the criminal justice process and into drug and or mental health treatment, simultaneously providing monitoring services as an adjunct to criminal justice supervision. TASC comprehensive case management services create a unique interface among the criminal justice system, the treatment service system, and the offender, thus allowing for effective and efficient outcomes.

EAC's TASC Programs are located in Kings, Bronx, Queens, Richmond and Rockland Counties as well as in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

(718) 727-9722

Sarah Anderson
Program Director

Queens TASC

80-02 Kew Gardens Road,
Suite 203
Kew Gardens, NY 11415
(718) 268-5657

Erin Mahoney
Program Director

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The Education & Assistance Corporation's (EAC, Inc.) 66 programs on Long Island and in the New York metro area protect children, create opportunities for seniors,

promote healthy families and communities, empower people through employment and education, and provide alternatives for people with substance abuse and mental health needs.

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