

# HOMeward BOUND

## Kentucky Department of Corrections Offender Newsletter

### CASE MANAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION BY JOANIE DINGMAN

During my tenure with the *Kentucky Department of Corrections* (DOC) I have witnessed many changes. Perhaps one of the most significant changes has been the introduction of a different philosophical view in how we approach the release process of offenders. I must say that I was stunned and proud of my institution when the basic principles were introduced. We, at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women (KCIW), were already discussing home placements, plans for reentry, job opportunities, etc. Offenders from my caseload stop by my office on a regular basis to update me on progress in these areas.

Since reentry has become a more focused topic, I have noticed a significant change in the offender population. Other agencies and the inmates' family members are recognizing the reentry process and the adjustments that come with reentering society after a period of incarceration.

Often times I hear offenders express a "dream world" of what it will be like on the outside upon their return, "*everyone will welcome me with open arms and will be glad I'm home.*" I have the unpleasant job of "popping that bubble" and bringing them back to some level of reality. They are reminded that these euphoric reactions will only last a day or so and then they will be expected to live the different lifestyle they have been touting to their family and friends.

One of the women from my caseload came to me 6 months prior to her release. She had three different options (this is a rare occurrence) for home placements. She needed to make a decision to live with family members or a friend and she had concerns about how she would reenter her family structure and how to make a good decision. After listening to comments about her family environment, I advised her to write to the prospective home placements asking their expectations when she came home and to express her plans and expectations of what was to occur when she arrived. This was a simple yet important task for her to work through while she was still incarcerated and provided her with the necessary information to make the best choice for her circumstances.

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I received correspondence from her post release, thanking me for assistance and to let me know that she is doing well and felt she had made a good decision in selecting her home placement.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is a state agency that has stepped up to the plate in helping returning offenders create a re-bonding period with their children. Through a collaborative process, the contacts from CHFS, the offender and DOC staff can sit down and iron out a plan for the adjustment period to be successful for mother and children. We work together to provide the necessary tools for the offender to return to an often times stressful life of parenting. The contacts from CHFS have gone above and beyond to ensure this transition is smooth.

I'd like to share two additional examples of this collaborative effort from my personal experience:

Last fall an offender came to me at the point where CHFS had taken her children from their father while she was incarcerated. The Offender was about to lose her parental rights and I suggested that she write CHFS and inform them of all the programs she had completed and for them to contact me if they needed verification. The CHFS worker contacted me, which led to a phone conversation with the offender and children. Additional phone conversations were made for the re-bonding process resulting in the offender and CHFS worker developing a plan for supervised visits upon release providing several goals for the mother and children. "Mom" had a goal to work towards and time to make the initial adjustment into society, find employment, adjust to her home environment prior to taking on the stressful responsibilities of a parental role. The offender called to provide an update and reported she was doing well, had her own place, was employed and had regained full custody of her children. She was able to spend the Christmas holidays with her family.

The second example also involved CHFS and one of our offenders. A CHFS worker contacted the offender in regards to terminating her parental right and placing the child up for adoption. This offender was also pregnant and CHFS was stepping in to take custody of the baby upon birth. This was a great deal of information for a pregnant offender participating in a substance abuse program, processing the termination of her parental rights and knowing her unborn baby would be placed in the custody of CHFS upon birth. She came to me seeking advice and again I contacted CHFS to see if anything could be worked out for the offender. Verification was made that the offender had completed a parenting program, was progressing through SAP at KCIW and had a projected out date. Phone calls were initiated between the offender and her child with the goal of re-bonding between the two and the relationship progressed with CHFS worker bringing the child to the institution for a visit. The offender has been parole recommended upon completion of SAP. She and the CHFS worker are discussing the best options for the placement of the children until she is paroled, and the options upon her release.

When you see the other state agencies and the families working with DOC to put the inmates back into the community and preparing the offenders for the family role, it becomes very rewarding, especially when the former offender succeeds. The days that I feel I have made a difference are what inspires me to remain in the field of corrections.

**“NEW DIRECTION”**

**ASK YOUR  
INSTITUTIONAL  
REENTRY  
COORDINATOR FOR  
DETAILS**



Planning on leaving in the next 18-24 months? If so, look at “New Direction” for assistance with reentry issues.



Employment  
Money Management  
Credit Rating  
Housing  
Family Issues  
Medical Issues

## TOOL FOR THE TOOL KIT

By Cheryl Million

### Collaborate:

**According to Mr. Webster the term collaborate means “working with others”.**

Mother nature has provided some excellent examples of animal structures that work together or collaborate to guarantee existence. A prime example is the common ant and we as humans share several traits with the ant.

Over 10,000 known species of ants exist in the world appearing in shades of green, red, brown, yellow, blue or purple. Ants live in hills or nests that they construct as a unit by following an internal hierarchy or social order. They work together or collaborate to build homes, provide food, protect each other from predators and ensure the next generation of the species.

We come in different colors, shapes and sizes. We collaborate with others in the building or purchasing of our homes, providing food for our families and we have a social order that increases our chances of survival as a species. Other traits we share are the protection against predators and protection of our young to ensure our next generation.

Individuals who are incarcerated are a segment of our population placed behind bars for crimes against society. Our mission in corrections is public safety and providing an opportunity for offenders to acquire skills which facilitate non-criminal behavior. As employees of the Department of Corrections we are committed to providing the offender population with the necessary tools to successfully reenter society and remain productive citizens. However, this can only be accomplished with the collaboration of all DOC employees, outside resources, faith-based community members and a change in philosophy about how to engage those incarcerated.



WORKING IN  
COLLABORATION TO  
CHANGE NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

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## Bluegrass Reentry Council Strives to Improve Ex-Offender's Lives

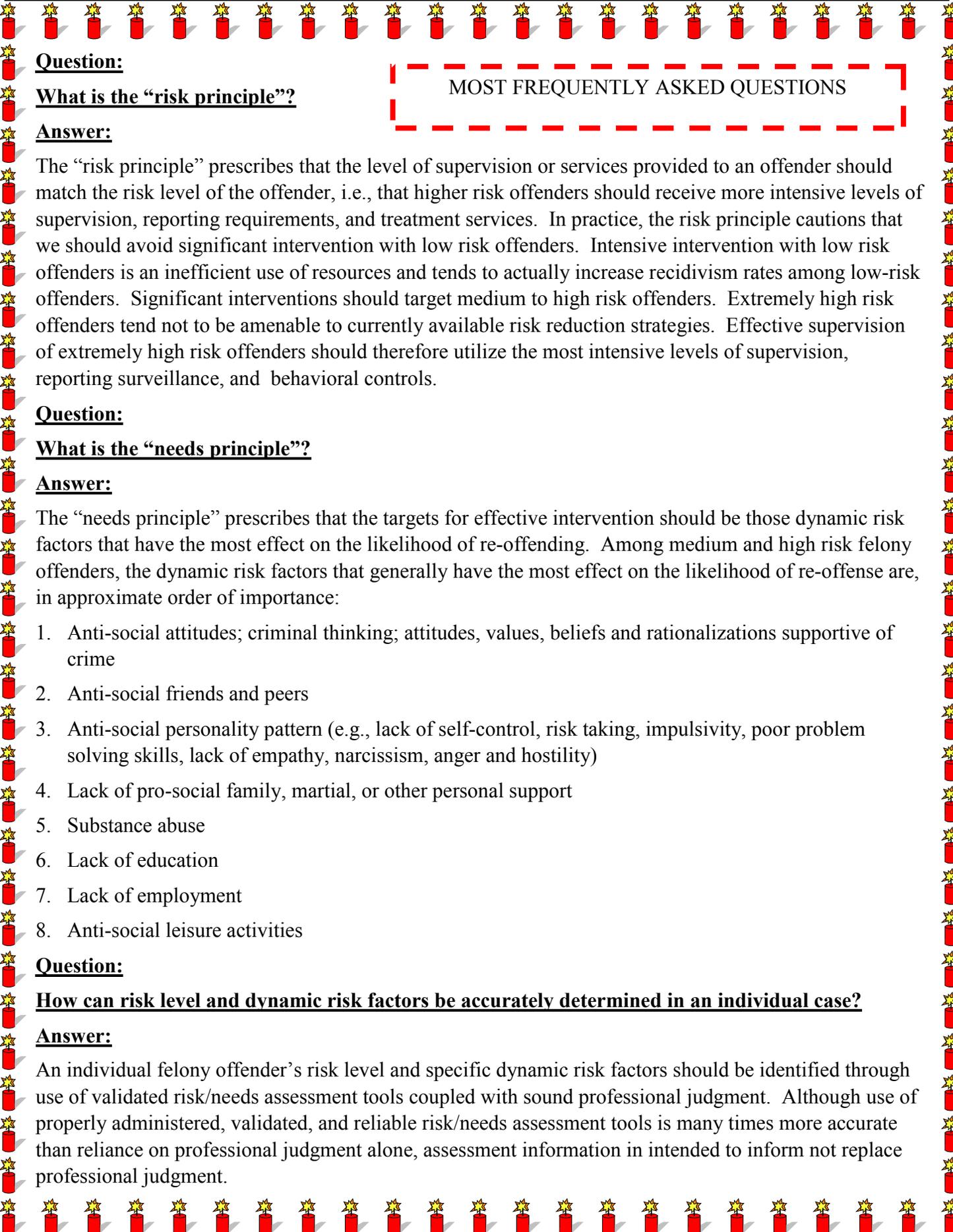
by Mark Johnson

In April 2009, a group of individuals recognized the need to share information among professionals working with offenders and ex-offenders transitioning from prison to the community. This need to communicate information and share resources led to the creation of the Bluegrass Reentry Council. The first meeting brought together individuals from Federal Probation, the Office of Vocation Rehabilitation, Goodwill, Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Office of Employment and Training. From that humble beginning the Bluegrass Reentry Council (BRC) continues to grow and now has a membership of over 200. BRC members come from many entities to include, but not limited to the following: law enforcement, non-profit agencies, community action agencies, faith based groups, educational institutions, local governments, private individuals, and other professional organizations. Anyone working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals to reduce barriers leading to recidivism is welcome to participate. Our mission is "To promote the successful reentry of ex-offenders into our communities."

The BRC meets monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, 2-3:30 pm, at National College located on Sir Barton Way in Lexington. Our meetings are open to anyone having an interest in reentry. Several times during the year we provide training for our membership and the public with the most recent conducted on June 28<sup>th</sup>, and titled "Reentry Toolkit: Theories, Practices, and Models." The training was provided by Patricia Taylor, Program Specialist from the National Institute of Corrections in Washington, D.C., Brigid Adams, Reentry/HIP Branch Manager from the Kentucky Department of Corrections, and DonaLee Breazzano, National Reentry Branch Administrator from the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Washington, D.C. Training topics included transformational workforce development, cognitive behavior therapy, collaborations, the new Equal Employment Opportunity Commission employment guidelines, assessments, and interactive case planning. Our next training event is scheduled for Friday, November 2, 2012, in Lexington. Details of the event will be forthcoming.

With the latest statistics indicating there are 7.3 million people on probation, in jail or prison, or on parole, and governments spending an estimated \$120 billion dollars on criminal justice, new strategies are necessary to help reduce the cost in dollars, community safety, and the destruction of families. The Bluegrass Reentry Council will continue to provide networking resources and training to enable our members in their mission to save resources for the tax payer, enhance community safety by reducing recidivism, restoring families, and providing hope to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.





MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Question:****What is the “risk principle”?****Answer:**

The “risk principle” prescribes that the level of supervision or services provided to an offender should match the risk level of the offender, i.e., that higher risk offenders should receive more intensive levels of supervision, reporting requirements, and treatment services. In practice, the risk principle cautions that we should avoid significant intervention with low risk offenders. Intensive intervention with low risk offenders is an inefficient use of resources and tends to actually increase recidivism rates among low-risk offenders. Significant interventions should target medium to high risk offenders. Extremely high risk offenders tend not to be amenable to currently available risk reduction strategies. Effective supervision of extremely high risk offenders should therefore utilize the most intensive levels of supervision, reporting surveillance, and behavioral controls.

**Question:****What is the “needs principle”?****Answer:**

The “needs principle” prescribes that the targets for effective intervention should be those dynamic risk factors that have the most effect on the likelihood of re-offending. Among medium and high risk felony offenders, the dynamic risk factors that generally have the most effect on the likelihood of re-offense are, in approximate order of importance:

1. Anti-social attitudes; criminal thinking; attitudes, values, beliefs and rationalizations supportive of crime
2. Anti-social friends and peers
3. Anti-social personality pattern (e.g., lack of self-control, risk taking, impulsivity, poor problem solving skills, lack of empathy, narcissism, anger and hostility)
4. Lack of pro-social family, martial, or other personal support
5. Substance abuse
6. Lack of education
7. Lack of employment
8. Anti-social leisure activities

**Question:****How can risk level and dynamic risk factors be accurately determined in an individual case?****Answer:**

An individual felony offender’s risk level and specific dynamic risk factors should be identified through use of validated risk/needs assessment tools coupled with sound professional judgment. Although use of properly administered, validated, and reliable risk/needs assessment tools is many times more accurate than reliance on professional judgment alone, assessment information is intended to inform not replace professional judgment.

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