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New 20-Year Study finds MRT Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Program Significantly Reduces Re-arrests and Re-incarceration

MEMPHIS, Tenn. —February 23, 2010—A new study that tracked almost 1,400 criminal offenders during a 20-year period indicates when offenders receive Moral Reconciliation Therapy® (MRT), a cognitive behavioral treatment program, they are much less likely to be re-arrested or re-incarcerated. The findings have major implications for federal, state and local government officials who cope with the high cost and public safety concerns of managing repeat offenders.

The study tracked 1,052 criminal offenders who had been treated with MRT against a control group of 329 criminal offenders, all of whom were involved with the Shelby County Correction Center in Memphis. This group has been tracked now at three-, five-, 10- and 20-year intervals for re-arrests and re-incarceration. After 20 years, 94% of offenders that did not get MRT treatment were re-arrested; 82% of this non-treated group were re-incarcerated. On the other hand, when an offender had received MRT treatment, the re-arrest rate dropped to 81% and the re-incarceration rate dropped significantly to 61%.

“In today’s economic crisis, government leaders are looking for programs that can produce results. MRT has proven over two decades to be a program that can help change criminal thinking, which can cut costs tremendously and enhance public safety. That cannot be ignored in today’s budget environment,” said Kenneth D. Robinson, one of the founders of MRT.

The 20-year MRT recidivism study also found of every 100 offenders who are treated, 13 who would typically be rearrested were not. In addition, of these 100 offenders who were treated, 21 would avoid jail or prison time. This translates to huge savings for correctional agencies, which today are burdened with high costs and serious overcrowding issues.

Robinson said that the study results are even more impressive when considering its authors counted every arrest (outside simple traffic court violations) the MRT-studied group had during this 20-year period, including lower level misdemeanor offenses, something many studies do not do. In addition, the study group included all participants who entered MRT treatment and not just “program completers,” another common study practice. Both the MRT-treated group studied and the non-treated group participated in similar institutional programs such as vocational training, GED prep, work release and counseling. The only difference in regimens for the MRT-treated and control groups was the use of MRT.

Data for the study was gathered from three criminal justice databases that captured information on local, state and federal re-arrests and re-incarceration. The MRT-treated group studied

received MRT treatment at some time from 1987 through 1991. The average age of the MRT-treated and control groups now is 44.5 years old, and the average sentence for offenders for both groups was 2.9 years.

In 2009, MRT was placed on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. Currently, there are 136 mental health and substance abuse intervention programs listed on the registry. MRT is one of only six registered interventions applied successfully in correctional settings to treat mental health and substance abuse issues. MRT was developed by Gregory Little, Ed.D., and Kenneth Robinson, Ed.D., in 1985.

The National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices is a program of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To be placed on the registry, an intervention program goes through a rigorous review process. Two independent reviewers evaluate interventions and consider factors such as evidence of positive outcomes, outcome results published in peer-reviewed journals, replication of outcome results and ease of dissemination of program elements.

MRT is among the most researched cognitive behavioral intervention programs, with more than 120 studies validating its effectiveness. These studies found MRT has produced positive outcomes with both genders and a diverse range of ethnic groups. MRT has been used in a wide range of agencies, drug and mental health courts, and community corrections treatment programs. Its core premise is improving decision making skills.

“As far as we know, this is the first 20-year recidivism study that reviews a treatment approach within criminal justice. This 20-year year study mirrors what we’ve found in previous studies: When offenders participate in MRT programs, they had significantly lower re-arrest rates, higher rates of individuals with no re-arrests at all, and lower re-incarceration,” Robinson said.

The study, titled “Twenty-Year Recidivism Results for MRT-Treated Offenders,” was authored by Gregory Little, Ed.D.; Robinson; Katherine D. Burnette, M.S.; and E. Stephen Swan, M.Ed.; and appeared in *Cognitive Behavioral Review* this month.

For a copy of the study, please call 901-360-1564.

About Correctional Counseling Inc. (www.ccimrt.com)

Based in Memphis, Tenn., Correctional Counseling, Inc. was formed in 1987. CCI specializes in providing cognitive behavioral staff training, treatment workbooks and materials as well as adult and juvenile outpatient, offender-specific substance abuse and accountability services. CCI provides correctional services to a variety of criminal justice agencies in the United States and commonwealths. CCI conducts multiple training sessions throughout the U.S. each year. CCI’s Moral Reconciliation Therapy cognitive behavioral program has been used with more than 1 million offenders since first introduced in 1985.

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