

Background

“A New Direction” is a joint venture between the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Minnesota-based Hazelden Foundation, a substance abuse treatment center and publisher.

In the spring of 1999, the Minnesota DOC established a committee to explore the effectiveness of the state’s chemical dependency treatment for offenders. The committee, known as CARE (Chemical Abuse and Recovery Evaluation), was comprised of industry leaders in the corrections and chemical dependency treatment fields as well as community members. CARE found that the Minnesota DOC had a good treatment program, but one with shortcomings: it wasn’t complete, it wasn’t consistent from facility to facility, and it didn’t offer a baseline for determining progress in treatment.

Based on these findings, the Minnesota DOC created the curriculum that came to be known as A New Direction. They brought the partnership idea to Hazelden in October of 1999. It was the first collaborative effort by the Minnesota DOC and a private agency. Treatment programs at the following Minnesota correctional facilities were key in the development of A New Direction:

- Sex Offender Treatment Program at Lino Lakes, MN
- TRIAD Chemical Dependency Program at Lino Lakes, MN
- Reshape Chemical Dependency Program at Saint Cloud, MN
- Atlantis Chemical Dependency Program at Stillwater, MN
- New Dimensions Chemical Dependency Program at Faribault, MN

Regarding Best Practices, A New Direction meets the following set of interventions that improve treatment outcomes as defined by Gendreau and Goggin (1994): treatment should be based on behavioral strategies; be provided for at least three to four months (100 hours) of direct service with daily contact; target criminogenic needs; provide optimal conditions for learning pro-social behaviors; and provide continuing assistance or aftercare once the formal treatment phase ends.

Curriculum Content

Each module features videos, workbooks, and facilitator’s guides. Each module is available in a short-term (3–6 months) or long-term (6–12 months) format. The videos are the same for both formats. The long-term workbooks and facilitator’s guides are more extensive than the short-term workbooks. Both short-term and long-term curricula can be adapted for medium-length programs.

The Videos

The majority of the videos for A New Direction were taped in Minnesota correctional facilities. Inmates, not actors, candidly discuss the tactics they have used to exact power and control over others. These videos present a powerful, direct, and liberating message about finding a life of recovery and freedom.

The Workbooks

Based on real-life experiences of incarcerated addicts involved in substance abuse treatment. Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. Workbooks use phrases and describe situations that are familiar to criminals and addicts. Quotes from offenders underscore key concepts.

The Facilitator's Guides

Each facilitator's guide contains the entire client workbook with sidebar notes, suggestions, and supplemental information for facilitators.

Six Modules

1. Intake & Orientation

Get inmates thinking about why they chose to participate in a treatment program, and what they need to do to turn their lives around. They will discover:

- why criminal behavior and drug use are so closely related
- why being honest about their feelings and attitudes is critical to progress
- what it means to be a responsible member of a therapeutic group
- how to feel safe disclosing personal information

Intake & Orientation Video – “Introduction to Treatment”

Inmates talk about their biggest fears and greatest challenges in becoming involved in a prison treatment program. Whether their initial motivation to participate was to get out of the general population for a while, to please a spouse or family member, or to truly make life changes, the inmates candidly discuss their reasons for entering a cognitive-behavioral therapy program and their experiences during treatment. Among their discoveries about treatment:

- change won't happen unless you are honest about your attitudes, behaviors, and choices
- in time, you have to be willing to share feelings and disclose personal information
- as a group member you are responsible for holding yourself and others accountable for words and actions
- reaching out to others for help and support is difficult but necessary

Intake & Orientation Workbook

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Intake & Orientation workbook:

- introduces inmates to the concept of a therapeutic community
- introduces the concept of thinking about one's thinking
- explores the criminal and addictive thinking concept
- provides an overview of the basics of drug and alcohol addiction

2. Criminal & Addictive Thinking

Get inmates thinking about and challenging their core beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that fuel manipulative, aggressive, and destructive behaviors. They will examine:

- how their thinking influences their feelings and behaviors
- how to recognize their own distorted thinking patterns (e.g., jumping to conclusions, selective focusing, excuse making)
- how to stop criminal and addictive thinking patterns

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Criminal & Addictive Thinking workbook:

- introduces the concept of thought maps
- examines the client's drug or alcohol use and criminal activity
- introduces common thinking distortions, criminal and addictive thinking patterns, and core beliefs
- educates clients on how to complete a thinking report

Criminal & Addictive Thinking Videos

“Thinking about Your Thinking”, Part 1

Inmates discuss their new understanding of how distorted thinking keeps them stuck in addictive and criminal behaviors. In a group setting as participants in a cognitive-behavioral treatment program, the inmates reflect on and challenge each other about their core beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about themselves and the world around them. Among their discoveries about the way they think:

- seeing yourself as a victim allows you to victimize others
- distorted thinking leads to manipulative and aggressive behaviors
- feelings of entitlement and criminal pride play into distorted thinking
- in criminal thinking, self is first and everybody else is second

“Thinking about Your Thinking”, Part 2

Inmates present a series of eight real-life, everyday prison scenarios that could easily escalate into violent incidents. After each scenario, viewers are asked to analyze the

event, identify the feelings and distorted thinking involved, and determine possible replacement thoughts and behaviors. Using their own words and drawing from their own experiences, the inmates role-play situations that realistically portray how criminal and addictive thought patterns lead to destructive behaviors. The situations include:

- An inmate's overreaction to a routine shakedown
- A discussion among three inmates about whether to retaliate for a fight
- A scuffle after an egregious foul on the basketball court
- An inmate's angry phone call to his spouse who refuses to send money
- A quarrel between roommates about how to resolve a conflict

"Criminal & Addictive Behavior": Tactics

Inmates candidly discuss the tactics they have used to exact power and control over others—in prison and out of prison. In a group setting as participants in a cognitive-behavioral treatment program, the inmates share personal stories about manipulating, intimidating, physically assaulting, and even murdering individuals who got in the way of what they wanted. Raw, real, and tragic, the inmates' stories reveal:

- how distorted thoughts and unresolved feelings fuel criminal behavior
- why using drugs and committing crimes are fundamentally linked
- what it really means to take charge of your life and respect others

3. Drug & Alcohol Education

Get inmates thinking about addiction as a chronic, progressive, and treatable disease. They will:

- learn about the nature and symptoms of addiction and the process of recovery
- understand the effects of alcohol and other drugs (emotional, spiritual, social, legal, financial, and vocational)
- work through the fear and grief of taking a First Step
- recognize the warning signs of relapse (HALT: hungry, angry, lonely, tired)

Drug & Alcohol Education Workbooks

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Drug & Alcohol Education workbook:

- explains the effects of addiction on body, mind, spirit, relationships, and community
- explores the criminal code in relation to gang affiliation and drug dealing
- explores the consequences of criminal behaviors and drug and alcohol addiction
- explores distorted thinking patterns

- shows how to create a crisis management plan to avoid relapse

Drug & Alcohol Education Videos

“The Disease of Addiction: Symptoms and Phases” - Popular Hazelden counselor Bruce Larson, M.A., L.A.D.C., explains why addiction is viewed as a disease and describes how the illness develops and progresses. Emphasizing that addiction is neither a moral failing nor a personal weakness, Larson outlines the primary, chronic, genetic, progressive, and fatal aspects of the disease. As Larson reveals in the video, the progression of addiction takes individuals from initial thoughts about how their alcohol or drug use interfere with their life, to eventual thoughts about how their lives interfere with their alcohol or drug use.

“Medical Aspects of Chemical Dependency” - You know how alcohol and drug use make you feel. But what are the physical effects of alcohol and drug use on the human body and brain? In this video, Dr. David E. Smith of the Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic explains how mood-altering substances affect brain chemicals, and how these biochemical reactions alter heart rate, breathing, sensory perceptions, and more. Viewers will:

- understand how different drugs affect brain chemistry
- realize why an initial “high” from cocaine is followed by a “crash”
- see how some drugs affect sensory perception: sight, sound, touch
- learn about the effects of withdrawal on brain chemistry

4. Socialization

Get inmates figuring out why they have difficulty building relationships based on trust and respect. They will learn to:

- understand the dynamics of healthy relationships
- manage anger in a positive manner
- appreciate the consequences of their actions
- identify and practice personal values

Socialization Workbooks

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Socialization workbook:

- teaches inmates how to establish and maintain healthy relationships with self, others, and a higher power
- focuses on skill-building for effective relationships with loved ones, peers, work colleagues, and strangers
- examines victim impact

- builds self-esteem
- shows how to live responsibly without using drugs or alcohol
- explores family systems

Socialization Video – “Getting Along”

Inmates talk about their lifelong difficulty in getting along with others, and their new understanding through participation in a cognitive-behavioral treatment program of how to develop healthy relationships.

Whether their socialization problems stem from childhood abuse, fear of abandonment, or feelings of worthlessness, the inmates candidly discuss the challenges and benefits of learning to build relationships based on trust and respect. Among their discoveries about relationships:

- empathy for others can be learned and developed
- the inability to admit fault keeps you isolated
- genuine relationships are based on honesty
- conflict is a natural part of relationships
- alcohol and drugs distort the way we experience relationships

5. Relapse Prevention

Get inmates discussing the biggest challenges to their recovery and developing personal strategies for staying clean and sober. They will consider:

- what triggers and cravings put them at risk for relapse
- how to avoid high-risk situations and people
- why they need to find a good sponsor
- how to build a reliable, effective support network

Relapse Prevention Workbooks

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Relapse Prevention workbook:

- introduces and addresses common relapse triggers
- offers inmates specific strategies to support their recovery
- discusses strategies for dealing with situations that could potentially involve relapse
- provides specific tools for avoiding relapse

Relapse Prevention Video – “Preventing Relapse”

Inmates talk about their recovery struggles and setbacks and offer suggestions for staying clean and sober in prison or out. Sharing their experiences, inmates make it clear that relapse is a real and menacing threat, particularly for the newly sober and newly released. Among their ideas for preventing relapse:

- avoid high-risk situations and people
- get a good sponsor
- go to Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or other support groups regularly
- before acting, ask yourself: Is it illegal? Immoral? Irresponsible?

6. Release & Reintegration Preparation

Get inmates actively preparing for life after incarceration. They will make plans for themselves, including:

- where to live
- how to find a job
- what to do with spare time
- who to turn to for support

Release & Reintegration Preparation Workbooks

Information, exercises, and activities help offenders see that criminality and addiction are thinking problems before they become behavior problems. The Release & Reintegration Preparation workbook:

- introduces and addresses common relapse triggers
- offers inmates specific strategies to support their recovery
- discusses strategies for dealing with situations that could potentially involve relapse
- provides specific tools for avoiding relapse

Release & Reintegration Preparation Videos

“Looking for Work” - For people in recovery, the work they choose to do for a living becomes an important part of their personal growth. Finding a job that’s right takes a bit of investigation, which includes identifying not only skills and abilities but also priorities and values. This video explores all these facets, plus important job-seeking skills such as creating a resume, looking for work, and networking. Important issues raised include:

- thinking about new job leads
- defining the type of work you want
- understanding informational interviews versus job interviews

“Managing Money” - One of the biggest challenges in the early stages of recovery is getting finances straight. While financial problems may seem overwhelming at first, they become easier to control once money management techniques are put into practice. This video helps viewers get their financial situation on track through exploring budgeting and other money management skills. Important issues raised include:

- knowing the difference between fixed and flexible expenses
- identifying income sources in addition to a paycheck
- exploring budgeting options when your expenses exceed your income
- understanding credit and dealing with creditors

“Life on Life’s Terms” - The newest volume in the video series for A New Direction, this inspiring video spotlights ex-inmates who have navigated the journey from behind bars to a life of freedom and recovery. It’s a difficult journey, but one that can be done. The video explores:

- the need for persistence when searching for a job with a criminal record
- how to avoid “triggers” if you’re returning to a problem neighborhood
- the importance of maintaining a support system to maintain recovery