

# Evaluation of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation Cognitive Skills Development Program as Implemented in Juvenile ISP in Colorado

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# Preface

One conclusion presented in this report has important implications for both criminal justice program administrators and program evaluators. While we report a variety of findings from this multifaceted study, of central import is the fact that the program was probably not implemented as it was originally designed. Our evaluation identified a number of explanations that may account for this finding. For example, the 18-week, closed group (meaning all participants must begin at the same time) program is difficult to implement in a setting where the typical length of stay is less than six months; *group* facilitation skills may not come naturally to probation officers who may traditionally work one-on-one; and structured quality control mechanisms did not exist at the time of the study (1994-1995). Understanding these implementation problems assist us all in explaining the disappointing outcome findings: on average, youth who participated in the program may have improved their cognitive skills but did no better on some of our outcome measures compared to similar juveniles who did not participate in the cognitive program. On a few measures, including recidivism, they did somewhat worse.

We are lucky that our research funders -- the National Institute of Justice and the Colorado Juvenile Justice Council -- along with the state Judicial Department, and the probation agencies that participated in the study, believed that the scope of this research should be broad enough to ask all of the relevant questions. This collaboration resulted in our conducting a process and an outcome evaluation, and prevented us from concluding that the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program did not positively impact the juveniles in our study.

Evaluation research typically focuses on an offender's behavior following program participation. Of particular interest, of course, is whether the offender is rearrested after a specified period of time. If an offender returns to crime after program participation, we may assume the program was ineffective, or we may conclude there was a poor fit between the offender's needs and what the program provided. These conclusions hinge on the offender's behavior after program completion.

But there are critical interim questions. The most fundamental question is whether the program was implemented as originally intended. This is the classic process evaluation question, a question that is often side-stepped in order to conduct *real* research: collecting rearrest data on a group of offenders that participated in the program compared to a group that did not.

Program implementation and management are difficult tasks. This report documents some of the difficulties, and the study underscores the value of process evaluations to program administrators and to the larger criminal justice community.





# Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the Division of Criminal Justice's evaluation of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) cognitive skills development program, developed by Ross and Fabiano (1985), as it is delivered to juveniles placed on Juvenile Intensive Supervision Probation (JISP) in Colorado. The R&R program is a mandatory program component of JISP.<sup>1</sup> The impact of the R&R program *on adults* has been evaluated in several sites (including one evaluation in Colorado), but has only been evaluated on one sample of adolescent offenders, and this study occurred in an adolescent correctional institution in Spain. While the results of the adolescent evaluation were favorable, the findings are not generalizable to Colorado.

The research questions guiding the current research were:

- 1) Is the program delivered appropriately?
- 2) Is program integrity achieved and sustained?
- 3) Does the program work to change attitudes and behaviors?
- 4) Does the program have an impact on post termination rates of recidivism?
- 5) If so, for which types of offenders did it work best?

The study was undertaken in three phases. To address the program integrity question (#1 and #2 above), group sessions were video taped and reviewed by one of the original developers of the R&R program, Elizabeth Fabiano. Answering question #3 involved administering pretest/posttest questionnaires to JISP clients, half of whom participated and the other half of whom did not participate in the R&R program. Data were also collected by interviewing youth before and after the program. Rearrest data were collected on each individual in the sample to address question #4 regarding changes in recidivism. Finally, addressing question #5 involved identifying relevant offender subgroups during the analysis portion of the study. The major findings of the study are summarized below.

A review of video taped sessions of program delivery revealed that the program delivered by JISP coaches barely met the standards of R&R program developers. Findings from this review indicate that, while the *content* of the program was delivered, the *process* of actually imparting knowledge and skills to the offenders barely occurred. Several shortcomings were noted by the video tape evaluator, such as not linking crucial information, lack of lesson preparation, inability to explain concepts or explaining concepts incorrectly, inappropriate combination of program sessions, and failure to make the program relevant to adolescents.

Findings from the process evaluation indicate that JISP officers did not sufficiently prepare for program delivery. Many officers reported that the demands of their regular JISP job duties did not permit time for lengthy lesson preparation. Additionally, according to Ms. Fabiano, coaches did not routinely

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<sup>1</sup> The R&R program is mandatory for all JISP clients unless they are deemed by the probation officer to be too disruptive or have characteristics that would prohibit them from benefiting from the program.

“sell” R&R and its benefits to program participants and, instead, most officers stressed the fact that participation in the cognitive program was a mandatory component of JISP.

Results from the outcome evaluation provide limited evidence to suggest that offenders in JISP who participated in the R&R cognitive skills program improved prosocial attitudes or increased cognitive skill levels. One test measuring attitudes and skills indicated improvement in three of nine skill areas measured, compared to no improvement among control group members. However, when using a different instrument to measure the same attitudes and skills, all significant change in attitudes and skills among both experimental and control group members were negative, suggesting that cognitive skills and prosocial attitudes became *worse* for those who participated in the R&R program, as well as for those that did not participate.

Regarding criminal behavior changes, there is no evidence to suggest that offenders who received the R&R program were less likely to recidivate after terminating from JISP.

The outcome findings must be viewed with caution, however, because the program appeared to be minimally implemented in JISP during the time period of the study, April 1994 to December 1995. Process evaluation data reflected important problems in program administration, including lack of training, imposing the role of coach on the probation officer, and some confusion about the workload standards.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Division’s evaluation of Colorado’s Juvenile Intensive Supervision Probation’s (JISP) Reasoning and Rehabilitation program indicates the program was only minimally implemented in 1994 and 1995 in Colorado. Although training probation officers to deliver the program appeared to be very important to state administrators, the program lacked an adequate organizational infrastructure to support institutionalizing the delivery of this specific cognitive development program.

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the process and outcome evaluation of the R&R program as implemented and delivered to JISP clients in Colorado in 1994 and 1995.

- 1) If the State Judicial Department intends to continue mandating participation in the program, we recommend that the administration prioritize complete and sufficient implementation of the program. To this end, the department must revisit its current training approach, reallocate resources so R&R program implementation is prioritized and monitored, and institute a mechanism of quality control with the explicit purpose of building and maintaining R&R program integrity.

- 2) The Judicial Department should sponsor a meeting to modify the program for adolescents. This meeting would include probation administrators, R&R program trainers, R&R coaches, juvenile probation officers, and other relevant parties who would work with the program designer.
- 3) Officers may not be suited or interested in presenting the R&R program to clients. To assist in the selection process of coaches, a screening tool that rates program delivery characteristics of probation officers before being trained to deliver the R&R program could be developed and instituted.
- 4) To increase administrative support for the R&R program and to provide continuity of care between JISP and regular probation, probation staff (officers, administrators, and supervisory staff) who are not trained as coaches should be required to participate in a training that reviews the basic philosophy, principles, skills, and requirements (preparation, resources, and skills) of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program.
- 5) To improve program delivery and integrity, we recommend that the Office of Probation Services organize follow-up training sessions for new coaches that take place between 30 and 45 days after the initial R&R program delivery training. Such a “booster session” might eliminate the shortcomings identified in video tape reviews of JISP program delivery sessions.
- 6) The Office of Probation Services should supplement R&R program delivery training with instruction in basic group facilitation skills. This is particularly important since probation officers may not have the skills required to be effective group facilitators.
- 7) To improve and monitor program implementation, and R&R quality control system should be developed and employed by State Judicial. Such a system could include:
  - P A system for certifying coaches, developed with the assistance of the program developers;
  - P A selection process for identifying potential coaches with promising skills; and
  - P The development and use of an evaluation form for offenders to rate R&R coach’s effectiveness at program delivery.
- 8) We recommend that a full-time cognitive coordinator be located at the Judicial Department’s Office of Probation Services (OPS) to monitor program implementation, coordinate training sessions, to review program and coach evaluation forms, and to serve as a resource for field officers and other inquirers who have questions about program implementation and program delivery.

- 9) The State Judicial Department should encourage probation departments to advocate parental involvement in the adolescent's development of cognitive skills. Such involvement may enhance the retention of skills as well as increase parental involvement in youths' correctional process.
  
- 10) In jurisdictions where staff sizes are limited, or where staff interest in delivering the R&R program does not exist, probation departments could contract with a non-probation officer coach to run the cognitive skills programs.

## Background of the Cognitive Skills Program in Colorado

In January 1991, the Colorado Judicial Department incorporated the Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) cognitive skills building program into a large pilot demonstration project (called the Specialized Drug Offender Program, or SDOP) for the adult substance abusing offenders. Reasoning and Rehabilitation is a copyrighted education program that focuses on teaching the following cognitive skills to offenders: problem-solving, consequential thinking, means-end reasoning, social perspective-taking, critical reasoning, abstract reasoning, creative thinking and values (Ross and Fabiano, 1985). When the R&R program was selected in 1991 for use in the SDOP program, it was the only cognitive skills program available in the corrections industry, according to the State Administrator for the Office of Probation Services. The R&R program was evaluated as part of a larger SDOP study in 1992, and was found to enhance program success among certain groups of people (Johnson and Hunter, 1992). In particular, Hunter and Johnson found that revocation rates for offenders in the specialized drug offender program were 50% lower than those in regular probation, and revocation rates for SDOP offenders in the cognitive group were generally lower, still. Additionally, the evaluation found that offenders who received the SDOP with the cognitive component were more likely to improve on a set of "positive belief factors" and decrease scores on "negative belief factors" than were offenders on probation or non-cognitive SDOP offenders.

Based on this research, in 1992 the Office of Probation Services incorporated the R&R program as a requirement for young offenders placed on Juvenile Intensive Supervision Probation (JISP), and JISP officers were trained by the program designers (Ross and Fabiano) to deliver the program. After the program was implemented, anecdotal information obtained the following year during a process evaluation of JISP (English, 1993), piqued interest in evaluating the program. Specifically, interview data revealed that some juveniles were so enthusiastic about the R&R program that they asked to bring friends to group sessions. Additionally, probation officers "coaching" the groups reported that group members: (1) bonded to each other in more pro-social ways than previously demonstrated, (2) took an interest in current events, and (3) demonstrated a willingness and eagerness to express their own points of view. Further, probation officers reported that parents gave accounts of behavioral and problem-solving differences in juveniles who have participated in the program.

The R&R (and close adaptations of the program) program has been evaluated on adult program participants (Fabiano, Robinson, and Porporino, 1990; Lucas, Raynor, and Vanstone, 1992; Porporino, Fabiano, and Robinson, 1991a, 1991b; Robinson, 1995; Robinson, Grossman, and Porporino, 1991; and Ross, Fabiano, and Ewels, 1988), including one evaluation in Colorado (discussed above), but the program has been evaluated on only one sample of juveniles (Garrido and

Sanchez, 1991). This single study on juveniles occurred in Spain, and while the results were favorable,<sup>2</sup> the study sample was very small, and the results may not be generalizable cross-culturally. We wanted to know for juvenile offenders on ISP in Colorado:

- 1) Is the program delivered appropriately?
- 2) Is program integrity achieved and sustained?
- 3) Does the program work to change attitudes and behaviors?
- 4) Does the program have an impact on post termination rates of recidivism?
- 5) If so, for which types of offenders did it work best?

The National Institute of Justice funded the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice to conduct an evaluation of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program as it was implemented in JISP. The Colorado Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Council augmented this evaluation effort by funding (from the state formula grant from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency) a specific component of the process evaluation, the program integrity assessment. Finally, the Colorado State Judicial Department paid for Ms. Elizabeth Fabiano, one of the program's developers, to conduct a "retraining" session for JISP coaches in jurisdictions participating in this evaluation.<sup>3</sup> The focus of this retraining was to update coaches on the most recent revisions to the program's content and delivery methods. This report presents the findings of the entire evaluation effort. The report is organized in the following way: Chapter 2 is a description of the program, Chapter 3 describes the research questions and methodology, Chapter 4 presents the findings from the evaluation, and Chapter 5 presents recommendations for both program development and implementation and future research.

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2 This program was an adaptation of the cognitive model developed by Robert Ross and Elizabeth Fabiano in their 1985 book *Time to Think: A Cognitive Model of Delinquency Prevention and Offender Rehabilitation*, that combined three of the techniques identified as producing positive results in delinquent rehabilitation. Findings obtained from this experimental study that included a total of 31 subjects, with an average age of 13.6 years were favorable. The experimental group obtained significantly better results between pre and posttest scores than the control group on four of the six measurements: empathy, means, problem detection, and generation of alternative solutions. Also, the experimental group improved their scores significantly on a nine-point behavioral scale in eight of the items. Comparatively, the control group improved in only one of the nine areas measured on the behavioral scale.

3 This training took place at the State Judicial Department's main office at 1302 Pennsylvania, Denver, Colorado on March 14-16, 1994.

## Description of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program

### THE REASONING AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The Reasoning and Rehabilitation program is comprised of 35 sequential modules to be delivered to offenders in groups of six to eight offenders. There are ten modules, each of which contains several cognitive skill-building sessions. Each session teaches a new sub-skill that builds upon skills learned in prior sessions. The modules cover the following eight areas: problem solving, social skills, negotiation skills, management of emotions, creative thinking, values enhancement, critical reasoning and cognitive exercises.

Traditional offender rehabilitation methods focus on changing the way offenders act. However, the fundamental concept behind the cognitive models of offender rehabilitation is that “since faulty thinking patterns propel offenders toward recidivism, programs should try to change the way offenders think, not the way they act” (Fabiano, Porporino and Robinson, 1991:108). Specifically, the Reasoning and Rehabilitation cognitive training is based on two premises:

- P Offenders tend to be under-socialized. That is, they lack the values, attitudes, reasoning and social skills which are required for pro-social adjustment; and
- P Socialization skills can be taught (Ross and Fabiano, 1991:3).

The R&R program is based on a substantial body of research which concludes that many offenders have cognitive skills deficits that preclude their successful adjustment to mainstream social expectations. In 1985, Ross and Fabiano linked the design of each module to empirical data that document the deficits of many traditional correctional treatment models and the value of cognitive-oriented interventions as effective methods of reducing recidivism.

The R&R program was designed to provide offenders with the opportunity to learn and experience new behavioral and cognitive skills. This program is supposed to teach offenders skills necessary to manage a life without further criminal activity. “The major premise of the cognitive model is that what and how an offender thinks, how he views his world, how well he understands people, what he values, how he reasons and how he attempts to solve problems plays an important role in his criminal conduct” (Fabiano, Robinson, and Porporino, 1990:4). The measurable goals program developers wished to accomplish include changes in beliefs and attitudes around pro-social and criminal thinking, and a reduction in recidivism. The primary goal of the Judicial Department in Colorado was the reduction in recidivism rates, according to interview data.

***The R&R program is based on a substantial body of research which concludes that many offenders have cognitive skills deficits that preclude their successful adjustment to mainstream social expectations.***

## REASONING AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM CONTENT

The R&R program is comprised of 35 90-120 minute sessions, delivered by a JISP officer, referred to by Ross and Fabiano in *Reasoning and Rehabilitation: Handbook for Teaching Cognitive Skills* (1991) as the “coach.” The program curriculum emphasizes group discussion, role-playing, games, puzzles and reasoning exercises that are designed to build skills and be fun for the program participants. Eight subject modules teach specific skills and are described in Table 2.1. Offenders develop thinking skills that enable them to increase their range of options when faced with problems or issues that have caused them problems in the past. This happens by introducing one skill, then later repeating that material along with a similar but new cognitive skill. This iterative approach requires that the program be delivered according to the schedule specified by the Ross and Fabiano.

*The program curriculum emphasizes group discussion, role-playing, games, puzzles and reasoning exercises that are designed to build skills and be fun for the program participants.*

The developers believe that adherence to the module sequence is a critical component of effectively delivering the program, and they have specified the sequence in the Program Delivery Schedule (see Appendix A). Further, to allow participants to integrate the material into their lives, the developers emphasize that only one session should be delivered per group meeting. Finally, Ross and Fabiano emphasize that the program should be delivered according to a schedule that allows for a minimum of two sessions per week.

**Table 2.1**  
**Program Modules and Description of Cognitive Skills Taught**

MODULE	DESCRIPTION OF MODULE AND COGNITIVE SKILL COMPONENTS
Problem Solving	Offenders are taught to recognize when a problem exists, define a problem verbally, identify feelings associated with problems, separate facts from opinions, assemble necessary information to generate alternative problem solutions, consider all of the consequences, and select the best solution.
Social Skills	Offenders are taught the skills to act pro-socially rather than anti-socially. The skills include: asking for help, expressing a complaint, persuading others, responding to others' feelings, and responding to persuasion, failure, contradictory messages, and complaints. Five steps are used to teach these skills: pre-training*, modeling, role-playing, feedback, and transfer of training (using the skills in real life situations).
Negotiation Skills	Offenders are asked to identify their own method of managing interpersonal conflict. They are taught skills to compromise in situations of conflict, specifically by identifying options to problems, identifying consequences to various options, and simulating the information through the use of role plays, practice, and feedback.
Managing Emotions	Offenders are taught the skills to manage their emotions when responding to interpersonal conflict. These skills can prevent them from responding to conflict out of anger or other strong emotional states. Specifically, they focus on recognizing their emotions in these contexts, and using skills such as monitored breathing and self-talk to control their emotions.
Creative thinking	This module responds to the basic cognitive deficit in an offender's ability to develop alternative views of situations and alternative methods of solving problems or achieving goals. It teaches the offender systematic thinking processes.
Values Enhancement	Offenders are challenged to examine their beliefs and consider their points of view along with the viewpoints of others. No right or wrong values are promulgated in this module. The primary method used to examine values is the use of moral dilemma scenarios, however, values and beliefs are discussed throughout the program as they arise.



Critical Reasoning	In this module, offenders are taught to think carefully, logically, and rationally. This module is designed to increase offenders' intellectual curiosity, objectivity, flexibility, sound judgment, open-mindedness, decisiveness, and respect for other points of view.
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\* Pre-training involves explaining to the group why it is important to learn the particular skill taught in each session, and role-playing a scenario in which the particular skill is *not* used.

Adapted from *Reasoning and Rehabilitation: A Handbook for Teaching Cognitive Skills*, Volumes 1&2 Handbook and Supplements, produced and distributed by T3 Associates, July 1991.

## EXPECTATIONS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Program participants are expected to attend bi-weekly sessions, for 18 weeks. The program is designed to be an interactive and participatory experience--not one in which participants are lectured "to," but rather one in which they actively participate and acquire skills. Participants are expected to begin the program together and remain in the program for the duration.

## EXPECTATIONS OF COACHES

The R&R program requires that all coaches be taught to deliver the program by certified trainers. As part of the training package, every new coach receives a copy of the *Handbook for Teaching Cognitive Skills*, which includes descriptions of the theory on which the program is based, all information that should be taught, and descriptions of what offenders should learn, as well as all the visual training supplements necessary to deliver the program.<sup>4</sup> According to the *Handbook* (1991:2), coaches must have the following abilities and personal characteristics:

- 1) Above average verbal skills;
- 2) Ability to relate positively and empathetically to offenders, but to do so while maintaining a relationship which does not compromise than rules, regulations and mission of the correctional agency;
- 3) Sensitivity to group dynamics and ability to stimulate groups and promote interest and high activity levels while maintaining adequate discipline;
- 4) Ability to confront offenders without demeaning them;
- 5) Above average interpersonal skills, and, in particular, the social/cognitive skills he/she wishes to acquire;
  - a) Empathy (versus egocentricity)
  - b) Effective problem solving
  - c) Well developed values
  - d) Rational and logical reasoning
  - e) Openness to new ideas (versus rigidity)
- 6) Successful experience in managing groups of poorly motivated individuals who may be passively or aggressively hostile or critical;

***The program is designed to be an interactive and participatory experience--not one in which participants are lectured "to," but rather one in which they actively participate and acquire skills.***

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<sup>4</sup> Modifications to program content and delivery methods were provided to coaches during the retraining session conducted between March 14-16, 1994 and sponsored by the state Judicial Department. Local certified trainers were also present during this retraining session to learn about these modifications to the R&R program.

- 7) Humility -- willingness to consider views (of both participants and program developers) which may not jibe with their own;
- 8) Enthusiasm; and
- 9) Thorough understanding of the cognitive model.

The specific materials, activities, and administrative arrangements needed to deliver the R&R program in Colorado's JISP are described below.

*Training of probation officers.* All coaches must be trained by a certified R&R trainer. Training lasts one week, and focuses on explaining the theories, modules, and role-playing/feedback regarding session delivery. In Colorado, two probation officers have been certified as R&R trainers.<sup>5</sup>

*Physical facilities.* The R&R program should be delivered in an appropriate training room. According to Ross and Fabiano (1991: 7) the program should be delivered in a room that is large enough for the students to view any visual material, and where they can adequately hear discussions by all program participants. According to interview data, it is important that the room not be too large that the students can get "lost," or can maintain an aloofness. The room also should not be too cramped, so as to invade participants' personal boundaries and safety.

*Training materials.* Materials such as flip charts, overhead projector, de Bono CORT cards,<sup>6</sup> and the games *Scruples*<sup>7</sup> and the *Dilemma Game*<sup>8</sup> must be provided by each local probation department. Some training materials (e.g. overhead charts and figures, photographs, worksheets, and role play scenarios) and order forms for the materials that must be purchased are provided in the training manual.

*Class preparation.* Thorough lesson preparation on the part of all coaches is necessary for appropriate program delivery. Coaches are trained that preparatory steps must be taken before the program can be delivered for the first time. Specifically, a separate lesson plan should be prepared for each session, and a minimum of two hours should be allowed to prepare such plans. Preparation time for future program delivery should not be quite as extensive. The program developers estimate that "approximately 70 hours are required for preparation before staff are able to deliver their

***A separate lesson plan should be prepared for each session, and a minimum of two hours should be allowed to prepare such plans.***

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5 Two additional probation officers have completed the training curriculum requirements except for the submission of video tapes for review by Ms. Fabiano. The positive review of video tapes is the final requirement needed for trainer certification.

6 These are cards developed by Edward de Bono as a method to stimulate and remind individuals to systematically apply creative thinking strategies in many situations. These cards are similar to flash cards used to learn simple mathematics, and they present one "tool" per card along with an explanation of the tool and examples of its use.

7 *Scruples* is a game used in the values enhancement module of the program. In this game participants deal with real life moral dilemmas. This game requires participants to anticipate other players' ethical and moral choices as well as their feelings and values. To do well in the game, players must actively participate, and learn the skills being taught in the R&R program.

8 *The Dilemma Game* is used in the values enhancement module of the program and it sets up a scenario in which participants must each take on particular roles and must make a group decision regarding the fate of all participants.

first program” (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995:4). Further, the *Guide to Lesson Preparation* identifies the following preparation steps:

- P Identifying and sequencing learning objectives;
- P Outlining the session flow and linking with objectives and methods;
- P Planning introductions, conclusions and summaries for each session; and
- P Identifying reference points for sequencing.

***Developers suggest that the program should be delivered at a pace of no fewer than two sessions per week, but could be delivered more frequently, particularly in residential settings, if desired by the coach.***

### **More about Program Coaches**

Coaches are taught to follow the structure of the Handbook, but not to read verbatim from the book. Coaches must have a clear understanding of the material before they can successfully present it to students. Coaches are expected to deliver the content of the program by linking concepts across modules with content that is personally relevant to the participants. Coaches are expected to facilitate and contain discussions. Coaches must be very assertive in their program delivery style: They must take opportunities to challenge participants’ thinking, for this is the heart of the program. They must clearly and correctly communicate to students how and when to use the tools learned in the program.

The challenge to the coach is to make each session relevant to the participants. This occurs by asking participants to apply skills and concepts to real life situations. Further, coaches should be able to assess whether participants are grasping the material and, if not, must be able to change delivery strategies when they are not working.

The program developers are clear that the program’s content, material and schedule of delivery are not to be altered (see Appendix A for schedule of delivery). “Failure to follow the required sequencing of the sessions may not only interfere with the offender’s progress, it will also confuse and frustrate him and prevent cognitive development” (Ross and Fabiano, 1991:5). However, examples used within the program may be changed to fit local vernacular, customs, culture, ethnicity, gender, and the age of the group of participants. Developers suggest that the program should be delivered at a pace of no fewer than two sessions per week, but could be delivered more frequently, particularly in residential settings, if desired by the coach.

According to Fabiano (March, 1994),<sup>9</sup> coaches should assure that participant groups be as homogeneous as possible. Under no circumstances should genders be mixed, and coaches should strive to keep the age groups as similar as possible in any group. Coaches are expected to deliver their first group within 30 to 60 days after training, and should have organized personal training materials and lesson plans prior to program delivery (Fabiano, March, 1994).

In sum, the program is well documented in the Handbook (1991), and

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<sup>9</sup> Information provided by Ms. Fabiano during R&R program delivery training, sponsored by the Colorado Judicial Department, 1301 Pennsylvania, Denver, Colorado, March 14 through 16, 1994.

modifications to the original program were provided during the retraining of JISP coaches that occurred prior to the commencement of this evaluation. Further, the Judicial Department sponsored an additional training immediately prior to the commencement of this research project, so that the JISP coaches in the research sites would be prepared to deliver the program within the time frame of the data collection for this evaluation. The research design and data collection approach are described in the following chapter.

# Research Methods: Process and Outcome Evaluation

## EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation design includes two components: (1) an outcome evaluation that used an experimental design to measure changes in experimental and control groups in terms of attitudes measured pre and post program delivery and in terms of differences in recidivism between the two groups, and (2) a process evaluation which looked at program implementation and delivery issues. Sites involved in the outcome evaluation and the process evaluation differed, and are identified in Table 3.1. The outcome and process evaluation components are described in detail below.

**Table 3.1**  
**Evaluation Sites for Two Evaluation Components**

JUDICIAL DISTRICT	EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN COMPONENT PARTICIPANTS	PROCESS EVALUATION COMPONENT PARTICIPANTS
1st (Jefferson County)	X	X
2nd (Denver County)	X	X
4th (El Paso County)		X
8th (Larimer County)		X
17th (Adams County)	X	X
18th (Arapahoe County)	X	X
21st (Mesa County)		X

### Outcome Evaluation: Experimental Design

To answer the question, “Does the R&R program work to change attitudes, thinking patterns, and behaviors?” we needed two groups, one who received the *intervention*, and a comparison group that did not. For this reason, we used an experimental design and randomly assigned JISP clients upon their placement to either participate or not in the cognitive program. This component included the random assignment of all JISP placements in four sites: Denver County, Adams County, Arapahoe County, and Jefferson County. Unless a juvenile was considered by their probation officer to be inappropriate for placement in the cognitive program,<sup>10</sup> every other juvenile sentenced to ISP in each jurisdiction was assigned to the treatment group. Those not assigned to the cognitive skills

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<sup>10</sup> As discussed previously, according to the Probation Supervision Manual, all offenders placed in JISP are expected to receive the R&R program unless the juvenile cannot benefit or unless the juvenile offender’s presence or participation is determined to be potentially disruptive to the group. Offenders determined by the probation officer to be inappropriate for group placement were excluded from the study.

training group comprised the control group. In addition, each jurisdiction was allowed to bypass the random assignment for specific cases in which they believed the offender would be hurt by not receiving the treatment. In these cases (there were three total), offenders were exempted from the study and were not tested on any of the instruments. Random assignment began in March, 1994 and continued through January, 1995.<sup>11</sup>

To measure changes in attitudes, attitudes and skills of offenders in the experimental and control groups were assessed before and after R&R program delivery. To measure differences in recidivism rates between the two groups, convictions for new crimes occurring after JISP termination were compared.

### **General JISP Caseload Description**

To compare the sample of juveniles in our experiment with all juveniles placed on JISP in Colorado, we collected data from official intake and termination files from the State Judicial Department's automated database. This database includes all juveniles sentenced to JISP during fiscal years 1994 and 1995, and includes basic demographic information, offense of conviction, as well as some basic assessment data. These data allow us to determine if the sample was representative of the state-wide JISP population.

If the random assignment was successfully implemented, characteristics of the clients in our experimental and control group samples would mirror those of the JISP client population in Colorado.

Table 3.2 compares characteristics of all juveniles placed on JISP in Colorado during fiscal years 1994 and 1995 with the sample of offenders in the two jurisdictions that comprised the experimental and control groups for this study. Note that the size of our sample groups is very low (each group contains 20 youth), thus our ability to confidently generalize the description of these groups is limited. According to frequency distributions of demographic data and a description of the samples, youths are generally similar in the random assignment and intake groups. Three important exceptions are: (1) offense categories represented among the intake group indicate more property offenses and fewer weapons offenses than either the experimental or control groups. Also, the control group had more violent offenders compared to the experimental or control groups (40.0% compared to 20.0% and 24.7%, respectively), (2) the average risk score for the control group is nearly three points lower, and falls within the medium supervision range, compared to the experimental and intake groups, whose average risk scores fall within the maximum supervision range, and (3) nearly 10% of the statewide JISP intakes were girls, but there are no girls represented in either the control or experimental groups. The lack of females in the study groups is a result of the need to keep the cognitive groups

***Note that the size of our sample groups is very low (each group contains 20 youth), thus our ability to confidently generalize the description of these groups is limited.***

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<sup>11</sup> The random assignment period was extended by one month from December 1994 to January 1995 because two sites intended to begin program delivery during the month of January, which would have enabled us to include more juveniles in the study. However, these groups did not start during that month, and our project time limitations prohibited further extension of the random assignment period.

homogeneous. Since we randomly assigned clients to receive the cognitive group treatment, girls were excluded from the study sample. The differences between the groups in offender risk and offense type limit comparability in terms of offender seriousness. This difference is important, because Ross and Fabiano's model has supported research findings (Fabiano, Robinson, and Porporino, 1990 and Robinson, Grossman, and Porporino, 1991) on the risk principle of case classification (Andrews, Bonta and Hoge, 1990) which suggests that intensive programming is most effective among offenders who are at higher risk of recidivism. Therefore, any differences found in recidivism outcomes between offender groups might be due to either the treatment effect or the level of offender seriousness.

**Table 3.2**  
**Frequency Distribution on Selected Characteristics for**  
**All Juveniles Placed on ISP in Fiscal Years 1994 and**  
**1995 and Randomized Placement Samples of Offenders**

	All 1994 and 1995 JISP Intakes (n= 183)	Experimental Group (n= 20)	Control Group (n= 20)
MEAN AGE	15.7	16.3	16.5
GENDER			
Male	90.2% (165)	100.0% (20)	100.0% (20)
Female	9.8% (18)	0	0
OFFENSE TYPE			
Violent	24.7% (43)	20.0% (4)*	40.0% (8)*
Property	64.4% (112)	55.0% (11)	55.0% (11)
Weapons	3.4% (6)	5.0% (1)	5.0% (1)
Other	7.5% (13)	20.0% (4)*	0% (0)*
AVG. RISK SCORE <sup>12</sup>	19.13	19.22	16.47

Source: JISP intake data from the State Court Administrator's Office of Probation Services.

\* Indicates differences between experimental and control groups.

### Sample Size

Taking into account case flow in the four study jurisdictions, and allowing for non-placement of approximately 25% of juveniles determined to be inappropriate

for the program, the design was expected to yield 75 juveniles each in the experimental and control groups, for a total of 150. In the end, the random assignment component of the study produced a total of 40 juveniles: 20 in the experimental group and 20 in the control group.

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<sup>12</sup> The risk score is a composite of 8 scored items. The scored items include age at first adjudication, prior criminal behavior, institutional commitments or placements, drug use, alcohol use, level of parental control, education, and peer relations. A copy of the Juvenile Assessment of Risk is attached as Appendix B.

Problems in achieving the sample size originally planned were due in part to organizational structure. Specifically, the problems related to slower than anticipated case flow, the inability of particular jurisdictions to schedule the start-up of cognitive groups, and the failure of one county to follow the random assignment procedures. The random assignment procedure often hindered the start-up of cognitive groups because it required between twelve and sixteen offenders (6 to 8 offenders each in the treatment and control groups) to be placed on JISP within a relatively short period of each other. When placements to JISP were slower than anticipated, many offenders terminated JISP before a cognitive group could commence.

Further, only two of the four sites produced cases for analysis. One site, Denver, did not deliver any cognitive groups during the 10-month random assignment period. Officers in Arapahoe County began two cognitive groups, however, one was canceled after ten sessions due to attrition, and all juveniles in the other group were excluded from the analysis because the random assignment protocol was not followed.

### **Process Evaluation**

The process evaluation was conducted in seven sites: the four sites where the random assignment was administered, and three additional sites where the process evaluation was the sole method of evaluation. These sites were selected because they were the only additional sites in which all JISP officers had experienced delivering at least one round of the cognitive program when the evaluation began.

Interviews, group observation via video taped sessions,<sup>13</sup> and client intake and discharge information were used to collect process information data. The process evaluation focused on providing a detailed description of the actual program operation: How does the program work? How is the program delivered? What is the nature of probation officer-client interactions? What are the goals of the R&R program within JISP? What is the philosophy of each local probation department regarding the use and delivery of the R&R program?

Group observation was used for the following purposes:

- 1) To determine program integrity;<sup>14</sup> and
- 2) To observe program delivery and client responses. To measure program integrity - that is, "Is the program being delivered to clients as it was designed to be delivered?" - coaches were rated on the following factors:

***The process evaluation focused on providing a detailed description of the actual program operation: How does the program work? How is the program delivered? What is the nature of probation officer-client interactions? What is the philosophy of each local probation department regarding the use and delivery of the R&R program?***

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<sup>13</sup> Video taping of group sessions only occurred in the random assignment sites. The discussion of program integrity, though part of the process evaluation, only reflects three of the four random assignment sites.

<sup>14</sup> It was important to assess program integrity to ensure that we were measuring the effects of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program, and not some other intervention.



- a) Understanding of material;
- b) Ability to interact with clients; and
- c) Presentation style.

A total of 24 professionals were interviewed for this study: thirteen probation officers, four JISP program supervisors, three chief probation officers, two state Judicial Department administrators, and two certified R&R program trainers. Interviews were conducted to assess program delivery and client response. That is, are coaches delivering a program that is in keeping with their jurisdiction's philosophy? Do the clients seem to be gaining skills from the program? What is the nature and level of group participation?

### **Evaluation Planning Team**

A team of local stakeholders participated in the design of the evaluation. This team was comprised of JISP officers, a probation supervisor, a chief probation officer, a judge, a state senator, DCJ research staff, and two NIJ project consultants. This team met throughout the planning phase of the project to discuss such issues as the focus of the evaluation, the feasibility of using an experimental design, sample size, and the description of JISP clients. Once the basic design of the project was agreed on, the team met throughout the evaluation to discuss program concepts and measurement issues, data collection items, logistical issues regarding random assignment and the process of conducting pre- and posttests, and to identify key people to interview for the process evaluation. The team met twice during the data collection phase of the evaluation for status reports and to discuss and identify solutions to problems encountered. The team met on a final occasion to review the draft report of the findings of the evaluation.

In addition to ongoing meetings with the local evaluation team, early in the evaluation planning phase, DCJ staff met with Elizabeth Fabiano and Frank Porporino, the proprietors of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation training. The focus of this meeting was to discuss the evaluation project, and, specifically to identify what they believed to be the crucial components of the program, and the skills most critical to measure. At this meeting, Ms. Fabiano agreed to conduct a video tape review of JISP coaches for the program integrity component of this evaluation.

### **Outcome Measures**

Reduction of recidivism is the overarching goal of the R&R program. The theoretical basis of the R&R program holds that reduction in recidivism is achieved by reducing other factors associated with criminal behavior, particularly improving cognitive skills that allow offenders to change criminal behaviors and criminal attitudes into those that are more productive and socially acceptable.

To measure recidivism rates of juveniles in the sample, DCJ researchers conducted interviews with JISP officers who supervised the offenders in the sample six months after termination from JISP. Recidivism was measured by rearrest for a new crime. It is important to note that juveniles who successfully

***A team of local stakeholders participated in the design of the evaluation. This team was comprised of JISP officers, a probation supervisor, a chief probation officer, a judge, a state senator, DCJ research staff, and two NIJ project consultants.***

terminated JISP were transferred to regular probation supervision, so they were not necessarily free from supervision during this six-month follow-up. Those offenders who failed JISP supervision typically moved to a more strict form of supervision, perhaps boot camp, detention, or commitment to a State institution. Data on program termination were also collected.

A second outcome measure was used to determine the extent of change in cognitive skills and functioning among the sample the experimental and control groups. This was assessed by focusing on nine areas that are related to effective cognitive functioning skills addressed by the R&R program and include:

- 1) Ability to recognize problems exist;
- 2) Ability to solve interpersonal problems;
- 3) Ability to think of and develop alternatives;
- 4) Awareness of consequences;
- 5) Ability to set and achieve goals;
- 6) Level of egocentricity;
- 7) Social perspective taking;
- 8) Level of impulsivity; and
- 9) Cognitive style (rigid thinking versus the ability to think abstractly).

Two instruments were used in the pre and posttest interviews (copies of these instruments, the statement of confidentiality, and the interview protocol can be found in Appendix C). The first instrument, a semi-structured interview is a slightly modified version of the semi-structured interview developed by the authors of the program as part of a larger cognitive skills assessment battery. This instrument was chosen because its semi-structured nature allowed program participants to expand on answers beyond a yes/no, which allowed for a wide range of answers and assessment of skill levels. This instrument, or variations of it, has also been used in other evaluations of the R&R program (Robinson, Grossman, and Porporino, 1991 and Fabiano, Robinson, and Porporino, 1990) and was found to be useful in measuring change in relevant skill levels.

The second instrument is a 70-item battery of statements measuring concepts or attitudes related to crime and criminal attitudes that respondents were asked to rank on a Likert scale format. This instrument is a modified version of a 120-item instrument developed by Johnson and Hunter for their 1991 evaluation of the SDOP program in Colorado,<sup>15</sup> one component of which was delivery of the R&R program. The items on the original instrument were selected either because they had a theoretical relationship with delinquency, a logical association with a socially acceptable lifestyle, or because change in the factor was a specific objective of the R&R program (Johnson and Hunter, 1992:3). The original instrument contained indicators of drug use which was not a concern in the present evaluation and were thus deleted for purposes of the current evaluation. Johnson and Hunter designed the instrument so certain items could be combined into additive scales containing

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<sup>15</sup> This instrument was pilot tested on a group of college students, and analyzed to assess clarity and the ability of the items to differentiate among respondents, and to construct scales with acceptable reliability levels and item-scale correlations (Johnson and Hunter, 1992).

from three to eight items each to measure relevant program objectives. The 14 concepts and attitudes, the questionnaire items used to develop each scale, and the direction of desired change on each scale are described in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3**  
**Concepts and Attitudes Measured by Pre- and Posttest Questionnaire**

CONCEPT / ATTITUDE	# OF ITEMS IN SCALE	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM #'s INCLUDED IN CONCEPT/ATTITUDE	DESIRED DIRECTION OF CHANGE
Self-control	4	1 + 13 + 14 + 15	Increase
Normlessness	3	2 + 3 + 7	Decrease
Susceptibility to Peer Influence Toward Deviance	3	4 + 5 + 6	Decrease
General Susceptibility to External Influence	5	8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12	Decrease
Powerlessness/Fatalism	6	16 + 17 + 18 + 19 + 20 + 21	Decrease
Problem Solving Ability	7	22 + 23 + 24 + 25 + 26 + 27 + 28	Increase
Rigidity and Closed-mindedness	5	35 + 36 + 37 + 38 + 39	Decrease
Empathy	3	40 + 41 + 42	Increase
Acceptance of Rationalizations for Criminal Behavior	7	48 + 49 + 50 + 51 + 52 + 53 + 54	Decrease
Awareness of Existence of Victims	4	59 + 60 + 65 + 66	Increase
Commitment to Socially Acceptable Goals	4	71 + 73 + 74 + 75	Increase
Positive Labeling	5	81 + 82 + 83 + 84 + 85	Increase
Attitudes Opposing Criminal Behavior	6	87 + 88 + 89 + 90 + 91 + 92	Increase
Exposure to Criminal Peers	8	93 + 84 + 85 + 86 + 87 + 98 + 99 + 100	Decrease

### LIMITATIONS OR DEFICIENCIES OF INSTRUMENTS

The semi-structured interview instrument used in the pre and posttests did not leave the respondent enough room to answer the questions from his own experience. The scenarios given were contrived and possibly not extremely relevant to this group of youth. Had we asked more direct and personally relevant questions, such as “how have you used any of the skills in your daily activities?”, or “Can you give me an example of how you manage conflict in your own life?” perhaps we would have received a greater variation in responses. Rather, the questions on the instrument too often afforded respondents the ability to answer a question with a simple yes/no answer. For instance the question “Do you feel you have problems?” was most often responded to with the answer “no,” rather than eliciting a response such as “I have some problems,” or “not many,” or “yes, but I wouldn’t call them serious.” Such questions would have also allowed the interviewer to probe about the nature or level of problems.

The appropriateness of the instruments was decided by the evaluation’s advisory committee review. Reliability was managed by using instruments with fixed

*The semi-structured interview instrument used in the pre and posttests did not leave the respondent enough room to answer the questions from his own experience. The scenarios given were contrived and possibly not extremely relevant to this group of youth.*

questions. Interviewers were trained to further explain a question if requested, but not to define the question for the respondent. Inter-rater reliability was managed by scoring all pre and posttests with all interviewers present.

## **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

Carefully developed programs can fail if proper implementation fails to occur. In this evaluation, we gathered information regarding the following three aspects of implementation:

- 1) Level of pre-program delivery planning and lesson plan preparation;
- 2) Amount of time between training/retraining and first program delivery; and
- 3) Program integrity measured via reviews of video taped sessions of each coach by T3 and Associates staff.

These issues were selected because they are the most crucial factors of implementation for which the probation officer/coach has responsibility, according to Fabiano. Other factors that can impact program implementation, such as the probation officer's perceived level of support from departmental administrators, were also discussed in interviews with probation officer.

## **PROCESS EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

Backup data for implementation measures were collected through interviews with all JISP officers, supervisors and in some jurisdictions Chief Probation Officers, state-level administrators, and certified local R&R trainers. Additional questions regarding such issues as agency support for program delivery, degree of comfort in delivering the program, program preparation and training, perceptions of how the program was received, and what factors contributed to successful program delivery and poor program delivery were asked of individuals in each of these groups. Interviews with probation staff, administrators, and R&R trainers took place toward the end and after the random assignment period. These interviews were semi-structured face-to-face interviews that lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each.<sup>16</sup>

Video tape schedules were set up to capture seven of the 35 sessions. Copies of these video tapes were forwarded to Ms. Fabiano for review and rating.

***Video tape schedules were set up to capture seven of the 35 sessions. Copies of these video tapes were forwarded to Ms. Fabiano for review and rating.***

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<sup>16</sup> The interview with Mesa County JISP officers was conducted over the telephone. An appointment was made and two officers were interviewed.

Table 3.4 shows which sessions were supposed to be video taped.<sup>17</sup> DCJ research staff were available to video tape all assigned sessions. In one jurisdiction, a probation officer offered to use his personal video camera to tape the appropriate sessions. DCJ staff would call to remind him of which sessions to tape, and he would set up the camera. At the end of the 35-week program, the tape was to be turned in to DCJ. However, this tape was inadvertently recorded over, thus only one session was captured for evaluation review. In the other two sites, officers felt it would be disruptive to have DCJ staff present during the entire session, so video tape equipment was left for the probation officer (or group a member) to operate. Sometimes, sessions were rescheduled without notifying DCJ research staff, thus eliminating the ability to video tape the sessions as planned. In some cases, the equipment was either run incorrectly or not run at all. By the end of the study period, each coach that conducted a group involved in this evaluation (including one coach whose cases were not used in the random assignment sample) had at least one, and as many as four, video taped sessions that were submitted to T3 and Associates for review and evaluation of program integrity and program delivery.

**Table 3.4**  
**Program Video Tape Schedule**

R&R COGNITIVE SKILLS PROGRAM VIDEO TAPING SCHEDULE	
<b>Day 04</b>	Problem Identification - Remembering and Stating
<b>Day 15</b>	AGO/Values Enhancement
<b>Day 16</b>	Dealing with Anger
<b>Day 19</b>	Negotiation
<b>Day 25</b>	Responding to Failure
<b>Day 28</b>	Review and Practice - Grab Bag
<b>Day 29</b>	Propaganda and Persuasion

## OUTCOME DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The purpose of the pre- and posttest interview was to assess the pre- and post-cognitive skill levels and attitudes of each juvenile offender in the study. Prior to each interview, subjects were given a confidentiality of information form to read, which was also paraphrased by the interviewer. If the juvenile understood and agreed with the contents of the form they were asked to initial for approval. To collect pre- and posttest attitude information, juvenile offenders in both the experimental and control groups were asked to participate in a 45 to 60 minute interview with a DCJ researcher prior the program start-up and again after program completion.

Recidivism data were collected from JISP officers twelve months after the random assignment period ended. This allowed ample time for clients to complete

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<sup>17</sup> Prior to program delivery by each coach, a schedule of sessions identified for video-taping, along with their corresponding dates was created and reviewed by the coach and DCJ researchers.

JISP and move on to regular probation. As with the interviews described above, an appointment was made in advance with the probation officers, and a list of names was sent ahead of time, along with the data collection elements, so all relevant data would be available during the interview. Interviewing the probation officer to obtain recidivism data also allowed the data collector to gather additional anecdotal information about each case that might shed light on the program performance of that individual.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Using SPSS for Windows, basic descriptive statistics (cross tabulations and frequencies) were used to profile and describe each of the sample groups: Experimental and control groups and the population of cases sentenced to JISP statewide during fiscal years 1994 and 1995. T-tests were used to measure differences in pretest and posttest results on the cognitive skills interview and the attitude questionnaire, as well as to measure differences in recidivism rates.

## Research Findings

The Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) cognitive skills program was implemented in Colorado as a mandatory<sup>18</sup> program component of the new Juvenile Intensive Supervision Probation (JISP) program in 1992. JISP caseload standards limit officers' caseloads to 15 clients. Implementation of JISP, was limited at first to a pilot study in seven Colorado judicial districts,<sup>19</sup> and a year later expanded to statewide implementation. In addition to conditions typically associated with ISP programs, such as frequent contacts with the probation officer, increased surveillance, random urinalysis, and strong enforcement of conditions (Petersilia and Turner, 1993), the Colorado JISP program requires participation of JISP offenders in the Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) cognitive skills development program.

JISP is a program designed for serious juvenile offenders, as a diversion from incarceration in the State's commitment facilities. An evaluation of the pilot JISP sites found that JISP clients and juvenile offenders placed in commitment facilities "were not significantly different on the following factors: current age, age at first arrest, prior criminal history, prior out-of-home placements, prior alcohol/drug problems, risk scores and needs scores" (English, 1993:ii). Thus, JISP clients are more serious in terms of criminal history and criminogenic risk factors (as measured by the State's risk and needs scoring instruments) than juveniles placed on regular probation in Colorado.

### PROBATION OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

In the four sites identified for participation in the experimental design phase of the evaluation, there were a total of ten probation officers: Three in Denver County, two in Adams County, two in Arapahoe County, and three in Jefferson County.<sup>20</sup> Half of these officers (n=5) participated in the R&R retraining session conducted by Ms. Fabiano, four were trained for the first time in March 1994 by local certified trainers, and one was trained at the annual Colorado Probation Training Institute in August 1994.<sup>21</sup> Four officers delivered the cognitive skills program during this evaluation, each of these officers had conducted at least two previous sessions of the R&R program.

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18 The State Judicial Department's JISP Supervision Guidelines state that "(a)ll youth will participate in the cognitive learning groups unless determined that the youth cannot benefit, or would be disruptive to the groups" (p. 14).

19 The following judicial districts were selected as pilot sites: 1st (Jefferson County), 2nd (Denver County), 4th (El Paso County), 10th (Pueblo County), 17th (Adams County), 18th (Arapahoe County), and the 21st (Mesa County).

20 Two officers are assigned JISP caseloads in Jefferson County, however, one officer was reassigned during the duration of this project. The officer who took over that caseload participated in the process evaluation interviews, and participated in the evaluation planning process.

21 The officer trained in August 1994 was assigned a JISP caseload after this evaluation began.

For the process evaluation phase of this project, seven of ten officers involved in the experimental design phase of the program, and six JISP officers in three additional sites were involved in the process evaluation phase. Of these thirteen officers, seven had delivered the R&R program at least twice prior to the time the evaluation began, and five had never delivered the program.

## **CLIENTS INVOLVED IN THE R&R PROGRAM**

According to the Colorado Judicial Department Juvenile Intensive Supervision Pilot Program Guidelines (14: no date) all JISP clients are required to participate in the R&R cognitive program unless they are considered to be unreasonably disruptive or unable to benefit from the program for some other reason. A consistent method to detect those youth who would be disruptive or for whom the program would not be beneficial has not been developed. Some officers use the Strategies for Juvenile Supervision (SJS)<sup>22</sup> classification to make this determination, along with observation of the youth's behavior, attitude, and mental capabilities.<sup>23</sup>

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Program Implementation**

This section reports findings on program implementation. Specifically, we address the issues of pre-program delivery preparation, officers' approaches to "selling" the program to adolescent clients, the amount of time between R&R training and first program delivery session, and program integrity--was the program delivered by JISP officers in this study actually the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program designed by Ross and Fabiano? Finally, we present the perceptions of probation officers, administrators, and trainers on how the R&R program could be improved for use with juveniles in Colorado.

#### *How much time did probation officers prepare for program delivery?*

R&R program trainers teach that the ideal amount of time to adequately prepare for program delivery is 70 hours, or 2 hours for each of the 35 sessions. Raynor and Vanstone (1992:23) reported as a major evaluation finding that the R&R program "requires major investment and a high level of detailed preparation." Preparation includes gaining a clear understanding of the skills taught, preparing lesson plans for each session, and preparing overheads and other materials used in R&R group sessions.

JISP officers involved in the process evaluation were asked how much time they spent in preparation for program delivery. While their answers varied, and all

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22 The Strategies for Juvenile Supervision (SJS) is a questionnaire used by probation officers to assess juvenile offenders on the following dimensions: reasons for involvement in the current crime, school adjustment, interpersonal relationships, feelings, family attitudes, future plans, and brief criminal history information.

23 All officers interviewed for this project and, indeed, the program developers agree that persons who are considered to be mentally retarded are not appropriate participants in this program.



officers reported preparing some level of lesson plans, only two of the thirteen officers interviewed reported spending an average of two hours of preparation time per session. The other eleven officers reported spending an average of 30 minutes preparing for each session. Often, this preparation was done immediately before the session delivery. Officers in one jurisdiction reported they could only prepare lesson plans at home because there was no reduction in regular job duties to prepare for the additional work of delivering the R&R program.<sup>24</sup> Officers in another jurisdiction reported they met after every session to discuss process issues of the most recent group session. These officers rotated responsibility for session delivery, so overall lesson preparation time decreased.

*Did officers regularly “sell” the program to offenders?*

Preparation for program delivery includes preparing program participants. In his report of New Mexico’s implementation of the Ross and Fabiano program, DeMaret suggests that “the program be introduced in such a way that it can be seen by potential students as an opportunity that is unique and special...It is felt that mishandling of the critical introductory stage could seriously jeopardize program success” (DeMaret, 1991:11). Indeed, Ross and Fabiano’s Handbook (1991) urges coaches to meet with each group member individually prior to commencement of the program. Such meetings should be held to discuss the training and respond to the participant’s concerns regarding participation. “These individual meetings should be viewed, not only as an opportunity for you to develop a working relationship with them, but also as an opportunity to do some lobbying to get their support for the training program” (Ross and Fabiano, 1991: 9). A sample of the contents of this initial meeting is provided for coaches in the Handbook.

R&R trainers and seven JISP officers interviewed conceded that adolescents are harder to sell the program to compared to adults. As one officer noted “adults (on probation) know their lives are messed up, and have greater opportunities to understand that these skills work. They have more history with failure, and probably more history with success as well.” Juveniles may lack such life experiences, however, one of the responsibilities of the coach is to discern the client’s strengths and weaknesses and market the program accordingly.

While all officers interviewed believed the program helps teach young offenders useful life skills, not all officers shared the same level of enthusiasm for the R&R program. Most JISP officers interviewed described the general program to clients in an effort to pique interest in the group, but all officers reported they stressed most heavily that participation in the program was a mandatory component of JISP. In fact, one officer summed up his “sales pitch” like this: “It’s either group or jail.” In addition to stressing the cognitive program as mandatory, some officers did describe their efforts at highlighting the benefits of the program. The efforts of two JISP officers at generating interest and excitement in the program are described below:

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<sup>24</sup> State probation administrators indicate that delivery of and preparation for the R&R program is a regular job duty of JISP officers, not an additional duty.

One probation officer reportedly worked hard to inform incoming group members of the benefits the program has to offer, claiming that it is “essential for kids to buy-in up front. They need to buy it to change their life.” This officer prepared flyers for all incoming group members and their parents to describe the group process and the skills taught in the group.

Another officer reported selling the program by focusing on the group as “a way to have fun and learn” particular skills that can help participants think better and make better decisions.

*How much time lapsed between coaches’ training and program delivery?*

On average, a period of 3.2 months lapsed between R&R program training and program delivery for the 13 JISP officers interviewed (data not presented). This average is skewed, however, by two officers: one waited a period of nine months, and one waited for twelve months before delivering the program for the first time. In both of these cases, officers were prohibited from delivering the program because there were not enough juveniles to participate. Seven officers (53.8% of those interviewed) delivered their first program within two months of training, which is within the standard time frame of program training to delivery recommended by Ross and Fabiano. Three officers delivered the program within three months of being trained.

*Did the program delivery meet the standards of Reasoning and Rehabilitation trainers?*

Overall, the assessment of the program integrity component of this evaluation concluded that the R&R program was “only barely implemented...information was imparted but skills were not developed” (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995:1, 5). Findings from the review of video taped sessions indicate that, generally, the *content* of the program was delivered--often by reading directly from the manual and thereby not demonstrating understanding of the material--however, the *process* of actually imparting knowledge and skills to the offenders barely occurred, according to the video tape review (a copy of this report is attached as Appendix D).

In general, the reviewers indicated that the video taped sessions they evaluated were on track with other first delivery performances they had seen, however, “with more apparent effort being made and with superior style of delivery and rapport with the offenders” (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995: 2). All coaches evaluated “have excellent styles and they effortlessly portray all of the characteristics needed to be

an effective ‘coach.’ Their buy-in with respect to the program and its goals is excellent” (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995: 5).

Several shortfalls were identified in the report regarding program delivery and program integrity. These include:

**P** Failure to link crucial program concepts together;

***Overall, the assessment of the program integrity component of this evaluation concluded that the R&R program was “only barely implemented...information was imparted but skills were not developed” (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995:1, 5).***

- P Cutting important discussions short and pursuing irrelevant tangents;
- P Explaining new skills incorrectly or in a confusing manner;
- P Failure to challenge thinking (while challenging values instead -- focus was on content rather than process);
- P Failure to deliver the program within 20 to 60 days following training (or retraining);
- P Lack of lesson preparation;
- P Inappropriately combining sessions that were designed to be delivered separately; and
- P Failure to make the program relevant to juveniles.

These shortfalls are important, and have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of cognitive skills development and the effectiveness of the program in general. However, with some effort on the part of coaches, these problems can be fixed. The program delivery report sums the overall evaluation of program integrity in the following way:

The program is not easy to deliver and it is very much dependent on the “technology” of skills development. This is different from most programs that simply allow groups to “go with the flow,” wander and pursue issues. We want to reiterate that (coaches’) determination was obvious...the coaches attempted to deliver (the program) as the manual specified. It is the process, and not the content which they now need to master. They exhibited great effort in attempting to engage the offenders.... What impact this may have had remains to be seen.

With some attention to correcting “process” issues, with greater attention to “lesson-preparation” (and the time and support of management to have the required time available) and, continued practice in program delivery, all will be excellent coaches. We believe the result will be a greater impact on the offenders and program outcome (Fabiano and Porporino, 1995:5).

*How can the R&R program be improved for use with juveniles in Colorado?*

The most common suggestion for improving the R&R program for use with adolescents was to shorten the program duration. Probation officers, trainers and administrators interviewed all agreed that the R&R program is too long for this juvenile population. Some of those interviewed believed the program was as much as 50% too long. Probation officers reported that juvenile participants began losing interest about half way through the 18-week program. Also, some officers believed that two hours per session is too long for this population. Most officers reported that 60 to 90 minute sessions would be optimal, for it was after that point that interest waned. Many officers reported spending a lot of time redirecting the group members’ attention to the material, because they were easily distracted to other subjects.

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## Measures of Offenders' Outcome

To measure program impact on key attitudinal and cognitive measures for experimental and control group members, average scores from both instruments at pretest (before group participation) were compared with average scores at posttest (after group completion) to determine where change was significant. Both instruments measured similar attitudes and skill levels, however, results from the two tests are conflicting.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 display the results of the pre and posttest attitude and skills information, as measured by two instruments: The interview information garnered through (1) a questionnaire with 9 scored responses whose scores ranged from 1 (no need for change) to 5 (high need for change), and (2) a 70-item battery of statements, that respondents were asked to rank on a Likert scale format, which measured concepts and attitudes related to crime. The respondent's answers were combined to create composite measurements of 14 different attitudes or behaviors. Table 4.3 displays recidivism rates for the experimental and control groups as measured by new crimes or technical violations committed while still on ISP and new crimes or technical violations committed after termination from ISP (and during supervision on regular probation).

Results generated from the semi-structured interview reveal that cognitive skills among the experimental group improved in eight of the nine skill areas (see Table 4.1) and became worse between pre and posttesting in one of the nine areas (problem recognition). Skill improvement in three areas (egocentricity, social perspective taking, and cognitive style) was significant. Among the control group of offenders, cognitive skills improved (but not statistically significantly) three skill areas (developing alternatives, social perspective taking, and cognitive style) and became worse in four of the nine areas (problem recognition, ability to set goals, awareness of consequences, and egocentricity), remained the same in two skill areas (problem solving and impulsivity). In summary, the skill levels among the control group increased in eight of the nine areas (this increase being significant in only three of the areas, however), compared to only increasing in three of the nine areas for the control group. The findings must be interpreted with caution given the small number of youth in the study.

**Table 4.1**  
**Experimental Group's Pre and Posttest Scores Skill Development Needs for Nine Skill Areas: Semi-structured Interview Instrument**

SKILL LEVEL ( 1= low need; 5 = high need for change)	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (n= 20)			CONTROL GROUP (n= 20)		
	Mean Score at Pretest	Mean Score at Posttest	P Value	Mean Score at Pretest	Mean Score at Posttest	P Value
Problem Recognition	4.17	4.39	.495	4.46	4.54	.808
Problem Solving Ability	4.44	4.33	.717	4.31	4.31	1.00
Ability to Develop Alternatives	4.67	.417	.095	4.31	4.23	.866
Ability to Set and Achieve Goals	4.44	3.94	.132	3.85	4.15	.515

Awareness of Consequences	4.44	4.22	.449	3.92	4.00	.880
Egocentricity	4.39	3.56	.003*	3.62	4.15	.151
Social Perspective Taking	4.44	3.83	.023*	3.92	3.69	.598
Impulsivity	4.67	4.22	.104	3.92	3.92	1.00
Cognitive Style	4.50	3.94	.014*	4.23	3.92	.337

\* Denotes statistically significant findings ( $p \leq .05$ ).

Table 4.2 displays the results from the 70-item battery of statements, which were combined to create composite scores for 14 attitudes and skills. These scores reveal quite a different finding from those reported in Table 4.1. As measured by this instrument, attitudes among offenders in the experimental group changed in the opposite direction than was expected--meaning that they got worse--on all 14 of the composite scales for the experimental group, and changed in the opposite direction in 12 of the 14 scales for the control group. However, among the control group, positive changes occurring in the two attitude categories (susceptibility to external influence and closed-mindedness) were not found to be statistically significant. These findings suggest that nearly all offenders in both the experimental and control groups grew worse in their cognitive abilities. This negative movement is statistically significant in 6 of the 14 skills measured among the experimental group compared to 10 of the 14 skills measured among the control group. According to these scores, the experimental group fared better because negative change occurred less frequently compared to the control group, however, according to these measures, cognitive skill development--the goal of the program--did not take place among either group studied.

***These scores reveal quite a different finding from those reported in Table 4.1. As measured by this instrument, attitudes among offenders in the experimental group changed in the opposite direction than was expected--meaning that they got worse--on all 14 of the composite scales for the experimental group, and changed in the opposite direction in 12 of the 14 scales for the control group.***

**Table 4.2**  
**Pre and Posttest Attitudes and Cognitive Skill Measures:**  
**70-Item Battery of Statements Instrument**

CONCEPT/ATTITUDE	EXPECTED DIRECTION OF CHANGE	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (n= 20)			CONTROL GROUP (n= 20)		
		Mean Score at Pretest	Mean Score at Posttest	p Value	Mean Score at Pretest	Mean Score at Posttest	p Value
Self Control	+	13.39	11.83	.078	14.92	12.54	.049*
Normlessness	-	8.33	8.61	.690	7.15	8.23	.141
Susceptibility to Peer Influence Toward Deviance	-	8.89	10.61	.036*	6.92	11.15	.003*
General Susceptibility to External Influence	-	13.94	14.50	.522	14.58	13.92	.578
Powerlessness/Fatalism	-	16.94	18.83	.127	14.54	17.85	.019*
Problem Solving Ability	+	21.56	19.33	.061	22.85	18.15	.001*
Rigidity and Closed-mindedness	-	12.78	16.72	.019*	15.23	14.15	.446
Empathy	+	10.50	8.50	.042*	10.31	8.46	.040*
Acceptance of Rationalizations for Criminal Behavior	-	19.06	20.71	.275	17.08	23.00	.005*
Awareness of Existence of Victims	+	13.71	12.29	.058	14.38	13.00	.190
Commitment to Socially Acceptable Goals	+	17.50	8.00	.001*	18.54	6.31	.001*
Positive Labeling	+	16.28	13.44	.001*	18.23	14.85	.006*
Attitudes Opposing Criminal Behavior	+	21.78	14.00	.078	24.54	12.38	.001*
Exposure to Criminal Peers	-	21.00	26.72	.019*	16.38	29.00	.001*

\* Denotes statistically significant findings ( $p \leq .05$ ).

Table 4.3 indicates that R&R program participants and non-participants alike were statistically equally likely to recidivate both during and after placement in ISP, indicating that participation in the cognitive program did not effect recidivism rates among those offenders in our sample. It is interesting to note that offenders in the experimental group were twice as likely as the control group to acquire a technical violation while in ISP (30% and 15%, respectively), but offenders in the control group were three times as likely as the experimental group to obtain a technical violation while being supervised on regular probation (5% and 15%, respectively). Neither of these differences is statistically significant, however.

**Table 4.3**  
**Recidivism Rates for Experimental and Control Groups During ISP**  
**Supervision and after ISP Termination**

RECIDIVATING EVENT	RECIDIVISM WHILE UNDER ISP SUPERVISION		RECIDIVISM AFTER ISP TERMINATION	
	Experimental (n= 20)	Control (n= 20)	Experimental (n= 20)	Control (n= 20)
New Crime	4 (20.0%)	4 (20.0%)	3 (15.0%)	2 (10.0%)
Technical Violation	6 (30.0%)	3 (15.0%)	1 (5.0%)	3 (15.0%)
No Violation	10 (50.0%)	13 (65.0%)	16 (80.0%)	15 (75.0%)
Total	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)
	df= 2; p= .494		df= 2; p= .527	

**SUMMARY**

Findings from the process evaluation indicate that JISP officers do not routinely commit the suggested two hours per session of preparation time prior to program delivery. However, all officers did report preparing some type of lesson plan prior to each delivery session. Most officers reported that the demands of their regular JISP job duties do not permit additional time for lengthy lesson preparation. All officers reported they were expected to prepare for and deliver the R&R program with no reduction in regular JISP job duties.

Regarding preparation of adolescent offenders for the R&R program, all JISP officers interviewed reported stressing most strongly the fact that participation in the cognitive program was a mandatory component of JISP. A few officers made a special effort at portraying the program as something that would be fun or that would be beneficial to offenders.

Time between training and program delivery averaged 3.2 months for the group of 13 probation officers interviewed. Ross and Fabiano recommended 60 days or less between training and first program delivery. However, more than half of the officers interviewed (53.8%) did deliver their first program within 60 days of training. Among those officers that took more than 60 days, small caseload sizes, or lack of new cases were cited most frequently as the barrier to meeting this standard guideline. In general, then, this process criterion seems to have been adequately met.

A review of video taped sessions of program delivery revealed that the program delivered by JISP coaches barely met the standards of R&R program developers. Findings from this review indicate that, while the *content* of the program was delivered, the *process* of actually imparting knowledge and skills to the offenders barely occurred. Several shortcomings including the linking of crucial information, lack of lesson preparation, inability to explain concepts or explaining concepts incorrectly, inappropriate combination of program sessions, and failure to make the program relevant to adolescents were noted.

Results of the outcome evaluation provide limited evidence to suggest that offenders in JISP who received the R&R cognitive skills program improved prosocial attitudes or increased cognitive skill levels. Results of one test to measure attitudes and skills indicates improvement in three of nine skill areas measured, compared to no improvement among control group members. However, when using a different instrument to measure the same attitudes and skills, all significant change in attitudes and skills among both experimental and control group members were negative, suggesting that cognitive skills and prosocial attitudes became worse for those who participated in the R&R program, as well as for those that did not participate. This is not surprising since the program was not adequately implemented. Regarding criminal behavior changes, there is no evidence to suggest that offenders who received the cognitive skills training were less likely to recidivate after terminating from JISP.



## Recommendations

The Division's evaluation of Colorado's Juvenile Intensive Supervision Probation's (JISP) Reasoning and Rehabilitation program indicates the program was only minimally implemented in 1994 and 1995 in Colorado. Although training probation officers to deliver the program appeared to be very important to state administrators, the program lacked an adequate organizational infrastructure to support institutionalizing the delivery of this specific cognitive development program.

The outcome evaluation indicates mixed results regarding pro-social attitude change and cognitive skill improvement for program participants: Results of one test to measure attitudes and skills indicates improvement among those adolescents that participated in the program in three areas compared to no improvement for the adolescents that did not participate. Results of a different test that measured the same attitudes and skills indicated all significant change among both participants and nonparticipants was negative.

We do not know if these mixed findings can be attributed to actual behavioral change or to the use of unreliable instruments. Do adolescent offenders who participate in groups with delinquent peers actually develop more anti-social attitudes by virtue of their association? If the instruments did not measure the same things, is one instrument better than the other? If so, which instrument obtains the most reliable measures of attitude change and skill development? These issues merit further investigation. Indeed, if juvenile offenders are developing more negative attitudes while participating in this program, this is a serious finding that deserves immediate attention by probation administrators.

- 1) If the State Judicial Department intends to continue mandating participation in the program, then the administration should prioritize complete and sufficient implementation of the program. To this end, the department must revisit its current training approach, reallocate resources so R&R program implementation is prioritized and monitored, and institute a mechanism of quality control with the explicit purpose of building and maintaining R&R program integrity. The following recommendations are based on the assumption that program administrators will choose to embrace the R&R program as it was developed and direct resources in such a manner that will ensure the integrity of the program.
- 2) The Judicial Department should sponsor a working group of probation administrators, R&R program trainers, R&R coaches, juvenile probation officers, and other relevant parties should work with the program designer (Elizabeth Fabiano) to modify the current R&R program and make the program more directly suited for adolescents. These changes should focus primarily on program duration and session length, but could also be directed toward the program's language, scenarios, and participatory activities.

- 3) Some officers may not be suited or interested in presenting the R&R program to clients. To assist in the selection process of coaches, a screening tool that rates probation officers before being trained to deliver the R&R program could be developed and instituted. Ross and Fabiano used such a screening instrument entitled “Characteristics of An Effective Trainer” for coaches in the pilot project for this program (Fabiano, Robinson, Porporino, 1990). This tool was not made available to State probation administrators, nor to certified coaches during any of the training sessions conducted in Colorado. However, we believe that such a tool would assess the following characteristics:
- P Is the probation officer motivated to teach the program?
  - P Does the officer possess basic group facilitation skills?
  - P Does the officer have the ability think on his or her feet?
  - P Does the officer exhibit the skills to take control of a group?
  - P Does the officer possess a wide repertoire of language skills necessary to interact with all types of people?
  - P Does the officer possess the cognitive and reasoning skills they will be asked to teach?
  - P Is the officer empathetic (without being a pushover)?
- 4) To increase administrative support for the R&R program and to provide continuity of care between JISP and regular probation, probation staff (officers, administrators, and supervisory staff) who are not trained as coaches should be required to participate in a training that reviews the basic philosophy, principles, skills, and requirements (preparation, resources, and skills) of the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program. This training should also include a discussion on the need for top-down support of the program, program implementation issues, and the need for all probation employees to understand the basic tenets of the R&R program.
- 5) To improve program delivery and integrity, we recommend that the Office of Probation Services organize follow-up training sessions for new coaches that take place between 30 and 45 days after the initial R&R program delivery training, and again after a the first program delivery cycle. Such a “booster session” might might eliminate the shortcomings identified by Fabiano and Porporino in their review of video taped sessions (reported in Chapter Five). This training might consist of the following:
- P A general overview of the program’s philosophy, concepts, and key skills;
  - P Discussion of program implementation plans, such as time lines for delivery of first group, preparation issues, additional clarification on issues that were not made clear in the initial training;
  - P One-on-one meeting time between trainers and new coaches to discuss any relevant questions; and
  - P Training on group dynamics and group facilitation.

New coaches would be expected to come to this booster session with prepared lesson plans.

- 6) R&R program delivery training should be preceded by training in basic group facilitation skills. Specifically, a session that covers issues such as the elements of group dynamics, what makes a successful presentation, organization of program materials, the use of role modeling as teaching, and leading successful group discussions would greatly assist in the process of delivering the program.
- 7) To improve and monitor program implementation, an R&R quality control system should be developed and employed by State Judicial. This quality control system could include the following:
  - P A system for identifying potential coaches, with promising skills;
  - P A system for certifying coaches, developed with the assistance of the program developers;<sup>25</sup> and
  - P The development and use of an evaluation form for offenders to rate R&R coaches effectiveness at program delivery.
- 8) We recommend that a full-time cognitive coordinator be located at the Judicial Department's Office of Probation Services (OPS). Given the state's financial and time commitment to the R&R program, and the validation that has been done with the program on adult drug offenders, it seems prudent to formalize this commitment with a full-time coordinator. This person would coordinate training, provide technical assistance on an individual or group basis, coordinate ongoing evaluation of the program, oversee proper and timely implementation of the program of each new trainee, and coordinate screening for potential cognitive coaches. Currently, the OPS schedules training sessions, but does not have the resources to oversee proper implementation of the program. As a result, the three certified trainers in the state, all of whom are probation officers or supervisors themselves, are inundated with calls for technical assistance and consultation for students who have lingering questions or concerns about the program. Or, worse yet, new trainees do not know where to go to get questions answered, and just "figure it out for themselves." These trainers are great resources for the State, and they should be protected from such ongoing requests for assistance that could otherwise be directed toward a statewide coordinator.
- 9) The State Judicial Department should encourage probation departments to advocate parental involvement in the adolescent's development of cognitive skills. Such involvement may enhance the retention of skills as well as increase parental involvement in youths' correctional process. A one to two-hour orientation about the R&R program could be developed that would give parents an understanding of the program, and could give them ideas of how

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25 A certification system could begin with the newly trained coach first delivering the program with a veteran coach, and submitting a series of video tapes to the State monitor for evaluation on a number of issues such as knowledge of the program and skills and ability to manage group dynamics. Once these steps are completed and the new coach has been rated at a satisfactory level, he or she would be certified, and eligible to deliver the program unassisted, if that was their preference. Coaches could continue to pursue levels of expertise in delivery of the program, which would enable them to assist other coaches in such things as co-facilitation, technical assistance on program content and lesson preparation issues, and evaluating video taped sessions by new coaches.

they might help their children integrate the material they are learning. In some cases, assessment of the parent's skills may be conducted, and a separate, but simultaneous program could be run for parents.

- 10) In jurisdictions where staff sizes are limited, or where staff interest in delivering the R&R program does not exist, probation departments could contract with a non-probation officer coach to deliver the R&R cognitive skills program. This contract coach would be expected to have completed lesson preparation, and could deliver up to three groups simultaneously. This would greatly relieve the already busy JISP officer from taking on the additional duties of lesson preparation and program delivery. Contract coaches would be expected to complete interim progress reports on each program participant, and hold monthly meetings with the JISP officer to discuss each participant's progress or lack of progress in the group.

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