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# **Program Evaluation of the Therapeutic Community in a Correctional Setting**

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DNP Scholarly Project Defense

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# Background

- The justice system uses two models:  
Retributive (Punishment) and Rehabilitation (Recovery)
- Organizations that use a rehabilitation model often have a separate program and housing unit for inmates and this is called the therapeutic community (TC)
- In rehabilitation, the therapeutic community is a standard of care across the United States
- Criminal behaviors are often intertwined with trauma and chronic substance abuse
- Exposure to trauma is disproportionately present and has the most significant impact on individuals and communities burdened by poverty, violence, social isolation, racism, and exposure to the criminal justice system

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# Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail (ACRJ)

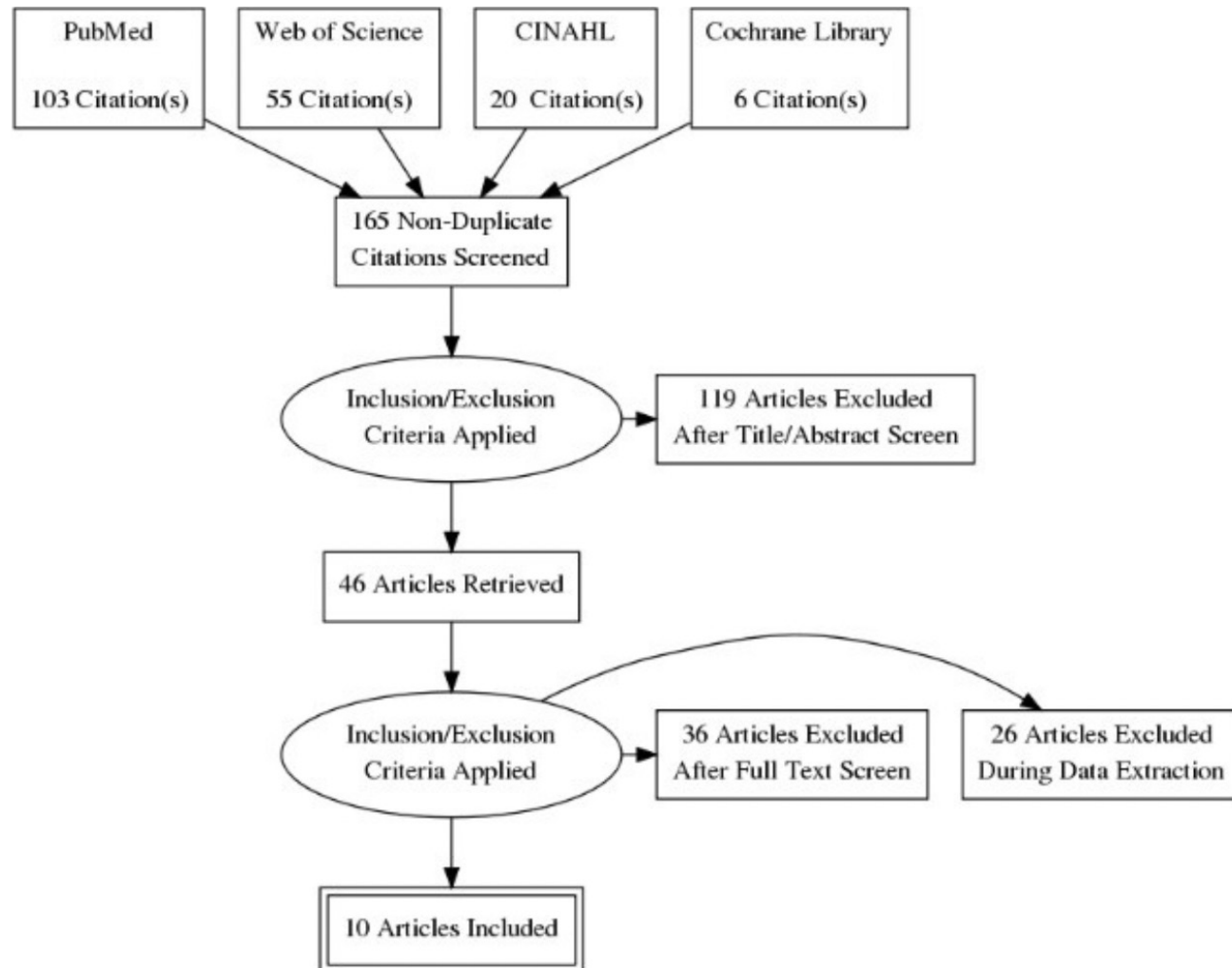
- Strong rehabilitation focus amongst the jails in Virginia
- ACRJ has earned the nick name "Hug-a-thug"

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# Significance of the Issue

- Criminal Sanctions and retributive measures without treatment are the least effective means of reducing future criminal behavior
- Substance use disorder (SAMHSA language) is a significant issue mainly affecting inmates involved in the justice system
- Standard TC programs often lack substance use withdrawal and rehabilitation treatment

# Literature Review Prisma Chart



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# Literature Analysis

- Identified Five Themes:
  - Screening practices for inmates with substance abuse issues
  - The effects of non-biological therapy
  - Coerced treatment of substance abuse
  - The effects of medication-assisted therapy
  - Transitioning treatment

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# Purpose of the Scholarly Project

- To Evaluate the Therapeutic Community Program at Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail (ACRJ)
- The Therapeutic Community Program was implemented in 2000 and paused in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Revise TC with addition of MAT to be implemented in the ACRJ

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# Project Method

- **Agency Clinical Innovation (ACI)** (2010) framework, is a systematic process designed to examine the worth of a program or project in terms of effectiveness, efficacy, and appropriateness
- Three approaches:
  - formative
  - process
  - summative
- Summative approach used for this program evaluation
- Eight steps that were used to complete a program evaluation in the correctional setting

Step 1) Establish evaluation team

Step 2) Planning

Step 3) Program logic

Step 4) Evaluation design

Step 5) Data plan

Step 6) Implementation

Step 7) Communication of results

Step 8) Incorporating findings



# Program Logic

## ***ACRJ Therapeutic Community Program Goals:***

- 1. Delivery of Therapeutic Strategies in a correctional setting at Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail*
- 2. Offer a lifestyle which includes drug abstinence, elimination of anti-social (criminal) behavior; development of employable skills, and the acquisition of positive attitudes, values and behaviors which reflect honesty, responsibility, non-violence and self-reliance.*

## ***ASSUMPTIONS & EXTERNAL FACTORS***

TC staff & facilitators / internal & external program support/ Successful TC training/ COVID-19 pandemic / Individual pressures & trauma / Judicial involvement / mental health status / Drug abuse

### ***INPUTS***

*Correctional Health  
Therapeutic Strategies  
Therapeutic Community values  
(e.g., view of right living)  
Group Counseling*

### ***COMMUNITY PARTNERS***

*Region Ten  
Offender and Restoration  
Drug Courts  
Therapeutic Docket  
District # 19 Probation and  
parole  
12-Step Fellowships (AA/ NA)*

### ***OUTPUTS***

***Short-term:*** *Improve knowledge and coping skills/ completion of TC competencies / Enhance response to stigma and discrimination / foster personal growth and change*

***Long-term:*** *utilize TC values as an effective tool for self-management / decrease anti-social behaviors / demonstrate consistent positive behaviors / gain employable skills*

### ***IMPACTS***

*Improved treatment models for drug abuse / reduced substance dependence and harmful behaviors/ improved quality of care across the continuum (from correctional facilities to the community)/ Enhanced emotional & psychological well-being / improved vocational & survival skills/ continued path towards recovery*

# ACRJ Program Goals

## *ACRJ Therapeutic Community Program Goals:*

1. *Delivery of Therapeutic Strategies in a correctional setting at Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail*
2. *Offer a lifestyle which includes drug abstinence, elimination of anti-social (criminal) behavior; development of employable skills, and the acquisition of positive attitudes, values and behaviors which reflect honesty, responsibility, non-violence and self-reliance.*

- Reduce risk factors that promote anti-social attitudes and behaviors
- Target risk factors within this population that includes: negative peers, anti-social personality traits, criminal and substance abuse history

# TC Milieu



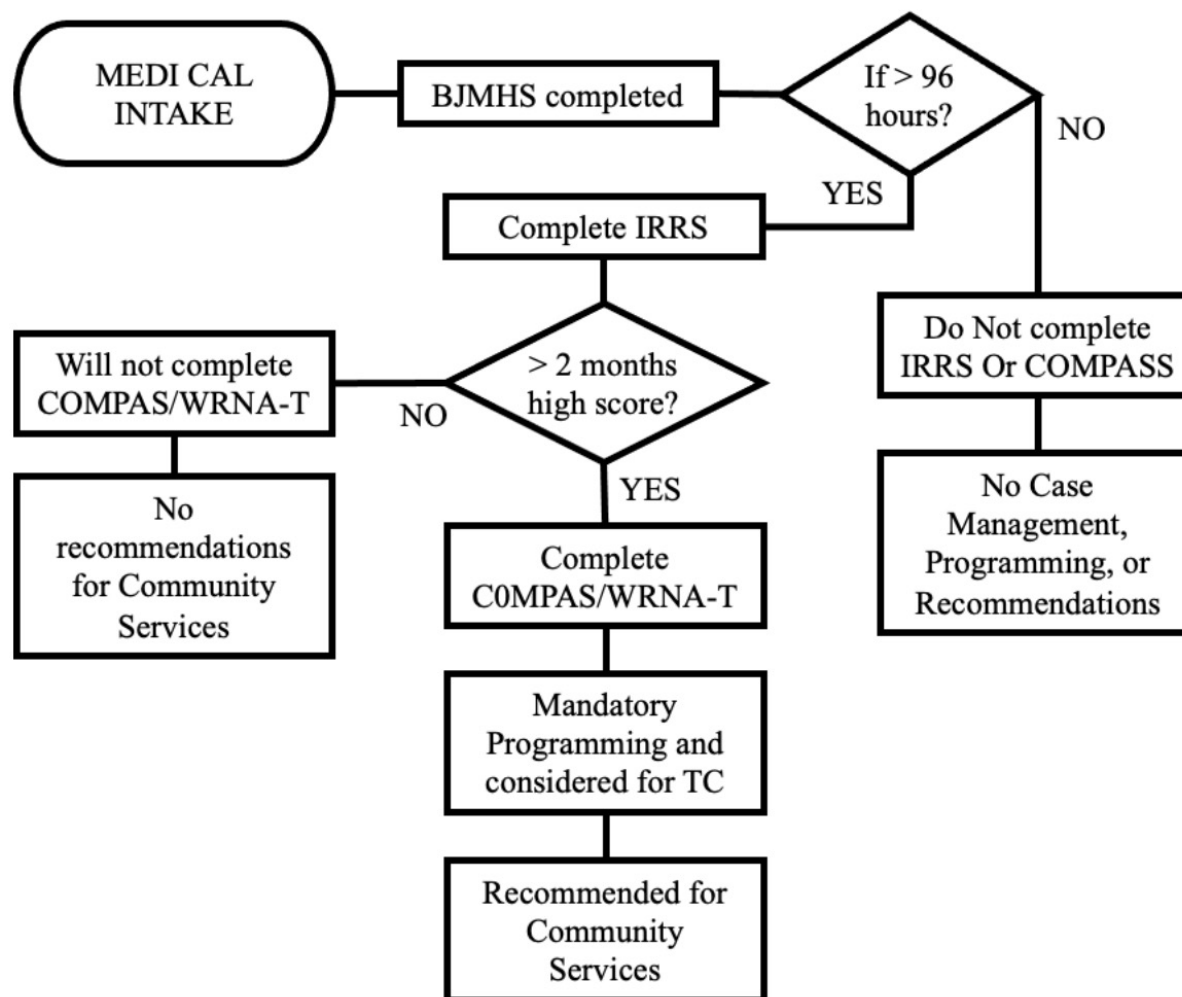


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# Purpose of TC

- TC incorporates a social learning model that uses highly structured and evidence-based practices and techniques.
- The components within the TC model focuses on reducing criminogenic risk factors by identifying and addressing faulty thinking, negative attitudes and behaviors
- The continuum of care is facilitated through the collaborative relationships between TC facilitators and outside organizations (e.g., Region Ten and Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR))
- Effective aftercare reinforces new behaviors learned in TC and reduces the likelihood of recidivism

# Incarceration Flowchart



# Assumptions and External Factors

## *ASSUMPTIONS & EXTERNAL FACTORS*

TC staff & facilitators / internal & external program support/ Successful TC training/ COVID-19 pandemic / Individual pressures & trauma / Judicial involvement / mental health status / Drug abuse

- The therapeutic community at ACRJ is driven by research and incorporates cognitive-behavioral strategies to address the criminogenic needs of this population.
- Screening and Decision Supports
  - Brief Jail Mental Health Screen(BJMHS)
  - Intake Recidivism Risk Screen (IRRS)
  - Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS)
  - Women's Risk Needs Assessment-Trailer (WRNA-T)

# Inputs

## **INPUTS**

*Correctional Health  
Therapeutic Strategies  
Therapeutic Community  
values (e.g., view of right  
living) Group Counseling*

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

*Region Ten  
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Drug Courts  
Therapeutic Docket  
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12-Step Fellowships (AA/ NA)*

- Strengths
  - Collaborative relationships with Region ten and drug courts and their commitment to rehabilitation
- Limitations
  - The intake process delays the progression from intake to TC and mandatory programs that promote recovery and support sobriety

# Outputs

## OUTPUTS

**Short-term:** *Improve knowledge and coping skills/ completion of TC competencies / Enhance response to stigma and discrimination / foster personal growth and change*

**Long-term:** *utilize TC values as an effective tool for self-management / decrease anti-social behaviors / demonstrate consistent positive behaviors / gain employable skills*

- Strengths
  - Inmates learn to understand and solve problems for themselves and others
  - Potential to reduce recidivism
  - Potential enrollment into community services rehabilitation
  - Early start of case management
- Limitations
  - Individual needs and concerns of the inmate may not totally be met
  - Early TC was not manned with ACRJ staff



# Impacts

## IMPACTS

*Improved treatment models for drug abuse / reduced substance dependance and harmful behaviors/ improved quality of care across the continuum (from correctional facilities to the community)/ Enhanced emotional & psychological well-being / improved vocational & survival skills/ continued path towards recovery*

- Strengths
  - Showcase new behaviors and coping skill obtained in TC
  - Peer support
  - Early engagement in recovery
- Limitations
  - Unpredictable length of stay
  - TC program did not integrate medications as a therapeutic approach

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# Recommendation #1

- Use a tiered approach to TC that considers length of stay and risks identified during the initial screening process
- For example:
  - **Tier I:** Program modules offered to **ALL** inmates incarcerated at ACRJ. Additional assessments can be completed while participating in Tier I TC.
  - **Tier II/ TC lite:** Preparation for TC. Early exposure to TC by Learning more about the competencies and rules of TC.
  - **Tier III/ Full TC:** Inmates who will be incarcerated for at least 12 months and meet the eligibility criteria for the TC
  - **Tier IV/ peers/ mentors:** Demonstrate mastery of TC competencies and assist with newer member and act as an extension of TC facilitators

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# Recommendation # 2

- Implement Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
  - Combine MAT and cognitive-behavioral strategies promote abstinence from substance use and introduce coping skills to maintain recovery and sobriety
  - Reduce risk of acute withdrawal symptoms
  - Reduce risk of post release overdose

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# Recommendation # 3

- Conduct systematic and ongoing Program Process Evaluations at least every 3 years
  - Assess strengths and limitations of the program
  - Evaluate costs and benefits of TC program compared to standard inmate housing
  - Work with community partners to evaluate impact of TC MAT on engagement with post-release substance treatment
  - Work with court partners to assess impact of TC MAT participants on recidivism rates

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# Questions

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