The Chill Plan

Personalized calming strategies to reduce misconducts among inmates at State Correctional Institution, Muncy

Agency: Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC)
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Background
In state prisons, 73% of women have symptoms of mental disorder. Women coming into the prison system are often victims of trauma and suffer from posttraumatic-stress disorder. Unalleviated anxiety can be associated with misbehaviors as inmates resort to violence as a dysfunctional coping mechanism. Research demonstrates that appropriate treatments and programs reduce levels of depression and anxiety and mitigate psychiatric disorders.

The “Chill Plan” was designed by staff at the Pennsylvania State Women’s Correctional Institution at Cambridge Springs as a crisis prevention program. This program empowers female inmates to preemptively manage their anxiety through personalized calming strategies with the end purpose of reducing misconduct.

Trial Design
During the two-month trial period, 248 inmates (excluding short-term parole violators) entered the Diagnostic Center for classification. All 133 inmates randomized to the Chill Plan were given a description of the program and 93 women filed a plan; 115 uninformed inmates served as the control group.

Results and Implications
No inmate in the intervention condition asked to invoke her Chill Plan during the trial period. However, simply filling out the Chill Plan may have been therapeutic in itself as findings document four misconducts for the Chill Plan condition (0.03), and 11 misconducts for the control condition (0.08) (p=0.058).

Key Finding
Inmates with Chill Plans had fewer misconducts than inmates without Chill Plans.

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