

2018

IMPACT OF CLIENT CRIMINAL HISTORY: BARRIERS TO CONSIDER FOR THE REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

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IMPACT OF CLIENT CRIMINAL HISTORY: BARRIERS TO CONSIDER FOR THE
REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

by

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation

in the Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

December 2018

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Master of Science

in the field of Rehabilitation Counseling

Approved by:
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Graduate School
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June 6, 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Thomas Upton for his guidance through the Rehabilitation Counseling program, and for helping me seize opportunities to learn beyond the curriculum.

I am indebted to Dr. Jane Nichols for her inspiration and encouragement to grow professionally.

My family and friends have supported me throughout this journey and I am beyond grateful to my wife and best friend, Leah, who saw my capabilities, believed in me and made this academic pursuit possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the field of rehabilitation counseling, counselors seek to assist clients with disabilities in working towards the goal of optimal functionality within their lives. Since its inception, the field of rehabilitation has held a central goal of complete inclusion for people of differing disabilities, both in the workplace and in civic participation (Upton, 2011). Many of the barriers and challenges that clients face occur commonly enough that rehabilitation counselors may specialize in their area of practice. Common focused modalities within rehabilitation counseling are those of disability management, life care planning, vocational counseling, forensic practice, and treatment of substance abuse and co-occurring mental disorders (CRCC, 2018).

Although specialization within the field encourages focused and efficient services for clients facing similar issues, rehabilitation counselors, who aim to serve clients holistically, realize that the presence of barriers that impact multiple areas of clients' lives is the norm. While poverty, social inequality and disability are often discussed openly and seen as necessary inclusions in the academic curricula of rehabilitation counseling, issues of legal and punitive impact to clients served are seldom addressed.

Discussion of crime rates is common within American culture. This discussion serves to influence our general perceptions of safety within our communities. It also helps us to stay informed about the effectiveness of policy as crime rate statistics and trends are updated and published. An informed populace is then able to participate in the democratic process with policies of crime and punishment in mind as individual citizens select the political candidates whom are most closely aligned with their personal philosophies on the subject. The bulk of this discussion focuses on arrest and conviction rates as well as sentencing guidelines. Sentencing

guidelines, which are ultimately interpreted and administered by the judicial system, are continually adjusted to reflect what the public in general considers to be adequate and proper punishment for various types of crimes committed.

Although popular discussion of crime and punishment may acknowledge the rates of return to criminal activity by previous offenders, the long-term personal impact of their initial contact with the criminal justice system is often left out. The fact is, that for the offender, repercussions for criminal activity do not end after the completion of court-mandated sentencing.

People that have criminal records often continue to pay for their transgressions for the remainder of their lives, due to the many forms of disenfranchisement society imposes on them. In addition, criminal records, which contain information about both arrests and convictions, may be permanently linked even to individuals who have never been found guilty of a crime. Over 30 percent of felony charges do not lead to conviction but are still reflected in criminal records (Kyckelhahn & Cohen, 2008).

While being necessary information for law enforcement agencies, judicial systems and policy makers, criminal records are also available to employers, housing providers, educational institutions, financial lenders, health care providers, and to some extent, the public at large. The expansion of internet search platforms and data has only served to increase this access.

The wide availability of this access to criminal records influences decision making as it relates to individuals being considered as qualified for many services and productive opportunities. It also ultimately has an impact as it relates to individuals being deemed acceptable for full social inclusion. For people navigating the world with a disability, this may present them with yet another challenge to function within their lives to the fullest extent possible. The rehabilitation counselor who works with these clients must then take these barriers

into account when planning and implementing services for them, just as they must take into account other barriers that are socially derived, such as discrimination in all of its forms and any socially imposed stigma.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline how clients' lives may be impacted by being permanently linked to criminal records, stressing the importance of addressing these barriers by the rehabilitation counselor. Just as the counselor must consider individual case variables such as level of physical and mental ability, educational achievement level, employment history, transferrable skills and socio-economic status and culture, he/she must also consider any limitations resulting from clients' historical contact with the criminal justice system. This paper will provide the counselor with information about current trends that may affect clients following the completion of court ordered sentencing, with specific focus on these effects as they relate to different aspects of clients' lives and personal identities.

Definition of Terms

Arrest- Within the context of law enforcement, a person suspected of committing a crime is "under arrest" when they are charged for a crime and taken into custody by law enforcement officials. The suspect is not considered guilty of a crime until it is determined by a court of law.

Conviction- When a subject has been determined by a court of law to be guilty of the crime they have been charged for.

Sentencing- Once convicted, a criminal may be sentenced to a punishment, as determined appropriate for the crime committed, by a court of law. This punishment may take the form of detention in a jail or prison, an arranged community service or some sort of restitution.

Misdemeanor- “offenses lower than felonies and generally punishable by fine, penalty, forfeiture or imprisonment other than in a penitentiary.” (Burton, 2007). Although misdemeanors are not considered to be as serious as felonious charges, they are maintained on permanent criminal records for U.S citizens.

Felony- A crime deemed more serious in nature than a misdemeanor. Violent crimes that may be considered felonious include manslaughter, murder, rape, assault and arson. Non-violent felony charges may include acts of fraud, theft, narcotic possession (determined by amount possessed), and sale of narcotics.

PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as defined in the DSM-5, is a disorder that may affect people who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events. Symptoms of PTSD include hypervigilance, feelings of detachment, sleep disturbances, flashbacks, anxiety, diminished concentration and difficulty navigating various social situations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

GED- General Education Diploma. Granted to those who complete academic coursework and pass an exam. The GED is considered to be equivalent to a high school diploma and is often sought after by individuals who did not complete high school.

Recidivism- The re-offence of additional crimes by those with past criminal activity or convictions. Often a measurement of the effectiveness of rehabilitation for criminal offenders.

O*NET- An online tool that is used to look up detailed information about different occupations. This information includes worker characteristics, occupation characteristics, worker requirements, experience requirements, occupation requirements and information specific to different occupations (Brown, 2015).

Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)- A resource published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Often used by rehabilitation counselors when providing vocational counseling services. Contains a comprehensive list of occupations in the United States, along with labor projections

Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)- A resource published by the U.S. Department of Labor, that lists thousands of jobs along with data obtained by job analysts regarding aptitudes and skills necessary for successful job performance.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will review recent historical trends in rates of conviction and sentencing in America along with influencing factors. The impact of criminal records upon multiple facets of clients' lives will be explored through the lens of rehabilitation counseling, with focus on barriers that may result in less than optimal outcomes for those seeking rehabilitation services.

Recent trends in American conviction and sentencing rates

The United States incarcerates more members of its population than any other nation, at over 400% of the world-wide average rate for industrialized nations (Hartney, 2006). In 1978, there were approximately 300,000 people in prison in the United States. As of 2016, this number had risen to 1,505,400 people incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). This sharp upward trend is largely thought to be a result of efforts to control the use of narcotic drugs in America by means of criminal prosecution of drug users. This policy is commonly known as the "War on Drugs", which was a term coined in 1971 by president Richard Nixon (Nixon, 1971).

As of 2011 it was estimated that 64.3 million American adults, or approximately one-third of the entire adult population, had criminal records (NELP 2011). This statistic does not differentiate by degree of severity of crimes people are convicted of, so it includes those of misdemeanor and felony offenses. In contrast, the rate of arrest and conviction for violent crime in the United States has been steadily declining, with the FBI estimating 2017 to have roughly half the occurrence rate as 1991 (Friedman, Grawert & Cullen, 2017). Non-violent felonies are prosecuted more frequently and account for 53 percent of the American prison population, with the majority of non-violent offenders being convicted of drug and property offenses (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

Impact on vocational outlook

In his State of the Union address shortly following the 9/11 World Trade Center attack, President George W. Bush proclaimed, “This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can’t find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit more crimes and return to prison... America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.” (Bush, 2004). This proclamation by President Bush was given in context of the United States acting proactively to ensure the vitality of its economy, which was in question as the nation recovered from the World Trade Center attack.

The limited opportunities for people with criminal histories to engage in vocations suited to their skills and abilities has indeed negatively affected the country’s workforce. This impact is a result of decreased participation in gainful employment by American citizens in what is normally considered to be the most productive years of their lifespan. In 2014, it was estimated that 15.8 million people of prime working age (between 18 and 54 years old) had records of felony conviction (Bucknor and Barber, 2016). The likelihood of American citizens in general having been arrested (regardless of conviction) by the age of 23 is one in three (Brame, Turner, Paternoster, Bushway, 2012).

Participation in gainful employment by people with disabilities is often a central goal addressed by rehabilitation counselors as they work with clients wishing to achieve goals of increased independence and autonomy. In modern American culture, quality of life is often associated with satisfaction with work or career. The role of fitting vocation within people’s lives has been equated with other central factors of well-being, such as quality of relationships with family and friends and perceptions of mental and physical health (Blustein, 2013). For people

with disabilities, employment can be an important component of life that offers them and increased sense of inclusion and worth.

Beyond the benefit of better quality of life for individuals, engagement in work is ultimately in the best interest of society at large. Aside from adding to the productiveness of the economy, individuals with a history of criminal activity who maintain gainful employment are less likely to commit another crime (Bahr, Harris, Fisher & Armstrong, 2010). Just as probation officials have an important role in monitoring ex-offenders to ensure compliance to post-incarceration legal requirements, rehabilitation counselors can be essential contributors to the welfare of their community by assisting individuals in finding employment that is suitable to them and more prone to be lasting, thus decreasing recidivism. It has been shown that involvement of vocational counseling can be especially beneficial for those who have criminal records, as they may require some assistance in their job search.

People with disabilities face an unemployment rate of 64 percent in the United States (Smith & Clark, 2007). For people with disabilities who also have criminal records, the assistance offered by rehabilitation counselors who can aid them in achieving vocational goals is even more important. Among criminal offenders who have been imprisoned, less than forty percent find themselves employed one year after release (James, 2010). These demographics make it likely that rehabilitation counselors will likely encounter clients who are dealing with barriers presented by having both disabilities and criminal records.

In his Life Span, Life Space theory, Donald Super introduced the idea that vocational choices and roles ultimately become key components of our identity. Before this theory was proposed, peoples' personality traits were viewed separately from career roles with traits being considered as characteristics that should be matched as closely as possible to job functions when

making vocational choices. This theory also proposed that there were stages of career development within the life-span, and that they generally followed a chronological order of “vocational maturity”. Super acknowledged that the chronological order of the stages, which include exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline may change for individuals depending on any circumstances that may influence career trajectories (Super, 1990).

The rehabilitation counselor will know that people with disabilities may not always have what society considers to be a typical career trajectory. Changing aspects of an individual’s disability may prolong or cause multiple returns to the exploration stage as vocational goals are re-assessed. People with criminal records often need to adjust to the same changes in vocational stages. If a client has been incarcerated for a length of time, they will have experienced an interruption in their career, that essentially sidelined them as they got older and their chosen vocation continued to advance. The criminal records that they are now permanently attached to may also prohibit them from participating in their original chosen vocation and place them back into the stage of exploration, which will then have them establishing themselves in a new career.

The rehabilitation counselor should be aware that clients seeking vocational assistance may be constrained by criminal records pertaining to events that happened when they were relatively young. Studies suggest that most of the prosecuted criminal offenses in America are committed by people under the age of thirty (Kearney, et al. 2014). Although a client may have become more mature, responsible, dependable and skilled, potential employers may pass them over when hiring due to criminal activity that may have occurred in the client’s teen years or early twenties. In 2014, a Kaiser Family Foundation poll showed over one third of unemployed men who were deemed able to work reported facing employment barriers related to their criminal records (Hamel, Firth, J & Brodie, 2014).

Rehabilitation counselors who are serving clients by assisting them with vocational pursuits are more effective when their knowledge of the job market is comprehensive and current. The counselor must consider multiple variables, as they relate to each client's specific vocational goals. The positions of employment that may be feasible for any given client to obtain and maintain will need to be screened for salary ranges, benefits, job conditions, geographical location and employee requirements.

Many of the variables for consideration by the counselor and client are readily available. Some of this information may be included in an employer's open position announcement or advertisement. Additional information may be obtained by the counselor, who may utilize tools such as the O*net, The Occupational Outlook Handbook or the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. Finally, the counselor and client may receive more detail directly from potential employers looking to fill positions during their initial contact or interviewing process.

The counselor who works with clients who have criminal records will need to be aware that there are no industry standards, other than those for specific licensures, that apply to the process of vetting employees based on criminal history. This means that standards upheld by employers regarding the hiring of these prospects may be vague, inconsistent or opinion based. In cases of larger employers with more than one hiring manager, disqualifying criteria may vary, depending on which manager with whom the job seeker happens to interview. Within these differing situations lies an opportunity for the rehabilitation counselor to proactively develop relationships of trust with businesses in their local job market. It has been demonstrated that employers are statistically more likely to hire former offenders when ongoing professional support is involved (Solomon, 2004).

People with criminal histories may give employers reasonable pause when considering new applicants for open positions. Employers may consider the presence of a criminal record to be an indication that a prospective employee will not measure up to moral standards or that their inclusion in the company may increase liability and negatively impact workplace safety. In a 2009 survey of potential employers, only 26 percent responded by saying they were likely to consider having employees with a criminal record. 63 percent of responding employers stated that they absolutely would not hire a previous offender regardless of the nature of criminal offense. This survey demonstrated that the presence of a criminal record of any type, misdemeanor or felony, resulted in prospective employers being 50 percent less likely to extend a job offer to a candidate regardless of gender or race. The remaining 11 percent of survey participants indicated that they would require specific information about the types and circumstances of the crimes committed by prospective employees (Pager & Western, 2009).

Beyond the perceptions and informal rules upheld by potential employers is the fact that the presence of criminal records may permanently bar job-seekers from professional licensure necessary for many vocations. Over 25 percent of employment positions within the American workforce have requirements of state or federal licensure (White House, 2015). These licenses cover a wide range of occupations, including legal, financial, law enforcement, health-care, service industry jobs (such as cosmetology, massage therapy and food service), architecture and many trades such as plumbing, electrical, aviation, mechanical work and carpentry. The rehabilitation counselor may need to familiarize him/herself with the legal requirements of worker licensure within their state of practice as it applies to individual cases as some licensure may be obtainable by clients based on the nature of their documented offense, while some will include a permanent disqualification thus eliminating the associated vocational goal.

Impact on educational outlook

Among persons presently incarcerated, 40 percent do not have possess a high school diploma or GED. When compared to the rate of 18 percent of the general population of adults in America who have not completed high school (Harlow, 2003), it is obvious that further education will likely be a common goal suggested by vocational counselors working with those having criminal backgrounds who wish to reintegrate with society. For clients who have not successfully completed high school, the attainment of a GED is imperative if they have the goal of obtaining gainful employment. In 2020, it has been estimated that 88 percent of job openings will require a high school diploma, GED or further education, with 24 percent of jobs in the U.S. market predicted as being open to applicants that list high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2013).

While some programs within prisons offer GED programs for convicted criminals to complete before release, this is not always the case. If a client with a criminal record wishes to pursue a GED in an effort to open more employment opportunities, the counselor will need to know the standards of admission into the programs offered in their local area. Many GED programs are offered in college and junior college settings, and these institutions may prohibit ex-offenders from enrollment based on criminal history.

These conditions may also apply to those who have completed high school and are seeking post-secondary education. Colleges, junior colleges and trade schools consider criminal records when reviewing applications and may deny enrollment based on prospective students' criminal histories. According to a study conducted by the Center for Community Alternatives, 66 percent of respondents consider criminal background when reviewing applicants. This

information is collected through applicant self-disclosure as part of the application and through background checks (Weissman, Rosenthal, Warth & Messina-Yauchzy, 2010).

Since there is no standard policy governing universities and trade schools regarding consideration of applicants with criminal records, rehabilitation counselors who are serving these clients may need to contact admission departments in their area to inquire about their specific standards. It is worth noting that many colleges have extra vetting processes set up for those with criminal backgrounds that may entail multiple departments within the school reviewing the applicant's information. This may include references, letters of recommendation and information obtained from the criminal justice system as it pertains to parole, probation or mandated rehabilitation.

Post-secondary education in America can be a costly venture and many students require some assistance in paying for tuition, fees and scholastic supplies. This assistance often takes the form of student loans, grants and scholarships. These forms of financial assistance come with application processes of their own which often include background checks. Aspiring students with criminal records may discover they are not eligible to receive financial assistance from these sources.

The first step in arranging for financial aid is the completion of the FAFSA application (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). This application requires current information as it pertains to the student's place of residence, loan history, financial resources and income tax. It also requires information regarding criminal history. Currently, any history of felonious charges for crimes involving narcotics or sexual offenses can exclude applicants for consideration for federally approved student loans and commonly use grants such as the Pell Grant (FAFSA, 2018).

Disability

The primary goal for the rehabilitation counselor is assisting those with disabilities in reaching their highest possible levels of functionality and inclusion. As put forth by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling Certification (CRCC), “Rehabilitation counseling is a systematic process which assists persons with physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities to achieve their personal, career, and independent living goals in the most integrated setting possible through the application of the counseling process.” (CRCC Scope of Practice, 2017). Just as people with disabilities may require some assistance in navigating the challenges that vocational, residential, economic and discriminatory barriers can present, the effects of permanently attached criminal records only serve to intensify their need. Because the incidence of disability for those having criminal records is significantly higher than that of the general population in America, there is an increased likelihood that the counselor will provide services at some point, if not frequently, to clients with a history of contact with the criminal justice system.

Among criminal offenders who are sentenced to incarceration, the incidence of individuals having at least one disability is much higher than that of the general population. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports a 40 percent disability rate among those sentenced to incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). Within the general population of the United States, the incidence of disability is estimated to be 19 percent (Bernstein, 2012). Although this incidence of disability within penal institutions, when broken down into disability type, is significantly higher for physical disabilities such as vision, hearing and ambulatory deficits. Additionally, cognitive disabilities occur at four times the rate as for the general population. An important limitation to the BJS study was that its definition of cognitive disability did not include

mood or psychological disorders, which were not measured. Within the BJS study, the term “cognitive disability” was used only to describe disorders and syndromes that affect learning and cognition, such as attention deficit disorder, Downs syndrome, traumatic brain injury, autism and dementia.

For criminal offenders that serve prison sentences, there is also the risk of developing disorders resulting from exposure to the correctional environment itself. Jails and prisons are notoriously loud and dangerous places that expose inmates to unique stressors and the ever-present potential for personal harm. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been found to occur at a much higher prevalence of 30-60 percent among males who have experienced incarceration, in comparison to those in the general American population which has a three to six percent rate of incidence (Wolff, et al. 2014).

Liem & Kunst (2013) suggest that symptomology of PTSD is prevalent enough in those that have been incarcerated that it warrants a new psychological diagnosis, which they termed, “Post Incarceration Syndrome”. In their study they noted that, along with classic PTSD symptomology, ex-offenders often presented with the shared symptoms of alienation, sensory disorientation and institutionalized personality traits that limited their ability to adapt to life outside of penal captivity.

Rates of some infectious diseases, some of which result in chronic health conditions are higher for criminal offenders that have experienced incarceration. The incidence of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection among prisoners in the United States is 2.3 percent, which is over five times the incidence within the general population (Weinbaum, Sabin & Santibanez, 2005). The U.S. Social Security Administration recognizes HIV infection as a disability due to

its progressive and debilitating nature, which often impacts the ability of those infected to participate in gainful employment (Social Security Administration, 2018).

While management of medical aspects of treatment for HIV is not within the scope of practice for the rehabilitation counselor, assistance with adjustment to disability caused by it can be very beneficial for people with the disease. HIV, while being chronic and progressive, varies greatly in its impact on personal function as related to variables such as overall level of health, changes in treatment regimen and stage of disease process (Lohse, Gerstoft & Obel, 2007). The role of the rehabilitation counselor is then to assist clients by accurately assessing their level of present function and implementing plans that will help them adapt to change in disease impact.

Psychosocial considerations

Working to assist people with disabilities who face stigma as a major barrier to inclusion in work and society is a traditional theme for rehabilitation counselors (Maki & Tarvydas, 2011). Stigma is a negative social reaction that implies disgrace or disdain for members of society that are deemed inferior due to personal qualities that differ from the norm. For people with disabilities, this stigma creates an additional barrier that affects them beyond any limitations imposed by the disability itself, as it often results in isolation, discrimination, and decreased opportunity. The United States has taken great strides to reduce stigma for people with disabilities, with significant progress being made on both legislative and cultural fronts.

Stigma is very damaging to those who experience it. Not only does it limit opportunities that are socially derived, stigma decreases social inclusion for those that are perceived as unworthy for full participation. Studies have shown that people who experience stigma have decreased feelings of self-esteem and increased feelings of depression (Roeloffs, Sherbourne, Unützer, Fink, Tang & Wells, 2003).

People with disabilities may experience additional sources of stigma if they have a criminal record which may further compound their struggle towards full participation and inclusion in society. Stigma, as it relates to those with criminal histories is common and has implications that reach beyond the barriers that are present in the systems of criminal justice, health care and employment. Discrimination, prejudice, distrust and limited awareness occur within the social realms of American culture, ethnic cultures, local communities, social and recreational clubs, as well as families. Among people with a history of incarceration, 65.3 percent reported experiences of stigma resulting from social reactions to their permanent status as former offenders (LeBel, 2012).

Feelings of stress and difficulty coping can be compounded by unemployment, as discussed previously, and are common for people who have criminal records. Being unemployed while able to work is reported to result in significant feelings of elevated stress and declining mental health for 40 percent of those surveyed. This general perception of compromised mental health includes difficulty sleeping and has been reported by 37 percent of this population along with 35 percent of respondents reporting serious negative impact to relationships with immediate family members (Hamel, et.al.2014).

For the rehabilitation counselor working with these clients, the implication is that, even in the absence of a clinically diagnosed psychological disorder such as PTSD, their clients may have extreme difficulty adapting to their home, public and work environments. These additional stressors may influence the level and duration of needed therapeutic interventions, which the rehabilitation counselor may then need to justify to their agency and/or funding sources.

It is worth noting that race disparity has been and is currently a feature of the United States criminal justice system. As a result, it will affect multi-cultural aspects of the

rehabilitation counselor's professional practice. The probability of being convicted of a crime resulting in imprisonment varies for different races and ethnicities in the United States. The chance of being imprisoned for a white male in America at some point in his life time is 5.8 percent. Latino males have a 16 percent incarceration rate over their lifespan and African American males have the highest probability of 33 percent (Bonczar, 2003).

CACREP standards published in 2016 put forth that accredited academic curricula for rehabilitation counselors include instruction on multicultural counseling theory. In section 2 of the CACREP standards it is outlined that curricula must prepare counselors in training to understand "the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, and the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients." (CACREP, 2016). Looking beyond rates that serve to predict the likelihood of individuals being prosecuted for crime, the rehabilitation counselor should understand that racial disparity, as it applies to crime and punishment in America results in collateral effects that cannot be ignored if they are to practice with true multicultural competency.

Basic needs

As the rehabilitation counselor and their clients work together to determine appropriate goals, prioritization is essential. Progress towards long-term goals typically requires the attainment of short-term goals that can be viewed as foundational in positioning clients in improved states of stability from which they can then move forward. The widely accepted theory that Abraham Maslow put forth in his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" posits multiple basic human needs which must be met, in order of importance, as they build upon each other. Commonly referred to as "Maslow's hierarchy of needs", this theory states that a person will

have to fulfill needs such as securing sources of food, shelter and safety before moving on to goals of belonging and self-improvement (Maslow, 1943).

For people with disabilities, limited monetary resources often destabilize access to food, shelter and safety. The rehabilitation counselor is frequently in the position to assist clients in navigation of services and benefits that are set up by federal and state government and at times, charitable foundations. The term “social safety net” is commonly used to describe assistance provided for marginalized citizens by the federal and state governments and includes services and benefits such as Medicare, social security disability, unemployment, housing assistance, nutritional programs, childcare, assistance for pregnant women and new mothers and energy assistance. The rehabilitation counselor will need to know what types of social assistance benefits apply to clients in their geographical area of practice along with standards of qualification as they make appropriate referrals and assist clients with applications.

For clients who have limited or no income, lack of food is a problem that precedes all others in that adequate nutrition is essential for survival. The rehabilitation counselor who works with these clients will need to know that access to common sources of assistance, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) may be limited or completely revoked for clients who have criminal records (Bell, 2014). In 1996, as an effort to reform welfare and in smaller part as an extension of the ongoing “War on Drugs”, the PRWORA (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) was enacted by president Bill Clinton (Senate Bill 2105, 1996). Among provisions of the act were those that placed a lifetime ban on anyone who had ever been convicted of drug related crimes from receiving TANF benefits. Since then, some states have partially rolled back the broad disqualifications of the PRWORA, allowing limited participation

in food assistance programs, while others have not. For the rehabilitation counselor working with former drug offenders, knowledge of benefit limitations within their state will be essential, as there may be additional application requirements along with possible qualifying stipulations for clients, such as participation in a mandatory drug testing protocols.

A safe and stable housing situation is also an essential basic human need that has priority over other measures of independence. Along with issues of accessibility which must be considered for clients with physical disabilities and limitations imposed by financial standing is the issue of significantly limited housing options for clients who have criminal records. These limitations in residential opportunities stem from multiple types of restriction from participation in the process of finding suitable housing as it may usually occur for individuals without remarkable records. These restrictions include limited access to state or federal housing and rent assistance, loan disqualification, as well as any that may be applied by privately held providers of rental housing.

Clients with limited income often find options by applying for residence in low income housing. Often called “Section 8 Housing”, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This federal program supplements rental fees for people who do not have enough income to afford typical rental market rates. Rental housing that falls under the Housing Choice Voucher Program may be part of subsidized housing projects run by public housing authorities or those owned by private entities (U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2018).

Public housing authorities operate regionally, and are usually overseen by county or city governments and approved through the HUD. A primary qualification is that they provide 550 or more units of Section 8 housing within their complex or community (HUD, 2018). Although the

HUD itself has traditionally discouraged discrimination, stating that, “HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all... free from discrimination.”, local public housing authorities vary widely in their practices in vetting potential renters (HUD, 2018). For the rehabilitation counselor assisting those with criminal records, it will be important to know the details of low income housing qualifications from county to county within their specific geographic areas.

When assisting clients who are searching for rental housing, it is important to know that privately held rental properties are subject to less stringent rules of law regarding acceptance of new tenants. Landlords or property management companies often require potential tenants to complete comprehensive applications before considering new tenants as possible renters. These applications provide the renter with information that they have determined to be predictive of tenant behavior as it relates to timely and consistent payment of rent, treatment of property and commitment to terms of lease contracts. The information obtained in these applications helps the renter determine which tenants they will enter into contract with and which they will exclude from consideration due to perceived risk.

Private renters consider many variables when interviewing potential tenants. They may require information regarding tenants' personal credit history, which could be considered an indicator of the tenants' likelihood to follow through with rental payments. References from the tenants' previous landlords may be required to assess how tenants have historically treated rental property, whether they honored rental agreements and whether there is a history of eviction. Renters often wish to know how many residents are going to be living at the property and whether tenants plan to have pets. Criminal background information is often accessed by landlords by utilizing internet databases, such as judici.com, where information is publicly

available regarding criminal charges, hearings of cases and dispositions for individuals entered in a search engine (judici.com, 2018).

While the criteria of rental qualification may vary among privately held rental properties, federal law prohibits discrimination by private rental housing providers. The Fair Housing Act (1968) was enacted to prohibited discriminatory practices in the selling and rental of housing, stating “It is unlawful for any person to refuse to rent or sell a dwelling, refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of a dwelling, or otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling to any person because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability.”.

The rehabilitation counselor will need to know that although discriminatory practices in home rental are illegal, clients with criminal records may be in a vulnerable position. The use of criminal records as rental disqualification has been noted by the HUD department to be an issue when used by landlords as an excuse to discriminate when selecting renters. In 2016, HUD released a statement of guidance to address the problem, declaring it to be an “intentional discrimination in violation of the Act occurs if a housing provider treats individuals with comparable criminal history differently because of their race, national origin or other protected characteristic.” (HUD, 2016). It may then be valuable for the counselor to have knowledge of the reporting process for alleged instances of discrimination by renters, which is outlined at the HUD website (HUD, 2018).

Substance abuse treatment

The provision of services for clients with issues of substance abuse is common for rehabilitation counselors, with many counselors working in facilities that primarily serve those with substance abuse related diagnoses. Not only are substance abuse and addiction causative factors for disability, they often impact individuals that have other pre-existing disabilities. The

incidence of substance abuse impacting individuals in conjunction with other mental and emotional disorders occurs frequently enough that the term “co-occurring disorders” was termed. In 2014, 1.4 million people in the United States were diagnosed with cooccurring disorders. Among people who have been diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder, 45 percent have a co-occurring mental disorder (Hedden, 2015).

Common mental and psychological disorders that co-occur with substance abuse disorder include those of depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bi-polar, PTSD, and many personality disorders (McGovern, Xie, Segal, Siembab and Drake, 2006). Not only does the presence of one or more of these disorders increase the probability of the development of a substance abuse disorder, drug and alcohol abuse serve as causative or exacerbating factors in the development and severity of psychological disorders. Physical disabilities resulting from substance abuse are numerous as it negatively impacts all organ systems in the body. These disabilities include movement disorders, loss of limbs as well as those resulting from chronic diseases of the circulatory, neurological, respiratory, musculoskeletal and digestive systems (NIH, 2017).

The correlation between substance abuse and criminal behavior is well known, as many people with addictions commit crimes to obtain drugs of abuse and many drugs of abuse are illegal to possess. Additionally, intoxication and withdrawal states impair individuals’ ability to reason while increasing impulsivity. Clients seeking treatment for substance use disorders often do so as a response to negative life events. These critical “rock-bottom” situations are frequently a result of contact with law enforcement and the judicial process (Beck & Wright 2011). In America, 34.4 percent of those participating in treatment programs for substance use disorders in 2011 were originally referred by the criminal justice system (Smith and Strashny, 2016).

While contact with the criminal justice system may serve as the impetus for clients' decisions to seek treatment for addiction, it also presents lasting repercussions and barriers resulting from clients' criminal records. These could be considered to mainly be a result of the barriers that the presence of criminal records place in the previously discussed life areas, as the establishment and maintenance of long-term sobriety is much more likely for clients that are able to experience success, feelings of worth, inclusion and productivity.

Just as rehabilitation counselors know that attainment of meaningful employment is an important goal for clients who wish to become more independent and productive within society, those involved with addiction treatment understand that satisfactory employment is a protective factor for clients in recovery from drug abuse. Studies show that unemployment is a predictor of high incidence of relapse for clients who have received treatment for drug and alcohol addiction (Henkel, 2011). Limited employment opportunities for those with criminal records can be expected to significantly impact the practice of rehabilitation counselors working with populations in treatment for substance abuse disorders.

Within the Theory of Work Adjustment put forth by Dawis, Lofquist & Weiss in 1968 was the idea of "person-environment correspondence", which referred to an employee's fit within a given work environment as being influenced by a set of values that the employee desires to have present in the that environment. These include altruism, achievement, comfort, status, autonomy and safety. Considering the limitations in place for job seekers who have criminal records it is readily apparent that several of these values may not be attainable. Clients who are attached to criminal records may face difficulty finding any employment, and once hired may find themselves in positions where they have very few options regarding status and autonomy or

may be overqualified due to education or work experience which may diminish their sense of achievement, which will ultimately affect their satisfaction and retention.

Rehabilitation counselors who work with clients seeking substance abuse treatment should also be aware that clients with histories of interaction with the criminal justice system may view people in positions of authority with distrust and apprehension. They may view those in helping professions to be in positions of authority and rehabilitation counselors may have to invest extra effort in establishing rapport with them. Counselors may need to educate their clients about their roles as collaborators and advocates, which differ from that of criminal justice authorities in that they do not seek punishment as a goal.

A frequently utilized theoretical orientation for counselors treating clients with issues of substance abuse is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Developed by Aaron T. Beck in the 1960's, CBT applies to substance abuse treatment well due to its focus on "thinking errors" that ultimately influence behavior. In treatment for substance abuse CBT is used to educate clients that some of their beliefs and thoughts may not be serving them well, and that they contribute to craving and drug use. Counselors serving those with criminal backgrounds may encounter what Wanberg & Milkman described as thinking errors that are commonly held people who engage in criminal behavior. These include the inability to see things in more than one way, the victim mentality, feeling that self-gratification must be immediate, and that the "system" exists specifically to mistreat them (Wanberg & Milkman. 2010).

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION

Since the late 1980's, sentencing guidelines have changed the criminal justice system in the United States in that they sharply increased the number of arrests, convictions and incarceration of non-violent offenders. Because of this, there is now a significant segment of the population that live with permanent criminal records, many whom also have disabilities. As people with disabilities seek rehabilitation services, the demographics of contact with the criminal justice system for all Americans increases the likelihood of the rehabilitation counselor working with clients who have criminal records.

When working with clients who have both disabilities and criminal records, the rehabilitation counselor should realize that there may be additional barriers that that have the potential to impact many areas of life, including clients' vocational pursuits, goals in education, housing, psycho-social aspects and substance abuse recovery. The rehabilitation counselor must assess the nature and extent of these barriers and take them into account when assisting clients in setting goals and measuring progress. Goals and treatment progress measures that apply to one client may not apply to another, who may have similar ability, aptitude and motivation, due to one having the presence of a criminal record. Just as the rehabilitation counselor needs to be knowledgeable about adaptation strategies that apply to disability, he/she needs to familiarize themselves with options for increasing opportunities for clients who are restricted by permanent attachment to their criminal records.

The stigma that is often aimed at ex-offenders, may also pollute the therapeutic relationship between the rehabilitation counselor and their clients. Although it is natural for counselors to have their own personal opinions about the state of crime and punishment in

American society, care must be exercised that they do not negatively affect service quality due to judgement, favoritism or any assumptions on the counselor's part. Counselors will need to be aware of their own values and attitudes towards individuals with criminal histories so they will be able to put these aside, if needed, when working in their professional capacity. Counselors may occasionally find reason to refer particular cases, as they would with other cases where personal differences create conflict of interest.

Among the core ethical principles that make up the foundation of the rehabilitation counselor code of professional ethics are those of justice and fidelity (CRCC, 2018). These principles have important implications for the rehabilitation counselor who finds themselves working with clients that have records of criminal activity. From the very beginning, each therapeutic relationship must be based on the assumption that the rehabilitation counselor will be working with the client as an advocate who is focused on improving quality of life in the face of disability, regardless of the client's personal or legal history.

Fidelity, as an ethical principle, describes the counselor's relationship with and treatment of clients as being one that demonstrates loyalty to clients and will be considered worthy of trust. The idea of the importance of fidelity is apparent in the CRCC's first enforceable standard of ethical practice, which states, "The primary responsibility of rehabilitation counselors is to respect the dignity of clients and to promote their welfare." (CRCC, 2018). This simply means that the counselor's main loyalty is always applied to the client, who's welfare is ultimately above that of any agency, funding source, or actor outside of the relationship. Rehabilitation counselors must keep this in mind as they communicate with others regarding the client who may not adhere to similar ethical principles when weighing a client's status as an ex-offender.

Justice is a principle of the rehabilitation counselor code of ethics that speaks to the idea of fair treatment of and service delivery to all clients that a rehabilitation counselor may serve. Working with the principle of justice as a guide, the counselor needs to respect differing cultures, races, levels of ability, gender orientations and personalities without discrimination or favoritism. To provide services justly, services, resources and referrals must be provided with equity, regardless of clients differing personal characteristics.

Rehabilitation counselors who find themselves working with clients that have criminal records are likely to find that, for many reasons, provision of just resources to this population is challenging. The presence of criminal records may be viewed as justification for the withholding of rights, options and resources by entities and institutions outside of the counseling relationship, and allocation of resources may possibly differ for this population within the agency the counselor works for. While serving as primary advocate for each client, the counselor will likely be in the position to ensure that the client is being treated as fairly as possible by funding sources, referrals and potential employers. The rehabilitation counselor may also find that in working with the principle of just service for these clients, they may find themselves in disagreement with social norms or political climate.

This review of literature was conducted utilizing the resources available at Morris Library at SIUC and the internet. Based on this research, one factor that appears to be largely absent is any study of the possible need for inclusion of subject matter or curricula studies regarding clients with criminal records within rehabilitation counseling programs. Much of the study of this subject has been part of the disciplines of criminal justice and to a lesser degree, social work.

I believe that the presence of additional barriers that are present for clients with histories of contact with the criminal justice system along with those that result from disability is common

enough that rehabilitation counselors in the field will encounter them frequently. The increase in arrests and convictions for non-violent crimes in the last thirty years has radically changed the percentage of working-aged Americans that will need to face life as ex-offenders, often for crimes committed when they were relatively young. Although the primary focus of rehabilitation counseling is focused on people with disability, the training provided to new counselors is comprehensive and includes social, medical, psychological, vocational and multicultural aspects. While person-centered treatment of people as unique individuals takes into account ethnicity, sexual orientation, family of origin, socio-economic disparities and trauma, the status of ex-offenders is not discussed.

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Impact of Client Criminal History: Barriers to Consider for the Rehabilitation Counselor

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