



SMART Recovery and the InsideOut Program for Inmates in Correctional Facilities

Funded by \$1 million in grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), SMART Recovery introduced the InsideOut program in 2002.¹ SMART had been holding its regular mutual support group meetings in correctional facilities since it was founded in 1994. Partnering with NIDA, SMART developed a version designed especially for correctional facilities to help inmates overcome addictive and criminal behavior. SMART uses tools from cognitive and motivational enhancement therapies with proven effectiveness, which are widely used in modern treatment.

InsideOut was created primarily for use in federal and state facilities where inmates serve extended sentences. It is divided into two parts:

- 1) Detailed and structured introduction of all the elements of the SMART self-empowering model for behavioral change using its 4-Point Program[®] with an added focus on correcting criminal thinking errors – 24 meetings 90 minutes in length.
- 2) Learning how to apply the program in day-to-day life as their recovery efforts progress – 12 meetings 90 minutes in length. In this part, inmates attend regular SMART meetings, either inside the facility or outside after they are released.

SMART Recovery InsideOut Program for Montgomery County

The InsideOut program has worked well in hundreds of facilities worldwide²; due to its length, however, it cannot be used in jails where people are incarcerated for short periods of time. In 2016, the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) expressed interest in adapting InsideOut for its use, and SMART has responded with a version of the program that condenses the first part of the program into 12 meetings.

After they are released, inmates can continue with the second part by attending free weekly SMART support group meetings for as long as they want. There are more than 50 meetings in the region covering DC, Maryland and northern Virginia (for the most current list, visit www.capitalSMART.org). They can also attend meetings online almost any day of the week with a headset and weblink (www.smartrecovery.org/community). Attendance at face-to-face and online meetings can be verified when proof is required.

Over the past two years, SMART has been working with MCCF staff and counselors to refine this program and create a workbook for it. The SMART leaders involved include President Joe Gerstein, who played an instrumental role in creating the InsideOut program, Board member Bill Greer and former Board member and licensed addiction counselor Barry Grant.

How SMART Recovery Works

SMART Recovery helps people find the power and motivation within themselves to replace self-destructive behavior with healthy lifestyles. They reconnect with their most important values and create change plans to lead balanced, fulfilling and meaningful lives. Inmates have found SMART especially useful in transforming their lives to maintain their freedom once they are released.

¹ For more details, including samples of instructional videos and components of the InsideOut program, visit www.smartrecovery.org/correctional-facility-substance-abuse-programs/.

² In a study of 6,000 inmates, reconviction rates for violent crimes were 42 percent lower for the 3,000 who attended as few as 11 SMART meetings while incarcerated, according to research conducted in Australia by Chris Blatch et al., “Getting SMART, SMART Recovery Programs and Reoffending,” *Journal for Forensic Practice*, 2016, Vol. 18 Iss: 1, 3-6.

SMART InsideOut Program

Like SMART Recovery, InsideOut is a self-management program. It helps inmates deal with criminal and other self-defeating thinking that gets them into trouble. First, they work on changing their thinking. Then they will see problems before they happen, improve how they communicate with others, and stay away from alcohol and drugs. They also learn to stay away from the lifestyle that helped create a lot of their problems.

At the heart of all SMART Recovery support is its 4-Point Program, which teaches valuable life skills with a framework to overcome addictive, self-defeating behavior. Each point is discussed in meetings. The tools consist of handouts, exercises and cell work that help inmates manage their life inside and outside the walls. Addictive behavior is more than drinking and using other drugs; it includes criminal thinking, gambling, conning and manipulation. All of these have to do with how people are thinking – or really not thinking about their long-term well-being.

Point One: Enhancing and Maintaining Motivation

This point simply asks: “Why do you want to or think you need change?” It asks people to weigh the costs and the benefits of their addictive behavior, teaching that any short-term benefits are not nearly worth the long-term costs in health, relationships, job opportunities and, of course, the loss of freedom. The motivation must come from within. Inmates must decide to change for reasons that make sense to them and follow a course of action to sustain that change with practices they can integrate into a new and healthy lifestyle consistent with their values.

Point Two: Coping with Urges

Here people identify and challenge the belief that they really *must* take part in a certain behavior just because the thought or feeling comes up – without giving thought to the negative consequences. They learn to recognize the triggers that often lead to urges, along with the fact urges dissipate in length and intensity over time.

Point Three: Managing Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors

People need to understand that thinking can be an automatic reaction; and for that reason, it is important to change how they see themselves, along with others and the world in which they live. People need to learn that they do have a choice by identifying the thoughts and beliefs that govern how they behave and how they feel. People may not be able to change other people or the world – and must accept this, as hard as their life circumstances might be – but they can change themselves and learn how to interact more effectively and not be distracted by conditions they cannot change.

Point Four: Lifestyle Balance

This point teaches inmates how to build a lifestyle that is healthy, balanced and fulfilling, offering the long-term benefits that addictive and self-defeating behavior cannot provide. They will also learn skills to prevent relapses and to rebuild the quality person they left behind before they chose the negative over the positive. These skills include recognizing triggers and high-risk situations, as they construct a new way of living.

Use InsideOut With Other Recovery Support Programs and Activities

If people find help and support in NA, AA or other effective self-help programs, by all means they should keep participating. Success in recovery often requires people to engage in more than one program and take many other measures to improve themselves, including exercise, yoga, mindfulness, education and job-training.