

# Operating Therapeutic Communities Within the Criminal Justice System



# The Person

One of the central assumptions of the TC Perspective is that all substance abusers ~ regardless of the drugs they use, their backgrounds, ages or lifestyles ~ are fundamentally more alike than they are different. They tend to share certain characteristics:

- Immaturity
- Low self-esteem
- Poor tolerance for discomfort
- Inability to cope with feelings or delay gratification
- Problems with authority
- Poor interpersonal skills
- Lack of accountability for their behavior
- Manipulativeness and dishonesty
- Self-deception and delusions of victimization.

Since these characteristics vary in their presence and severity from member to member, individual treatment plans should reflect individualized assessments and areas of emphasis in treatment.

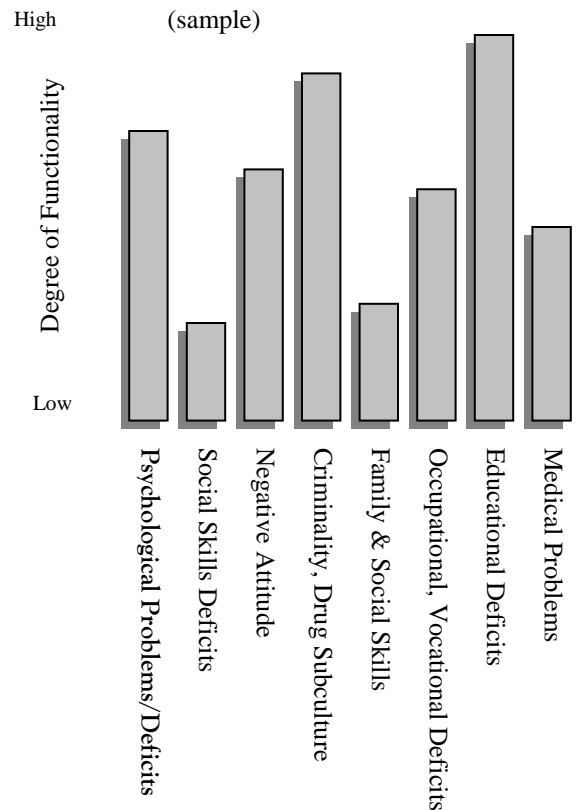
# A Continuum of Dysfunction

The characteristics of the substance abusers fall along a “continuum of dysfunction,” with varying degrees of severity. It is important to recognize each member's individuality within that pattern and not to stereotype community members.

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## The Dysfunctionality Continuum



Members enter the system on the bottom, where jobs entail relatively minor responsibility, more physical labor, few rewards and little status. Higher level job functions require more responsibility, skill and leadership and are accompanied by commensurate status and privilege. Advancement requires hard work, discipline and good work skills.

Privileges, status and social approval provide incentives for upward mobility. Downward mobility, with its attendant loss of privileges and status, serves as a sanction and deterrent.

The key difference, perhaps, between the vocational structure of a TC and that of the society at large is that upward mobility in the TC is also dependent on psychological growth and progress toward treatment goals.

## Levels of Job Functions

There are multiple levels of functional jobs in a TC. The jobs at each level provide specific challenges and can be used as clinical tools to help members master particular skills.

Residents should wear some form of “visible identifier” to proclaim the attainment of new status to the community.

## Levels of Job Functions

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- Enter at the Bottom of Pyramid
  - Incentives for Upward Mobility
  - Visual Aid to Identify Status
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Although the regulations at a particular facility may make it impossible to change clothing as in a traditional residential TC, some other type of identifying system can be used (such as arm bands or badges).

The following is a job function hierarchy from a residential TC. It includes six levels. A TC job function hierarchy does not have to include a certain number of levels or certain types of jobs; it must be a multiple-level hierarchy with clearly defined standards of increasing responsibility and skill at each level.

## Sample Job Function Hierarchy

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