

Common Ground (CGS)

Logline: Transitioning Prisoners From AC and Longtime Seg.

Goals: Addressing conflict resolutions that prisoners in AC/longtime segregation have with prison staff and/or among themselves, resulting in the hopeful transitioning and release from AC/long time seg.

Premise of Program: CGS begins with the premise that if a prisoner has been placed and held in AC/long seg. status there has to be an existence of some kind of conflict between either staff or the prisoner and other prisoners that has led to this long time segregation placement.

Unique Approach: Instead of placing blame or approaching the conflict from a subjective point of view, CGS is designed to not take a particular position in the conflict, but equalize the concerns voiced by both the prisoners/staff conflict or prisoner/prisoner conflict that led to the AC/long seg. placement, and focus on resolutions without placement of blame.

This unique approach is effective because, as in any conflict, resolution and all points of view must be aired and respected as part of the resolution discussion. No problem has ever been solved by one party in a given conflict being burdened with blame, while the other takes on a superiority complex.

Objective: The objective is to find common grounds that everyone can respect each other's security and classification concerns without placing blame and the use of inferiority labels that makes one party feel the need to be defensive, which is what most prisoners who are held in AC/long seg. feel. This defensiveness has been the main reason no previous administration/ clinical programs have successfully led to the prisoners transitioning and eventual release from AC/long seg.

Designed: This is what makes CGS unique and effective. It was designed specifically with AC/long seg. prisoners in mind. After careful review of complaints, court cases, and other view points of prisoners held in these statuses. The CGS think tank recognized the fault lines that kept the prison officials security claims and goals from registering with the prisoners and the prisoner's views being considered by the prison officials. Both sides took a "my way or the highway" approach. Resulting in the stalemate with the prisoner stuck in AC/long seg. for indefinite years and the prison officials having to pay the cost of these prisoners becoming more defensive and in the more extreme cases, psychologically damaged beyond the objective penological goal of the status. And a psychologically damaged prisoner is not in anyone's best interest. It is certainly not in the best interests of society, where some, if not most, of the prisoners will be freed to; nor the tax payers, who now have to pay extra to staff special housing units to police segregated mental units that are in fact disciplinary segregation units, which only exacerbate the original conflict.

Workshops: The CGS is organized in six workshop sessions:

Session One: Begins with both the prison official and prisoner reducing to written word what each feels is the contributory problems.

CGS freedom of expression: in order for the workshops to be effective there has to be a certain level of free expression. CGS believes all participants must be allowed to state their views free of punishment. Free expression does not entitle abusive language used to provoke or disrespect the other participants, or create more problems.

Session Two: begins with the prison official recitation of the prisoner's point of view and the prisoner recitation of the prison officials. Or, in case of prisoner/prisoner, each would recite the other's views. The participant must defend each other's view point as if it was their original view to examine and experience the difference in each other's views.

Session Three: begins with each participant putting forth prospective resolutions to the conflict, with discussion.

Session Four: begins with the mediator of CGS - a neutral and independent person - putting forth resolutions that participants should consider. The participants can accept or alter these resolutions and stipulate.

Session Five: begins with the participants pointing out what issues of concern that the other one has. They can agree these are ones to be dealt with and agreements to resolve them.

Session Six: begins with all participants putting forth future resolution commitments to prevent and stop future problems and incidents.

Completion of CGS: Upon completion of CGS, which is a six week session workshop, the prisoner participant should be placed in a transition housing to be phased back to general prison population.

Homework Assignments: After each workshop the participant should take a story of real life conflict (past and present, over the span of the workshops) and write a report stating how both sides to that real life conflict could resolve the matter. Also, what might be the fault line problems preventing the current resolutions. The reports should also point out valid points that each side has that should be taken more serious by the other side.

Final Report: At the completion of CGS, the participant should write a one hundred word essay on how the examination of the report conflicts has impacted their opinion, and if so, made a change in view point.

Disclaimer: The reports written should be permitted some freedom of expression and not be used to continue AC/Seg. placement, nor future placement. The reports will be either read at sessions or by the mediator who will return them to the participant.

Rights: CGS was created by FFUP in house pro se legal consult, R. U. and FFUP reserves all rights.

Donation: FFUP waives the rights to WI DOC to use CGS as part of the prisoner AC/long time seg. remedy.

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