



## Organizational factors and collaboration and integration activities in criminal justice and drug abuse treatment agencies

Wayne E.K. Lehman<sup>a</sup>, Bennett W. Fletcher<sup>a,\*</sup>, Harry K. Wexler<sup>b</sup>, Gerald Melnick<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD 20892, United States

<sup>b</sup> National Development and Research Institutes, Inc., New York, NY 10010, United States

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### ABSTRACT

Despite strong interest in improving collaborations between correctional and substance abuse treatment organizations, there is a lack of empirical data describing the existing practices. The current study used a national survey of correctional administrators to examine organizational factors related to cross-agency collaboration and integration activities between corrections and substance abuse treatment organizations. Using a measure of collaboration that scaled cross-agency activities from less structured, informal networking and coordination to more structured and formalized levels of cooperation and collaboration, we found that different correctional settings (e.g., community corrections, jails, prisons) differed significantly in terms of their collaborative activities with substance abuse treatment agencies. We also found that the organizational characteristics that were associated with different levels of collaboration and integration differed across the correctional settings. Further research is needed to better understand how and why correctional agencies decide to formalize collaborative arrangements with treatment agencies and whether these efforts lead to more favorable outcomes.

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### 1. Introduction

Improving the collaboration and coordination between correctional and substance abuse treatment agencies has been suggested as a way of improving the ability of drug-involved offenders to successfully complete probation or parole and transition into productive citizens (Hammett et al., 1998; Osher et al., 2003; Taxman and Bouffard, 2000a; Zhang et al., 2006). The criminal justice system has been characterized as fragmented and having poor coordination with partner institutions such as treatment services (Freudenberg, 2001; Veysey et al., 1997). Establishing stable interorganizational relationships with drug abuse treatment providers has been described as an approach for making the systems more responsive and effective; to improve coordination with other service providers to reduce conflicting system demands on re-entering offenders; and, in short, to smooth the transition from receiving support services from the correctional system to services available in the community (Duffee and Carlson, 1996; Hammett et al., 1998; Robillard et al., 2003; Taxman and Bouffard, 2000b; Taxman et al., 2007b). Konrad (1996) defines human services integration very broadly as "... a process by which two or more entities establish linkages for the purpose of improving outcomes for needy

people." Fletcher et al. (2009) describe some recent efforts at increasing systems integration within the criminal justice system. However, little research has been conducted on the nature of the integration between correctional and treatment settings, the circumstances under which cross-agency collaboration occurs (or does not occur), and the relationship between collaboration and integrative activities and organizational as well as individual client-level outcomes.

#### 1.1. Measure of cross-agency collaboration

A needed step in studying system integration efforts is development of a usable measure to describe such efforts. Fletcher and colleagues (Fletcher et al., 2009) reviewed several models of collaboration and integration activities and described the development of a measure which was conceptually and empirically related to a hierarchical model of integration (Konrad, 1996), classifying organizations by the level of structure and formality of their collaborative activities. The Konrad model views systems integration as occurring on a continuum ranging from informal, less structured activities to more formal, structured activities. Konrad described five levels of integration along the continuum from (1) information sharing; (2) cooperation and coordination; (3) collaboration; (4) consolidation; and (5) integration.

Fletcher et al. (2009) utilized data from the National Criminal Justice Treatment Practices Survey (NCJTPS; Taxman et al., 2007a), a nationally representative survey of organizational characteristics

\* Corresponding author at: 6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 5159, Bethesda, MD, 20892, United States. Tel.: +1 301 443 6504; fax: +1 301 443 2636.

E-mail addresses: [bflachte@nida.nih.gov](mailto:bflachte@nida.nih.gov), [w1115m@nih.gov](mailto:w1115m@nih.gov) (B.W. Fletcher).

and drug abuse treatment practices for offenders with a drug problem. The collaboration and integration activities measure was based on 11 items describing interagency activities between correctional and treatment agencies. The 11 activities were developed in part with the intent of distinguishing activities related to Konrad's hierarchical model of integration.

Factor analysis results reported by Fletcher et al. (2009) showed that the 11 items factored into two distinct factors which were equivalent to Konrad's (1996) information sharing and cooperation and coordination levels of systems integration (low structure and informal activities) and the collaboration and consolidation levels of systems integration (high structure and more formal activities). The low structure factor included six items: (1) we share information on offender treatment services; (2) our organizations employ similar requirements; (3) we have written agreements providing space for substance abuse services; (4) we hold joint staffing/case reporting consultations; (5) we have modified some program/service protocols to meet the needs of each agency; and (6) we have written protocols for sharing offender information. The high structure factor included five items: (1) we have developed joint policy and procedure manuals; (2) our organizations have pooled funding for some offender substance abuse services; (3) we share budgetary oversight of some treatment programs; (4) we share operational oversight of some treatment programs; and (5) our organizations cross-train staff on substance abuse issues.

Fletcher et al. (2009) reported that the data supported the hierarchical nature of the two factors as described by Konrad (1996). That is, participation in less structured and informal activities was more common (30–57%) than participation in higher structure and more formal activities (17–30%). Based on a simple count of activities endorsed, three levels of systems integration were defined: (1) no integration programs reported not participating in any of the 11 activities; (2) low structure programs were defined as participating in 1–6 activities; and (3) high structure programs participated in 7 or more activities. Based on the factor structure, agencies participating in 7 or more activities by definition had to participate in at least some of the high structure activities.

Additional analyses reported by Fletcher et al. supported this breakdown. Most agencies defined as low structure at minimum participated in information sharing (86%) and participated in the other low structure activities at rates ranging from 23% to 53%; however, participation in any of the high structure activities was very low with rates ranging from 6% to 23%. High structure agencies on the other hand participated in most of the low structure activities (95% for information sharing and 80–95% for the other low structure activities) and had high rates of participation in the high structure activities with rates ranging from 53% to 79%. Thus the breakdown of no integration, low structure and high structure programs was consistent with the hierarchical model of systems integration described by Konrad (1996) and appeared to be a useful method for classifying programs in terms of the extent of their system integration activities.

### 1.2. *Systems integration and resource dependency theory*

Resource dependency theory posits that agencies become interdependent as they rely on other agencies in their environment for resources necessary to achieve organizational objectives (Aldrich, 1976; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Rivard and Morrissey (2003) argued that much of the research on interorganizational relationships stemmed from resource dependency theory. Resources in human service delivery refer to clients, equipment, expertise, funds and information. Thus, from the perspectives of correctional and treatment agencies, the motivation for building collaborative relationships is at least partially based on the need for resources that they may not be able to provide directly or efficiently and

that can be provided by other agencies. Rivard and Morrissey state that interorganizational relationships are influenced by the amount of resource dependency between agencies, goal similarities, frequency of interactions, similarity of treatment ideologies, and informal relationships. These collaborative relationships are seen as developmental in nature and evolve through several stages toward shared responsibility and interdependence.

Rivard and Morrissey (2003) used the resource dependency framework to examine factors associated with greater coordination of activities between 63 mental health agencies and concluded that coordination was higher when it helped agencies achieve their own individual goals, when programs were influential in shaping policy, when resource linkages were maintained over time, and when the agencies operated within the same service sector. Thus, coordination was facilitated when interorganizational relationships fulfilled both the internal agency needs for goal attainment and the external needs for exerting control over the larger policy and program environment.

Resource dependency theory has several implications for interagency collaborations between correctional and treatment agencies. For example, correctional agencies that serve target populations with diverse sets of problems will have a greater need to provide relevant service and thus a stronger motivation to develop more structured collaborative relationships with agencies that have those resources. Large organizations will also be more likely to have the resources that are needed to develop those collaborative relationships.

### 1.3. *Organizational barriers and facilitators of collaboration and integration activities*

Efforts toward systems integration have an extensive history but evidence for effective implementation of integration efforts is limited and inconsistent (Alemi et al., 2004, 2006; Dennis et al., 2000; Kahn and Kamerman, 1992; Kreuter et al., 2000; Kusserow, 1991; Lasker et al., 2001; Roussos and Fawcett, 2000). Barriers to integration efforts and sustainability are many. These include the bureaucratic nature of social service delivery systems, professional and philosophical differences, and inadequate resources (Kusserow, 1991), lack of incentives for communication between system components and lack of an infrastructure that allows for services that continue across organizational boundaries (Taxman and Bouffard, 2000b), and the time consuming and resource intensive requirements of building partnerships (Axelsson and Axelsson, 2006; Banaszak-Holl et al., 1998; Lasker et al., 2001).

In spite of the many difficulties in developing integrative relationships, efforts continue to be made. As delineated by Fletcher et al. (2009), such efforts include Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC; Wenzel et al., 2004), drug treatment courts (Turner et al., 2002), case management strategies (Rapp and Goscha, 2004; Siegal et al., 2002), and boundary spanners – linking and coordinating services within and outside organizational boundaries (Grudzinskas et al., 2005; Steadman, 1992). It is obvious that many correctional programs recognize that systems integration efforts will continue to an important part of providing services for drug-involved criminal justice offenders, but because of the many difficulties in developing sustainable collaborative efforts, it is important to develop a better understanding of the organizational characteristics that are related to collaborative activities.

### 1.4. *Study purpose*

Strong interest in collaborative efforts between correctional and drug treatment agencies continues in spite of evidence that suggest difficulties in implementing and sustaining collaborative efforts. Data from the NCJTPS shows that many correctional agencies are

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