

a TCU/DATAR Training Module

STRAIGHT AHEAD

**Transition
Skills
for
Recovery**



**Institute of Behavioral Research
Texas Christian University**

STRAIGHT ***AHEAD***

Transition Skills for Recovery

***a Training Manual
from the
TCU/DATAR Project***

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This manual was developed as part of NIDA Grant DA06162, *Improving Drug Abuse Treatment for AIDS-Risk Reduction (DATAR)*.

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Preface

**The 10-week
Straight Ahead
program
provides an
alternative for
treatment
agencies to
provide clients
with infor-
mation, skills,
and encour-
agement in
ways to
strengthen and
maintain
recovery on
their own.**

The TCU/DATAR project is concerned with enhancing drug abuse treatment and reducing client dropout and relapse rates. A key area of investigation has involved cognitive enhancements to counseling through the use of node-link mapping in both group and individual counseling sessions. In addition, a variety of interventions have been developed for this project, including a structured AIDS/HIV information curriculum; treatment modules addressing relapse prevention, assertiveness training for women, and contingency management; and a social support and life skills package for clients who are approaching readiness to leave treatment (***Straight Ahead: Transition Skills for Recovery***). Research for the DATAR project is being conducted by the Institute of Behavioral Research (IBR) at Texas Christian University, in collaboration with three methadone treatment centers in Texas (Corpus Christi, Dallas, and Houston).

Previous studies conducted by IBR have focused on long-term treatment outcomes. The Drug Abuse Reporting Program (DARP) study examined 12-year outcomes for male opiate users and looked at their reasons for starting, continuing, and stopping drug use, as well as the role of treatment in the recovery process. Among the many important findings in this study was the validation of the “social” nature of addiction careers. Those who maintained abstinence reported that their efforts were helped by avoiding old drug-using friends and hangouts, developing new friends, interests and work habits, and reestablishing family ties and relationships (Simpson, Joe, Lehman, & Sells, 1986; Simpson & Sells, 1990). Treatment was seen as an important component for helping addicted people begin the social change process necessary for long-term recovery. Other researchers who studied the process of recovery in *nontreated* individuals reported on the importance of social change as well, especially in the areas of establishing supportive, drug-free social networks and developing new nondrug-related interests (Waldorf & Biernacki, 1981; Waldorf, 1983).

The ***Straight Ahead*** training manual was developed as a training and reference tool for substance abuse counselors in the TCU/DATAR project to use with clients who have completed the “primary” phase of their treatment program. This would include clients who have ceased or greatly reduced illegal drug use and alcohol use and have shown evidence of stabilization in terms of program attendance, employment or educational involvement, and desire for change. The focus of the manual is on helping clients develop social skills and support networks for recovery maintenance. The manual addresses relapse prevention, friends and social networks, 12-step and other community-based self-help, family recovery issues, assertive communication, stress reduction, anger management, and planning and problem-solving. These “transition” skills are seen as an important adjunct for preparing the client to establish his or her own continuing aftercare support system for recovery maintenance once involvement in primary treatment has ended.

Restricted staff time and budget constraints have reduced the number of formal aftercare programs available in public treatment settings. The 10-week ***Straight Ahead*** program provides an alternative for treatment agencies to provide clients with information, skills, and encouragement in ways to strengthen and maintain recovery on their own.

Acknowledgments

Our special thanks to Charlotte Pevoto for conceptualizing the layout and design of this training manual. The hands-on, user-friendly quality of this manual is due to her skills and creativity. Thanks also to Dr. Barry S. Brown for his review of the manual and excellent editorial suggestions, and to Drs. Don Dansereau and Sandra Dees for their guidance and suggestions for the structural map exercises in this manual.

We also want to acknowledge the many contributions of the counselors and supervisors of the Corpus Christi Drug Abuse Council (CCDAC) in Corpus Christi, Texas, and adVance Treatment Center, Inc., in Houston, Texas. Their help in fine-tuning and field testing this manual is very much appreciated.

Introduction

Using This Manual

The ***Straight Ahead*** module consists of ten, two-hour sessions and is best suited for small groups of five to seven participants. The manual follows a “cookbook”/training guide approach with sequence, instructions, and approximate times included for each exercise, activity, and discussion. Icons and margin notes are used to draw attention to this information. Materials and preparation considerations are listed at the beginning of each session. Information handouts and activity worksheets for copying are included at the end of each session, along with an evaluation for the session. A sample pretest/posttest instrument for the module (***Straight Ahead Client Survey***) is found in the Appendix.

The sessions were designed to be presented sequentially, and our initial experiences indicate participants enjoy the pacing of the activities, exercises, and discussions. However, the “cookbook” approach also allows for flexibility. The material can be adapted to meet the demands of a variety of drug and alcohol treatment programs. As with any cookbook, feel free to add, substitute, expand, or rearrange these materials to suit your preferences and the needs of your program. In some cases you may find it helpful to extend the material suggested for one session over two or more sessions. This allows you to adapt the material for shorter meetings or for occasions when the group’s interest and receptivity warrants longer discussions. In short, the manual is a resource to use in the way that works best for you and your clients.

The groups are intended for clients who have completed at least their “first 90 days” of primary treatment, and who have been successful in quitting or dramatically reducing drug use. The module is best suited for those who are not in deep crisis, who seem to be making progress in recovery, and who have made optimal use of individual and group counseling services and other opportunities for resolving their problems with sub-

stance use. Ideally, it can be used as an aftercare “readiness” package for helping clients frame and focus their goals for continued recovery and the steps needed to realize those goals.

Psychoeducational groups which address recovery issues have been identified as important components of drug treatment, and especially useful in methadone maintenance programs (La Salvia, 1993; Stark, 1989). The topics included in ***Straight Ahead*** are those cited in the drug and alcohol treatment literature of the last fifteen years as relevant for recovering people. These include avoiding relapse (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985; Nurco, Stephenson, & Hanlon, 1991; Zakon, McAuliffe, & Ch’ien, 1985); improving social and family support (Gibson, Sorensen, Wermuth, & Bernal, 1992; Goehl, Nunes, Quitkin, & Hilton, 1993; Kaufman, 1980); creating drug free social networks (Fraser & Hawkins, 1984; Hawkins, 1980); utilizing community-based self-help groups (Brown & Ashery, 1979; Dupont, McGovern, & Brock, 1992; Humphries, Mavis, & Stofflemayr, 1991; McCrady & Irvine, 1989; Zweben, 1987); and communication and life skills training (Callner & Ross, 1978; Hawkins, Catalano, & Wells, 1986; Monti, Abrams, Binkoff et al, 1990). ***Straight Ahead*** groups serve to impart information and advice within these topic areas, as well as to encourage participants to invent, explore, and discover potential solutions to problems or concerns they may be experiencing.

Weekly recovery discussions

After the first session, subsequent sessions begin with a half hour period set aside for participants to discuss “homework” assignments and their successes and challenges during the week. This time allows participants to “reconnect” with each other informally before moving on to the more structured and didactic part of the session. Participants are encouraged to keep a ***Weekly Recovery Journal***, a single page chart on which they can jot down successes, challenges, and goals around specific recovery issues.

At the end of each session a specific assignment task, based on the day’s topic, is suggested to participants (for example, “In the week ahead, practice using *I-statements* more frequent-

ly”). The assignments are then discussed the following week at the beginning of the session, along with other issues participants have noted in their journals. These assignments are to be suggested, but not mandated. Avoid leading into these discussions by asking “Did you do your homework?” Instead, use the lead-ins suggested in the manual to encourage participation in the discussion regardless of whether or not someone was able to complete the assignment.

Exercises and activities

Many of the exercises and suggested discussion questions in ***Straight Ahead*** are designed to empower participants by encouraging them to think positively about their strengths, abilities, and resources for discovering solutions to the challenges and difficulties they face in recovery. This approach draws on aspects of motivational interviewing as suggested by Miller and Rollnick (1991), as well as approaches developed by Brief Family Therapy practitioners (Berg & Miller, 1992; de Shazer, 1985; Lipchik, 1988; Lipchick & de Shazer, 1986; O’Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989).

Some exercises and handouts use structured maps to help participants focus on specific issues or information. These structured maps are part of a system called *node-link mapping*, a cognitive enhancement approach developed by Dr. Donald Dansereau and colleagues at TCU and used extensively in several DATAR interventions (Dansereau, Joe, & Simpson, 1993). A counselors’ manual on node-link mapping, ***Mapping New Roads to Recovery***, is available through the DATAR project and is listed in the Reference Section of the manual.

Here are some closing suggestions for working with the ***Straight Ahead*** materials:

Review the *Straight Ahead* manual: Read through the manual and become familiar with the topics, approaches, and layout of the materials.

Choose your group members: ***Straight Ahead*** is designed for clients who are not in crisis, and who are approaching readiness for aftercare or “graduation” from a formal treatment

setting. At minimum, some degree of success in beginning and maintaining sobriety should be a prerequisite for inclusion.

Where possible, remove barriers to attendance: Transportation, child care, and meeting times are factors that influence attendance. Bus tokens or carpool coordination may be needed by some potential group members. On-site child care can help those with children (especially women) attend more easily. Offering groups during the early evening or on weekends may appeal to working clients.

This manual has been designed to provide chemical dependency counselors with a structured approach for helping clients improve their skills and develop strategies for positive change. It is hoped that practitioners will find this manual a useful tool and handy reference for helping people reach and maintain their recovery goals.

Special Notes and Symbols

In addition to its convenient step-by-step approach, the ***Straight Ahead*** training manual is designed with special notes and symbols, or icons, to assist the group leader with helpful hints and in organizing materials for session preparation.

The term ***NOTE!*** in the narrow column informs you of special information and tips in using this training manual.

NOTE!

The following icons appear throughout the manual and indicate at what point objects and special procedures are used in the pre-session preparation and presentation steps. Icons are placed in the narrow column directly opposite corresponding text or figures.

ICONS

Certificate for graduation/recognition



Copies of handouts, worksheets, or evaluations



Crayons, colored pencils, or markers for participant use



Directory list of community resources for session topic



Flip chart materials





Markers for preparing flip charts or listing points during discussion.



Materials icon represents the list of items directly under the “Group Leader Materials and Preparation” in each session



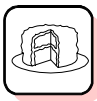
Music — cassette tape or compact disc and the equipment to play it



Pencils or **pens** for participant use



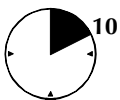
Pocket folders for participants to store handouts, etc.



Refreshments for graduation session



Role play procedure or materials



Time icon estimates the minutes needed to complete a procedure step



Videocassette tape and the equipment to present it