

Motivational Interviewing in Juvenile Justice—Workshop at Loyola College

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On Tuesday, August 23, 2005, GUIDE's Family Intervention Specialists (FIS) hosted training for employees of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) in Prince George's County. The purpose of the retreat was to provide an introduction to *motivational interviewing* (MI), an innovative practice model designed to work effectively with individuals who find it difficult to make changes in their behavior and lifestyles, such as children who may be involved with juvenile justice authorities.

MI is a brief intervention that begins as a mindset or "way of being" counselors, probation officers, and others may employ to help clients and families conduct self-evaluations and to help them reduce ambivalence in order to make steps toward positive life changes. MI has been traditionally used to help individuals with substance abuse problems who continue to use alcohol and other drugs despite the fact that using produces very negative life consequences. The approach is also being applied more and more in unique settings, such as in health care facilities.

Twenty-five probation staff and others from DJS participated in a full day's workshop conducted by Dr. Joseph Ciarrocchi, a clinical psychologist and Chair of Graduate Programs in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola College in Maryland. The program was conducted in state-of-the-art facilities on Loyola's graduate school campus in Columbia. Dr. Ciarrocchi has studied, practiced,



Loyola's high-tech classroom proved an ideal location for the MI workshop.

and taught MI techniques in a number of clinical settings. He has participated in training conducted by psychologist William Miller, who developed the short-term intervention method. Dr. Ciarrocchi's most recent book, *Counseling Problem Gamblers: A Self-Regulation Manual for Individual and Family Therapy* explores MI as a helping method for people who suffer with perpetual gambling habits.

Dr. Ciarrocchi presented an introduction to basic MI concepts, including the idea that affirmation and careful listening will help clients to feel protected and safe to explore some of the positives and negatives associated with the life changes that they are required to make in order to better their lives. Workshop participants engaged in role-play and other interactive exercises in order to experience and practice what some of the MI techniques are attempting to capture, as well as some of the difficulties that might arise while following the model. The response to these activities was very positive as people realized MI is a skill that develops with time, training, and practice. Several of the DJS staff



Workshop participants discuss new techniques and solutions.

commented on how much they had discovered about the differences in interviewing styles and how much more information they were able to obtain during role-play activities when they used open-ended questioning formats.

Participants also learned the importance of “rolling with resistance” in the MI approach. In an attempt to gain more insight and information about a client’s motivation and emotions, MI stresses the need to show understanding and empathy for the possibility of a client’s negativity toward intervention, while still balancing the need to hold the client accountable to make necessary changes in his or her life.

GUIDE’s Family Intervention Specialists serve as part of the DJS Intensive Aftercare Unit in Prince George’s County. They bring professional mental health services to the unit’s work with youth, primarily those who are returning to their homes from residential placements. Intensive Aftercare Teams in the County are designed to include two DJS employees—a case manager and monitor—and a FIS worker. The Intensive Aftercare program is part of a statewide juvenile justice initiative to

provide intensive, community-based care and services that help youth successfully reintegrate into their homes, schools, and communities. Funding for the FIS effort (and the MI in-service retreat) is provided by the Prince George’s County Mental Health and Disabilities Administration through a grant from the State of Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration and the DJS.



Dr. Ciarrocchi presents MI information.