

A New York City Version of Correctional Boot Camp: An Overview*

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THE HIGH Impact Incarceration Program (HIIP) is military or “boot camp”-style training for male inmates that provides tools to reverse the inmates’ compulsion toward criminal behavior. The daily schedule begins at 0500 hours (5 a.m.) and concludes at 2200 hours (10 p.m.) and includes academic/vocational education, substance abuse intervention, discharge planning, independent living skills, and individual and group counseling. HIIP is a “total learning environment” designed to foster involvement, self-direction, and individual responsibility. It focuses on teamwork and functions with the belief that participants can improve themselves, turn their lives around, and eventually positively influence others’ behaviors and attitudes. Members are encouraged to participate fully in the program’s management and direction. Negative behavior is reproached and becomes a focus for modification; positive behavior is encouraged and expected.

The program’s three major areas of responsibility are self-responsibility, responsibility to others, and accountability. In developing self-responsibility, inmates set personal goals and use their skills to accomplish these goals. Participants learn self-assessment, decision-making, and communication skills. In learning responsibility to others, participants learn to maintain healthy, strong, mature relationships and assimilate confrontation skills from group sessions (giving and receiving feedback). This helps pinpoint obstacles to success and reverse the negative effects of dependent/unhealthy relationships often accompanying criminal behavior.

To address accountability, inmates learn the repercussions of negative actions/behavior. HIIP teaches skills for evaluating and organizing including tools for improving relationships with family and friends. Subject matter includes attitudes/behaviors and time management techniques related to work, study, leisure, family, and spiritual development; developing

personal interests/abilities; and what to do when reintegrated into “free” society. The main focus is realization of self-worth.

An Introduction to HIIP

The New York City Department of Correction (NYC DOC) first adopted the HIIP concept as a cost-effective strategy to reduce city-sentenced inmate sentence length, cancel parole violator hearings, and reduce recidivism. The HIIP environment values and supports human development, creating a caring community of members who help each other as they help themselves. Behavioral change and confrontation of destructive attitudes maintain the integrity of the program. Inmates set goals and learn behaviors leading to successful living. They have a disciplined lifestyle and acquire mechanisms to relieve stress. HIIP inspires members to confront mistakes, change what doesn’t work, and accept responsibility for their lives.

As its mission, the program encourages participants to focus on returning as productive members of society by positive involvement. HIIP is conducive to physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual growth. Negative behavior modification is taught as positive behaviors are cultivated, furthering a sense of self-worth and personal pride.

HIIP’s development began when a NYC DOC committee, “Alternative to Incarceration,” examined the concept of paramilitary incarceration programs during the summer of 1990 and searched for program participants. By late October, the North Module of the Correctional Institute for Men of Rikers Island was designated as a 100-bed HIIP facility. To date it has become a 300-bed command. The population includes city-sentenced and technical parole violator male adult and adolescent inmates.

HIIP’s philosophy includes the following concepts: the point of power is to be in the present; become committed to change; be responsible *to* others for your own actions; you are not responsible *for* others; become attached/committed to society; share a common belief system with the larger society; take responsibility for your behavior; cultivate self-esteem via personal achievement.

The four elements of social control (Hirschi, 1972), which HIIP utilizes, are: *attachment* (affectional re-

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gard for people, places, and things); *belief* (a common value system, being responsible for yourself and to others); *commitment* (functioning according to your own belief system; accept repercussions of not doing so); and *involvement* (conventional activities involving industriousness, teamwork, and participation to exhibit attachment, belief, and commitment). HIIP also integrates Glasser's five basic needs that contribute to one's driving forces: survival (biological, includes reproduction), belonging, power, fun, and freedom (Glasser, 1965, 1984).

Responsibility is the ability to meet one's needs without interfering with others. HIIP excludes blaming, excusing, or justification. If one behaves in a certain manner, one takes responsibility for that action, without exception. HIIP keeps participants responsible for their own actions, refrains from doing for them what they can do themselves (though staff may network or direct inmates to appropriate resources), encourages them to make intelligent choices and experience consequences, and strives for consistency by entitling them to their feelings without reacting, justifying, or blaming.

HIIP provides an environment that invites change as well as a culture that gives participants the feeling of belonging that they experienced in their illegal/drug subculture. Program treatment includes straight talk, reinforcement for good behavior, and commitment to growth/change including confrontation of gross behavior patterns. New participants emulate the behavior of those already in-house.

The HIIP educational model shows that the quickest way to establish self-esteem is to learn. As such, the total learning environment emulates a complete society, helping participants achieve their goals, regardless of obstacles or others' personalities. Coping behaviors are essential, so ways of dealing with stress are a particular focus. Alienation and impulsivity (typical sociopathic functioning) are countered with the following principles: to win for oneself is dependent upon others winning as well; to win personally is easier when the whole society has members who participate productively; and to exercise control over one's destiny, one must utilize thinking and planning.

The concept of family is an essential aspect of HIIP. Participants learn to take care of themselves and when to be taken care of; help take care of others; and have an investment in each others' growth and welfare. Accordingly, cheating, lying, stealing, conning, and withdrawing are all behaviors that should be "nipped in the bud." The cohesiveness of a group is facilitated when its members "call each other" on negative behavior—without violent confrontation or blaming. Further, the program does not encourage fond discussion of criminal behavior or relating all life experiences to prison experiences. Health, wealth, and well-being are in the world at large, not the world "inside."

Goals and Overall Program Structure

As a cost-saving alternative to incarceration, HIIP espouses a threefold goal to reduce the sentence length of targeted parole violators and city-sentenced male inmates through the local Conditional Release Commission; to offset department operating expenses by reducing recidivism; and to empower inmates to live independent and productive lives.

HIIP is a highly structured training environment for city-sentenced inmates and parole violators. Specially trained uniform and civilian staff members give program participants the opportunity to learn and practice behaviors/skills essential to overcoming adverse socioeconomic forces traditionally hindering successful community living.

The program emphasizes community and teamwork, believing that individual empowerment enhances community empowerment and vice versa. HIIP is rigorous and demanding. Members participate in a structured network of program activities including academic and vocational education, substance abuse intervention, independent living skills training, individual/group counseling, and discharge planning. These help members adhere to HIIP program standards, which encourage values, attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary for successful community reintegration. HIIP standards directly reflect those of the larger society.

Empowerment is the underlying framework for the entire HIIP program. To understand this concept, one must first consider the meaning of powerlessness. Within HIIP, this refers to the inability of participants to direct the course of their lives due to societal conditions, power dynamics, lack of skills, or lack of faith that they really can change their lives. Within HIIP, empowerment is defined as a three-step process by which participants: (1) gain a basic understanding of certain societal forces that hinder their ability to live healthy, successful lives; (2) develop behaviors and skills necessary to transcend or circumvent these negative societal forces in order to assert control over their lives and well-being; and (3) support and become instrumental in the empowerment of participants and members of the larger society.

The program training phase model sets standards for participant growth in the three-step empowerment process. Each phase demands increased practical application of newly acquired knowledge, values, attitudes, behaviors, and skills. Phase I (from weeks 1 through 3) focuses on responsibility for one's self. Participants learn all aspects of the program and discuss how to apply what they learn to overcome adverse societal forces and to live successfully upon discharge. Toward the end of Phase I, community group leaders are assigned to facilitate military drill regimens and cadences, morning meetings, community meetings, and therapeutic videos. Participants also begin to actively support the empowerment of each other.

Phase II (from weeks 4 through 6) focuses on responsibility to others. Participants demonstrate a thorough understanding of program philosophy, community standards, general orders, inspections, evaluations, disciplinary procedures, and facilitation techniques. They apply methods learned in the program and discuss their application to life on the "outside." Participants assume more responsibility for the program's day-to-day operations and support the empowerment of all community members.

Phase III (from weeks 7 through 9) focuses on taking responsibility for the quality of one's own life. Phase III is the same as Phase II, with increased opportunity for peer facilitating and leading in most programmatic components.

Main Programmatic and Treatment Components

All HIIP components are linked by their reinforcement of the empowerment process and provide opportunities for participants to self-discover, confront mistakes, assume responsibility for self and to others; to develop knowledge, values, attitudes, behaviors, and skills essential to successful community living; and to set goals and assert control over their lives.

HIIP staff members demonstrate how each activity leads to the goal of empowerment. It is critical that participants understand *why* they are learning what is taught and *how* to apply their newly acquired information and skills to their daily lives upon discharge.

Participants are bound by community standards and classroom agreements. Community standards require participants to adhere to program rules, goals, and activities; speak supportively; acknowledge others; demonstrate respect; communicate problems; agree to strive for resolution; and focus on what works. Classroom agreements are to direct all attention/communication to the group leader; be clear and concise when speaking; offer solutions; keep time agreements; do not disturb the class; and keep confidential all personal information shared.

Physical training, a military drill regime, and military cadences are an integral part of the program. Within HIIP there are four platoons: senior, junior, sophomore, and freshman. There is a graduation almost every 2 weeks. The progress in eight short weeks is very positive and effective. The daily regimen, which includes calisthenics and running, provides an attainable challenge to ability, encourages a state of physical fitness, and enhances self-esteem. Participants think and act more effectively. Academic scores and attention spans are improved by the physical fitness portion of the program. Military drill helps focusing skills and teaches effective leadership. Military cadences reinforce a common belief system and a commitment to HIIP principles. Intensive military bearing, courtesy, drill, and physical exercises are taught by drill instruc-

tors. All activities are attended in military formation to instill pride and dignity.

The HIIP process addresses the control theory that nonconformity is produced by the failure of the social bond. If participants "attach" to each other, conformity is likely. HIIP bridges the external discipline of the military model with an internalized system of positive values, self-worth, personal pride, and group participation/support.

Tools and Resources

Inmates are offered all of the following tools and resources; however, it is up to each of them to use them effectively.

Substance Abuse Intervention Division. HIIP offers a total of 56 hours of substance abuse intervention. HIIP concentrates strongly upon this subject because it believes that drug addiction is not only a health issue, but also shows a lack of self-esteem and self-motivation.

Group Therapy. The benefits of group therapy include: imparting information, instilling hope, realizing the universality of one's problems, and learning altruism through helping others. Tools used include corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, development of socializing techniques, imitative behavior, interpersonal learning, catharsis, and group cohesiveness.

Morning Meeting. A daily 30-minute morning meeting promotes introspection, good feeling, and a positive tone for the day. Participants raise questions or concerns about the program or their personal lives. They also tell stories, sing, recite poetry, or share feelings. The meeting ends with a moment of silent meditation. Groups are kept as small as HIIP staff coverage permits, and community groups are never divided. Correction officers lead morning meetings during the first 3 weeks of the program. After that, community group leaders are responsible for them.

Academic and Vocational Education. Participants are placed on traditional or nontraditional vocational education tracks, based on assessment conducted during orientation week. The education component also is divided into two sections to maximize performance. While both sections improve basic math and reading skills and prepare for the GED, the section supporting the traditional track emphasizes grammar, punctuation, business letter writing, and office machines while the section supporting the nontraditional track focuses on geometry and measurement. Both vocational and academic education components are bilingual.

Work Detail. Inmates are assigned Rikers Island-based work details that support and develop their assigned vocational education track.

Individual Counseling and Case Management. Individual counseling and case management focus on members' unique concerns. This helps withdrawn/hesitant inmates to assert themselves in group settings; to re-

view and discuss weekly program performance evaluation and help develop weekly program goals in areas that need improvement; and to provide assistance in developing medium-long range goals in conjunction with discharge planning.

Independent Living Skill Workshops. One-and-a-half-hour workshops are offered Monday through Friday. Core workshops offer fundamental knowledge and skills, with titles that include: self-discovery (values, interests, abilities, cultural awareness, personal characteristics, and experiences); self-esteem; listening; verbal and nonverbal communications skills; assertiveness skills and self-advocacy; frustration, anger, stress, and time management; conflict resolution; cultural sensitivity; and decision-making and goal-setting.

General workshops cover many topics, and inmates attend whether or not they feel the topic applies to them. Program specialists provide a list of issues related to the topic of the day. Participants also suggest topics of their own.

Network Meetings. These include “community,” “three-part,” “confrontation,” and “clearing” meetings. They are designed for participants to learn and apply interpersonal skills and responsibility for self and to others in preparation for successful community living.

Community Meetings. “*The only failure is the failure to participate.*” This daily 1-hour meeting helps develop and support a sense of family among HIIP members, focusing on responsibility for self and to others. The format sets a formal tone and provides a structure to confront community issues. Chairs are in a horseshoe arrangement to encourage eye contact. Members raise their hands to be recognized by the facilitator and stand to address the group.

The following areas are covered:

- **General Spirit**—A brief check to see how people are feeling and the overall mood of the group.
- **Reaffirm Purpose of Program**—A member reads the philosophy of the program, followed by personal statements.
- **Regressions**—Personal statements by members regarding behaviors they recognize as negative and in need of change.
- **Teachings**—Teaching statements, usually drawn from personal experience or by analogy, offered by members and staff to those members requesting help.
- **Pull-Ups**—Statements of concern about negative attitudes/violations of the community standards shown by careless behavior. This raises levels of awareness about personal habits and care of the HIIP environment. “Pull-up slips” are written down as general statements, and leaders review these before the meeting to ensure that the larger community can

benefit from the discussion. This avoids nit-picking or personal issues that should be handled in a confrontation group.

- **Progress Reports**—The leader reviews community progress toward living up to community standards, then asks members to report on progress in other areas including education, work detail, and independent living skills.
- **Announcements**—Daily schedule, assignments, etc.
- **Closing**—End on an upbeat note with a teaching theme for the day, group ritual, story, skit, or whatever is appropriate. Teach a “word” for the day, including the definition and its use in a sentence. This motivates inmates to focus on a particular area of community living.
- **Feedback**—All meetings are followed by a feedback session, acknowledging positive things and suggestions for change. Feedback is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely—S.M.A.R.T.

Three-Part Meetings. “*I am the story I tell myself I am.*” These meetings reinforce basic self-worth and facilitate personal growth. They are run as support groups, with members seated in a circle, and include:

- **Self-Affirmation**—Inmates make statements of self-affirmation in the present tense, positively and potently. This counteracts most offenders’ negative self-image and begins positive self-talk—the first step to self-esteem.
- **Concerns**—After stating strengths, inmates may focus on problems, thinking through them with each other to seek solutions, using the five-step decision-making process. The five steps to making decisions are based on principles of twelve-step programs: (1) see your situation clearly; (2) know what you want; (3) expand your possibilities; (4) evaluate all possibilities before making a decision; and (5) create an action plan.
- **Future Direction**—Inmates identify actions they will take to resolve their concerns. Meeting should end on a positive note, with members summarizing their action plan or reviewing progress on a previous action plan.

Clearing Meetings. “*The point of power is in the present.*” These meetings provide a process for clearing feelings within small groups. Each member says, “What I’m feeling is...” and states clearly his own feelings and the situation that contributed to the feelings. He speaks about whatever he feels for as long as he needs. When finished, he turns to the person on his left and says either “and that’s what I’m feeling” or “I’m clear.” The group responds by saying, “Thank you, [speaker’s name].” This is the *only* response to any feelings expressed.

Confrontation Group Meetings. "People who care don't let you off the hook." These meetings address negative attitudes/behaviors displayed by participants, help clarify perspectives on how negative habits prevent them from being successful in their lives, and provide positive alternatives to dealing with stress. The HIIP definition of "confront" is "to come face-to-face with." Confrontation is only useful in the context of a caring community. Without support and concern, it feels like a hostile attack. Staff and participants watch for scapegoating, personal vendettas, and grandstanding although caring should not be confused with sympathy, rescuing, or excusing.

Confrontation groups provide a setting for resolving misunderstandings/anger between members and use the resources of participants to point out effects of their behaviors on others. They examine their feelings of personal self-worth and notice erosion of self-esteem caused by negative acting out. All members participate in this process to learn new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Members are encouraged to have a positive attitude toward the confrontation process. The whole purpose is to raise self-esteem and carry one's head high.

Milieu Therapy (Therapeutic Community). Initially intended to rehabilitate repatriated prisoners of war, Milieu Therapy has professional staff, nonprofessional staff, and offenders all taking part in the process of changing negative behavior. Group counseling, usually led by trained staff, may be led by offenders at times. Staff may need to adopt a more democratic stance (versus authoritarian role)—acting firmly, yet warmly. Small group size enables intimate interaction, and there is less room for deviant status avoidance. Participation is usually voluntary, and members can remove themselves (or each other) when necessary. To enhance the concept that each member is part of the mainstream, opportunities are available for eligible participants to have ample visits and furloughs, to nurture an attitude of acceptance, and to attain a job with compensation. Guided group interaction is based on socio-psychological learning roles and norm controls via interpersonal communication. The length of stay is usually limited to 6 months.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Cooperation with HIIP. The Inmate Education Program provides academic remediation, GED/college prep, computer and building maintenance training, transitional counseling, and aftercare follow-up. Life and job readiness skills as well as individual and group counseling services are offered. These resources have proved invaluable to the HIIP goal of reducing recidivism.

Austin H. McCormick Island Academy. This academy provides education opportunities for HIIP participants. Successful completion of the five General Education Development Tests, including writing skills, social studies, science, literature, and the arts, earn the stu-

dent a high school equivalency diploma. Inmates who apply themselves increase their likelihood of employment opportunities and may pursue higher education.

Small Group Seminars. These are presentations, developed and performed by participants, based on training program content. They have proven helpful to reinforce learning and to promote self-esteem, motivation, participation, creativity, and empowerment.

HIIP participants have 12 to 14 hours of personal time each week, which they may use for community meeting preparation, peer tutoring or studying, informal individual/group counseling, laundry, telephone, personal hygiene, letter writing, or reading.

Parole Officers' Involvement With HIIP

Successful social reintegration is the primary goal of parole, which allows conditional release to an offender who already has served part of his prison sentence. The unexpired portion of the sentence is served in the community under the custody of the state, as supervised by the parole officer. Parole has a legal responsibility to protect the community, so parole violations are likely to result in reincarceration.

Parole wants offenders put into community-minded or drug-oriented programs—either inpatient or outpatient. Ninety percent of the "teammates," as they are called, go into drug rehab. Parole enrolls the teammates, puts out warrants and parole violations, and guides graduates to aftercare meetings. It is the final stage of HIIP.

Graduation

A public graduation ceremony is the optimistic conclusion of HIIP, giving hope that graduates can go from incarceration to contributing beneficially to society, with the assistance of the aftercare program. By receiving respect and congratulations from the very staff members who had authority over them, graduates feel better about themselves, and their diploma tells them they have accomplished something they may never have believed possible. After the ceremony and a shared meal, graduates show their families the compound, take them on a tour of the program, and show them their workbooks. They are sent home with the phone number of the aftercare program. Families thus are involved in their recoveries.

Participants are responsible for the preparations for HIIP graduation (under staff supervision) including the choice and confirmation of a graduation speaker (plus a back-up speaker, if necessary); design of invitations, announcements, and program; telephone invitations to families and friends; selection of the valedictorian and participant graduate speaker; and preparation of graduation step dance(s). HIIP staff members arrange to print announcements and programs, prepare city and

non-city employee guest lists, notify the deputy warden for programs to confirm the location for the graduation and reception, coordinate with the buffet food service manager, and supervise the graduation rehearsal.

Graduation preparation offers an opportunity to apply knowledge, behavior, and skills learned throughout the program including creative writing and expression, organization, time management, discipline, delayed gratification, leadership, and teamwork. Participants experience satisfaction from seeing the results of their hard work.

Aftercare

The South Forty Transitional Services Program provides prerelease preparatory services to HIIP inmates as well as their STEP (Self-Taught Empowerment Program) counterparts at the Rose M. Singer Facility. As a result, they have been afforded a better opportunity to become productive members of society and reduce the possibility of recidivism. Upon release, they are referred to the program's career development program, where they receive subsidized on-the-job training and work experience.

The program also has helped the New York State Department of Correctional Services reduce ex-inmate unemployment by providing: vocational assessment services determining employment suitability; pre-vocational workshops to improve employability and job retention; individual and group counseling to improve problem-solving skills, increase self-esteem, and prepare for independent living; and referrals to training, support services, and educational programs to increase employability.

HIIP graduates are provided additional aftercare that has been specifically designed for them—i.e., extra attention may be paid to their substance abuse histories and issues surrounding maintaining abstinence/sobriety. Aftercare meetings take place every Tuesday, with access to resources that are available during the program's regular hours of operation. HIIP administrators note that the aftercare portion of HIIP is the primary reason for HIIP's overall success.

The most novel aspect of HIIP aftercare is the 24-hour hotline. Prisoners call, inmates call, graduates call—often family members call. Because of the relationships, bonding, and program content, the inmates/participants (now graduates or "teammates") want to let the staff know how they're doing. The hotline is an outside number that officers can pick up at any time. It also is a crisis line for anyone who gets in trouble to call for help or on-the-spot counseling.

Conclusion

HIIP is an effective program to help inmates recover from the problems that led to their incarceration in the first place and help them become contributing members of society. Through HIIP's training and continuing aftercare, participants learn skills, behaviors, and attitudes that lead to greater self-esteem, self-empowerment, and a successful life, thus significantly reducing recidivism.

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