Module 2: Understanding and Using Facilitation Skills

Performance Objectives

By the end this module, you will be able to:

- ✓ *define and apply the facilitation skills, including attending, listening, reflecting and encouraging*
- ✓ *construct open- and closed-ended questions and demonstrate the appropriate use of each type*
- ✓ *demonstrate facilitation skills in initial interviews*
- ✓ *describe some of the unique needs of diverse groups of offenders with whom you work and approaches for working with them effectively*

As an Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS), you will use facilitation skills to assist offenders in making effective career decisions and following through with a successful job search. In order to do this work effectively, you need to understand and apply some traditional helping and counseling techniques used to establish and maintain positive working relationships with clients in non-corrections settings.

Many of you have received basic facilitation skills training in the past and you may already use some of these skills in your work with offenders. However, it is likely that you will need to take a fresh look at your facilitation skills in order to offer the more advanced workforce development services you will use as an OWDS. While basic questioning and reflecting skills may have served you well up to this point, you will now need to take these and other facilitation skills to a higher level in order to integrate career theory into your work and to help offenders succeed in getting and keeping jobs.

Thus, this module is designed to reinforce the key facilitation skills for those of you who have studied them in the past and to introduce them to those of you who have not yet had an opportunity to use them. Opportunities to practice these skills in workforce development work will also be provided through structured activities described throughout the module and later in an instructor-led group.

Before we look at facilitation skills in the context of workforce development, it may be helpful to recall from the previous theory module that work plays an important role in people's lives. In many ways, work establishes an identity that shapes the way people relate to one another. In social settings, for instance, one question often asked when meeting new people is, "What do you do for a living?" Given the amount of energy and identity that individuals invest in their jobs, it is sometimes difficult to imagine what it would be like to be without a career. Many offenders

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have never developed a legitimate work history outside of prison and, in turn, have never been grounded by this central anchor of identity. Some have relied on welfare instead of working or have worked only sporadically because of incarceration, parole requirements, family demands, or chaotic life situations. When confronted with the idea of working after release, offenders no doubt experience any number of feelings — from excitement to fear, anger, or depression.

For this reason, it is vital for each OWDS to develop the ability to enable offenders to identify strengths and solve problems so they can work toward developing their careers. The facilitation skills presented in this module will provide the tools you need to assist them. Again, some of this material will remind many of you of theories and techniques you have read about before. For others, it will give names and concepts to the ways you already relate naturally with people; for still others, it may be a brand new way of looking at work with offenders. This module offers an essential foundation for the course material that follows.

This examination of the facilitation skills is divided into three parts:

- identifying the basic facilitation skills and considering tools and techniques for learning them;

- addressing the use of facilitation skills in the initial interview and focusing on possible barriers to success; and

- drawing on facilitation skills when working with offenders from diverse backgrounds.

Underlying Principles

The basic principles that facilitation skills are based upon include acceptance and respect, understanding and empathy, and trust and genuineness (Egan, 2010). *Acceptance* is the act of relating to another person without judgment. *Respect* is an attitude of giving dignity to each individual, regardless of his or her place in society. As an OWDS you must be able to accept and respect offenders just as they are. This non-judgmental point of view lies at the heart of effective facilitation. At the same time, it is not always easy to achieve — especially with an offender who is sarcastic or rude, or who has a criminal history that you may feel particularly uncomfortable with. In such cases, it will be important to be honest with yourself about your own feelings and reactions and to do your best to keep them separate from the work at hand. It may also be helpful to remember that career transitions are by nature stressful and that they often bring out the worst, as well as the best, in people. Ideally, you must strive to communicate acceptance by being professional, open, and non-judgmental toward the offenders you work with**.** You can convey respect by showing interest and concern for each offender as an individual through each step in the career transition process.

Human beings feel and experience understanding when they believe that another person has listened to them carefully and thoughtfully enough to know their experience. While sympathy suggests understanding based on shared personal experience, empathy involves putting yourself

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in another person's shoes in order to try to understand that person's thoughts and feelings. Thus, an OWDS does not have to have an incarceration history in order to work empathetically with offenders. In order to be fully effective, however, an OWDS must develop an understanding of each offender's emotional experiences and convey this understanding in the context of the work.

Like the other ingredients of effective facilitation, understanding and empathy are skills that improve with experience, practice, and professional commitment. Even the most seasoned and successful facilitators sometimes have difficulty communicating these attitudes to offenders because of the thought patterns and personality traits that offenders frequently exhibit.

In non-corrections settings, the facilitation or counseling relationship is based on mutual *trust*. An atmosphere of trust enables clients to be open and honest in sharing their experience and feelings as they work on life or career issues. However, in a criminal justice setting, trust is more analogous to the established principle of being "firm, fair, and consistent" with offenders. By integrating firmness, fairness and consistency into your facilitation skills, you can establish and maintain respectful, professional boundaries and avoid sending any mixed signals that might lead to misinterpretation and miscommunication.

Confidentiality

One of the essential ways that you can practice firmness, fairness, and consistency with offenders is to treat their confidences seriously and respectfully and not share them with others outside of the criminal justice community. You and your team members must not discuss offender information when you are out together at restaurants and other public places. You must also keep a commitment to follow local policies and guidelines on confidentiality of offender information**.**

At the same time, you are not bound to maintain the same type of counselor-client confidentiality that a private counselor must maintain. This distinction stems from legal precedent suggesting that, as a criminal justice counselor, the OWDS is a peace officer first and a counselor second (*Fare v. Michael C., 1979).* Although an OWDS is not a counselor, the distinction applies. In addition, privileged communication is granted by the state and applies only to certain licensed professionals—a term that does not apply to every OWDS. Further, according to Masters' classic text, there are exceptions to privileged communication in corrections, and confidentiality might not apply (Masters, 1994). You should be aware that there is an ethical duty to inform the offender at the outset of the workforce development sessions that you cannot ensure total confidentiality of all information that might emerge. It is important to remember that your notes, records, case summaries, and reports may be subpoenaed and used in open court against the offender. You will have an opportunity to practice discussing these limits on confidentiality during the classroom training.

Genuineness

When you think for a moment about the people you feel most comfortable with, a word that may come to mind to describe them is "genuine." Most people are keenly aware when someone is

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being fake or false with them. It is not a pleasant feeling. An OWDS with an artificial interpersonal style could make offenders feel patronized, brushed aside, or disrespected. On the other hand, offenders are more likely to benefit from working with an OWDS who relates to them authentically. Offenders are frequently astute observers of human nature and can quickly spot a phony. If you are perceived as being inauthentic, your ability to help will be severely limited; and you may, in fact, become vulnerable and open to manipulation.

Genuineness is conveyed, in part, through eye contact, tone of voice, and attending to people fully. However, it is also conveyed through the attitudes individuals show in approaching other people—including offenders. Try to keep this in mind throughout this course and in your professional work.

Tools and Techniques That Support Facilitation Skills

The counseling profession has developed an array of facilitation tools and techniques (Egan, 2010) that an OWDS can draw on in working with offenders. This section of the module will discuss the key tools of attending, listening, reflecting, encouraging, and questioning.

Attending

All too often in day-to-day life, people do not truly pay attention to one another in conversation. This inattention may be conveyed through a lack of eye contact, distractedness, or responses that are out of sync with what others are saying. No matter how this inattention is communicated, the result is the same: individuals are left feeling as though what they have to say is unimportant. Attending involves a sustained, concentrated effort to hear—truly hear—what another person is saying. Attending goes beyond listening to the content of the message. It is better described as listening with the whole body.

In his classic text, *The Skilled Helper*, Gerard Egan (2010) uses the letters S-O-L-E-R to summarize the most important ingredients of good attending skills. Some of you may already be using the **SOLER** skills, but becoming more consciously aware of them will enable each OWDS to attend fully to what offenders are saying.

S: Face the other person **S**quarely. You should be positioned so that you are turned directly toward the offender. This posture conveys interest in the offender and signifies respect for the person as well as the message.

O: Adopt an **O**pen posture as a sign of receptivity to what another person has to say. Crossed arms and legs can inadvertently communicate defensiveness or closed-mindedness on your part. Egan observes that this point doesn't have to be taken literally. In other words, if one's legs are crossed, it doesn't necessarily mean that one is not attending to the offender; however, it may be viewed that way.

The important thing is that you consciously ensure that your posture is communicating openness

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to what the offender is saying.
L: **L**ean toward the other person. People tend to communicate their interest in one another by leaning *slightly* toward each other. Egan suggests thinking of the upper body as being on a hinge that can be angled forward or backward. When you are sitting with an offender, hinge forward just a bit in order to convey that you are fully engaged in hearing what he or she has to say.

E: Maintain good **E**ye contact. When two people are engaged in a conversation, they tend to look directly at each another. Eye contact not only enhances concentration on what is being said, but also communicates interest in the message and the messenger. At the same time, you should be aware that some offenders might interpret steadily maintained eye contact as a challenge or a "power move." It is important for you to rely on intuition and understanding of individual interpersonal styles to establish a level of eye contact that is comfortable for each offender.

R: Try to be relatively **R**elaxed. Egan writes that being relaxed means two things: (a) not fidgeting nervously and (b) becoming comfortable using one's body as a vehicle for expressing oneself. You should be aware of what your body posture communicates to others. In working with offenders, you can develop this awareness by occasionally asking yourself, "How am I positioned right now, and what might this be saying to the offender?"

While it is important to be relatively relaxed in your interpersonal tone, you should take care not to do or say anything that could send the wrong message to an offender, regardless of gender. Because offenders have a frame of reference that has a very low threshold, it may not take much for an offender to conclude that you are interested in a personal relationship with him or her. Even something as seemingly innocent as a touch on the arm can be completely misinterpreted. You must use discretion and ensure that body language is an appropriate extension of the professional role.

Because the **SOLER** guidelines were developed for the North American culture, it is important to recognize that some non-Western cultures have characteristics that require sensitivity and modification. These will be discussed in more depth later in the module.

Listening

Listening is a concept that seems simple yet is deceptively complex because it involves paying attention to two different things at the same time. The first is the *content* of the message—the cognitive meaning of what is being said. The second is the *feeling* that is conveyed along with this content. In any conversation many different feelings can accompany a simple message. For example, if an offender were to say, "I didn't get around to working on my resume," this same sentence may communicate feelings of disinterest, guilt, or anxiety, depending on tone and non-verbal signals. Offenders may consciously or unconsciously communicate feelings through body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. You should draw on experience in relating with people in various life roles as listening tools in deciphering such messages. Offenders may also convey verbal messages that are out of sync with their non-verbal messages, thus consciously or unconsciously confusing the listener. In such a situation, you should reference this discrepancy as

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a way of clarifying the offender's actual feelings or reaction. For instance, if an offender insistently says, "I'm not angry," while flushed and speaking through clenched teeth, point this out in a non-confrontational way and ask the offender to consider what he or she may truly be feeling. For example, you might say, "I'm hearing you say that you aren't angry, but I'm also noticing that your teeth are clenched and your face is flushed. Is it possible that there's a part of you that's feeling annoyed?"

Reflecting

Reflections are used in many daily interactions, though most people probably do not realize it. If a friend were to tell you that she had lost her car keys and couldn't make it to an appointment on time, you might respond by saying, "How frustrating!" This response reflects an understanding of what the friend has said and demonstrates listening—not only to the content of the message, but to the feeling behind it. You will be most effective in assisting offenders when offering reflections that mirror both the content and feeling of their messages. Content is reflected when you restate or summarize the main point of what the offender has said. Feeling is reflected when you include in this statement a feeling word that approximates what you believe the offender is experiencing. Reflection, then, is more than just parroting what offenders say word for word; it echoes the essence of their words and includes an understanding of what they may be feeling. When done well, this technique enables offenders to feel more fully understood.

In the work of the OWDS, reflecting can be used to

- gather information
- build rapport
- achieve mutually determined workforce development goals
- offer suggestions
- help offenders discharge pent-up feelings that may be sabotaging job search and retention efforts
- encourage offenders to consider behavior patterns they have used in the past and acknowledge the need to learn new, more adaptive behaviors

Whether simple or complex, reflections can help you to better understand an offender's readiness level for workforce development milestones. For instance, saying, "It makes sense that you were a little nervous for your first interview, but it also seems like you did very well in spite of it" can normalize an understandable reaction and offer important affirmation. Reflections can explore behavioral tendencies or patterns of thinking and feeling that lead offenders to particular actions or ways of thinking about events. For example, when reflecting an offender's anger, you might ask, "Does it seem to you that you sometimes argue with your boss when you're mad at your girlfriend?" Reflection can also enable you to help an offender consider family of origin or early life experiences that contribute to current personality and functioning. When sensitively phrased, such questions may promote developmental insight. For instance, "Did your parent go to work each day when you were a child?" If the answer is no, you have gained insight that the offender may not have had a role model of appropriate work ethic/behavior providing an opportunity to

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discuss workplace expectations and related concepts.
Some people pattern their reflections on a "You feel . . . because . . ." model. For example, if an offender were to tell you that he was "ticked off" because his boss couldn't remember his name after two weeks of work, you could respond by saying, "It sounds like you're angry because this guy isn't showing you the kind of respect you'd like him to." While "You feel . . . because . . ." reflections work well for some people, they aren't the only way to use reflection skills appropriately or well. Over time, you should find a style of reflection that works well for your personality and communication style. The important thing is for the offender to feel "heard" and understood when working with you. This sense of understanding can help them to "hold things together" during the inevitable ups and downs of the job search and retention process.

Especially while still learning to offer reflections, you should consciously strive to avoid these pitfalls:

- wanting to give advice or find some immediate way to solve problems
- focusing too much on remembering all of the details the offender has shared
- concentrating on formulating a response to each offender statement instead of listening fully to the statements themselves
- getting caught up in the offender's feelings or the content of their messages. Many offenders are highly emotional, and this intense affect can "spill over" to you. Some offenders may also attempt to manipulate listeners by conveying sad stories that evoke sympathy and may distort facts.

During the in-class portion of the course, we will discuss ways to use facilitation skills as a tool to support offender workforce development without increasing the risk of manipulation.

Encouraging

Often all that is necessary to let offenders know that you are listening and encouraging them to continue talking is to use an expression like "umm hmm." Counselors and other helping professionals call this a "minimal encourager." Most people naturally accompany phrases like this by nodding their heads — a simple and effective "I'm listening" message, whether on its own or coupled with words.

When people are talking with someone and want to clarify their understanding of what is being said, they often simply ask for more information from the other person. You can use this technique to deepen your understanding of what offenders have to say. For instance, if an offender were to say, "My boss is a jerk," you might respond by asking, "What do you mean?" "Tell me more about that," or ask for an example. Any of these responses would show the offender that you are listening and would elicit more information in order to clarify an understanding of the situation. This skill of encouraging the offender to continue speaking and clarifying information is particularly useful when conducting initial interviews. It is important to distinguish that this facilitation skill of encouraging the offender to *continue speaking* is not the same as offering support and encouragement for actions.

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Questioning

The same basic question can be asked in more than one way. You should use both open- and closed-ended questions as tools in gathering information from offenders and to determine the need for services. Closed-ended questions are those that can be answered "yes" or "no" or with another simple one-word response. Usually, these questions ask for specific facts or opinions: "Do you enjoy working with computers?" or "Do you have any children?"

Closed-ended questions have advantages. They

- tend to be easy for offenders to answer. They may be useful when working with offenders who are learning English or with individuals who may be reluctant to open up initially.
- yield or clarify information quickly. For example, "Can you meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow?"

At the same time, closed-ended questions have disadvantages. They may

- restrict offenders to brief answers.
- keep the questioner in control of the conversation, limiting the time that offenders can talk. One has to ask just the right questions in order to discover the true needs and will find that responses to closed-ended questions provide less information.
- cause offenders to feel interrogated and thus lead to mistrust or resistance.
- be perceived as advice or criticism. For example, an offender who tells you that he is having trouble getting to work on time may feel you are being critical if you respond with "Don't you have an alarm clock?"

Open-ended questions invite a longer response than closed-ended questions do and often start with what, how, or why: "How have you used computers in your job here?" or "What do you imagine will be the hardest thing about leaving here and getting a job?"

Open-ended questions have advantages. They

- invite offenders to explore their thoughts and feelings.
- give offenders greater control in the conversation.
- convey interest and respect to offenders by inviting them to relate their experience in their own words and in their own way.

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- provide information you may not have known to seek. For example, in responding to an open-ended question, an offender may mention a skill or experience that you would not have discovered by asking a simple "yes" or "no" question.

Open-ended questions also have these disadvantages. They may

- allow offenders to wander away from a topic and lose focus or avoid topics that are unpleasant but necessary to discuss.

- lead to a series of "I don't know" answers.

Using Facilitation Skills in the Initial Interview

The initial interview with an offender offers an important opportunity to gather information. You must know how to conduct a good initial interview, though the timing and context of this interview will depend on your work setting. In most career development settings, an initial interview typically lasts up to an hour and focuses on getting detailed information on a client's life and career history. You will probably not have this much time, so it will be important to be flexible and to work within realistic time constraints.

As Masters (2003) observes, offenders view helpers (OWDSs, in this case) as authority figures who have great power to influence their lives. Offenders also tend to stereotype OWDSs as agents of the criminal justice system who are out to make life difficult for them, particularly when the OWDS works inside an institution, is a community supervision officer, or is part of a court-mandated program. Because of this, offenders may approach the initial interview with suspicion, tentativeness, ambivalence, and/or fear. Offenders frequently feel that anything they say or do is being scrutinized and can be used against them. It is not unusual for offenders, in the beginning, to test the waters before taking even the smallest risks with you. The offender will likely have unspoken questions that you should openly address in the initial interview in order to promote a productive session. Such questions include: "Will you be fair with me? What do you expect of me?" and "What will I have to do?"

Remember that the first contact is not an interrogation and that it will set the tone for your workforce development efforts with the offender. This is one of the reasons why you will need to use facilitation skills on a deeper level than before—to begin to prepare the offender to play an active, collaborative role throughout the job search, placement, and retention process. Therefore, while your time frame may be limited, it is *ideal* for you to take the first two or three visits to establish rapport before asking any questions that directly address the offender's risk factors.

During the initial assessment contact, you should clearly explain the rules and expectations in simple, honest, and direct statements. Throughout the initial interview, keep mental notes on the offender's use of language, mannerisms, and interpersonal style in order to be able to determine the offender's personal strengths and barriers.

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Though you may already have access to offenders' records, it may still be best to gather basic information on each offender's background, work, and training in order to build trust and establish an accurate foundation for the work that follows. It is crucial to take careful notes on the offender's history and job search situation and convey clear and accurate information about available services. It is also important to verify the information provided by offenders in interviews by cross checking it with established records or well-informed corrections personnel. The following section offers a framework for developing these skills.

The purposes of the initial interview are

- to develop an understanding of the offender, learning both history and the current situation
- to identify and define an offender's career goals
- to identify obstacles to and resources for goal attainment
- to match the offender's needs with appropriate services offered by the OWDS's office or a variety of other organizations

The initial interview allows you to use facilitation skills to learn about offenders, their needs, and how the services offered by key organizations can address these needs. As far as possible, the initial interview should be conducted in a setting that provides an appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality. The kinds of information sought vary somewhat in specific organizations. However, the most important areas are as follows:

- basic demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)
- incarceration history
- work experience and job-related skills (prison or community)
- education/training background (prison or community)
- specific strengths, aptitudes, sources of support
- specific challenges: financial, child care, transportation, or other barriers
- interests and career goals

Because interviewing is typically the first step in the career assessment process, a discussion of effective interview questions and step-by-step procedures will be presented in the Assessment Module.

Keep in mind, however, that the basic facilitation skills covered in this module are invaluable tools in conducting initial interviews with offenders. Ideally, use open-ended questions to broach each new topic, and use closed-ended questions to clarify the information the offender offers. Note that you are unlikely to get at any "real" barriers in the initial interview. Instead, it is more likely that the offender will discuss "safe" barriers, such as transportation concerns, until he or she becomes more comfortable with you. An open, non-judgmental approach to the offender should be maintained, along with effective attending and listening skills. Some of the topics that might come up in such an interview may make you feel awkward or uncomfortable. For instance, an offender may confide that he is HIV positive or talk about family issues that may bring on strong emotions. In such situations, you should respond to the offender with the same kind of

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sensitivity you would want to receive in the same situation. The SOLER attending skills and a calm tone of voice can also be used to convey concern and respect.

It is also possible that offenders will share details about crimes that will be upsetting to you. Each person has particular issues and vulnerabilities that are tapped by different kinds of crimes. Some, for instance, may find it most difficult to deal with sex offenders, while others will have a harder time working with offenders who have victimized the elderly. It is crucial that you consider your own specific vulnerabilities with regard to crimes in order to work effectively with offenders. Openness to understanding your anger, fear, or other personal reactions to crimes will be an important component in preparing for an offender workforce development role. Your instructor during the in-class segment of the course will discuss this topic.

Using Facilitation Skills with Diverse Offender Groups

Each OWDS works with offenders who may be labeled as minority or majority, men or women, homosexual or heterosexual, advantaged or disadvantaged, young or old, able or disabled. These offenders will all have common needs but will also present some needs that are unique. It is important to deal with them sensitively and with as much understanding as possible about the personal culture they bring with them to the career planning or decision-making process. This module will discuss the characteristics of various groups as if each were separate, knowing, however, that two or more of the categories of diversity described here may overlap in a given individual. For example, you may work with an offender who is from the Hispanic American culture who is also a juvenile.

Understanding the General Offender Population

Before learning more about diverse groups of offenders, it may be helpful to take a fresh look at the offender population in general. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the nation's prisons and jails incarcerated nearly 2.3 million persons by midyear 2007, with an average annual growth of 2.6% from 2000-2006. About two-thirds (66%) of inmates in custody were held in prison, while about a third (34%) were held in local jails. Of the 2.3 million inmates in custody, 2.1 million were men and 208,300 were women. Black males represented the largest percentage (35.4%) of inmates held in custody, followed by white males (32.9%) and Hispanic males (17.9%).

At midyear 2007 there were 4,618 black male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 black males in the United States, compared to 1,747 Hispanic male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Hispanic males and 773 white male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 white males.

Between 2000 and 2007, the number of inmates in custody in prisons or jails increased by 367,200. Male inmates (315,100) accounted for 86% of the increase to the custody population. Female inmates (52,100) made up the remaining 14%.

The custody incarceration rate for black males was 4,618 per 100,000. Hispanic males were

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incarcerated at a rate of 1,747 per 100,000. Compared to the estimated numbers of black, white, and Hispanic males in the U.S. resident population, black males (6 times) and Hispanic males (a little more than 2 times) were more likely to be held in custody than white males. At midyear 2007 the estimated incarceration rate of white males was 773 per 100,000.

An estimated 12% of jail inmates in 2002, compared to 14% in 1996, said they had lived in a foster home, agency, or institution while growing up. In 2002, 31% of jail inmates said they grew up in households where a parent or guardian abused alcohol or drugs, unchanged since 1996. Nearly 9% lived with parents who abused both alcohol and drugs. An estimated 46% of jail inmates in 2002 had a family member who had been incarcerated in a prison or jail. About 31% had a brother; 19% a father; 9% a sister; and 7% a mother who had been incarcerated.

In 2002, 18% of all jail inmates said they had been physically or sexually abused before their most recent admission to jail. Thirty-six percent of female inmates reported they had been sexually abused in the past. An estimated 4% of men reported sexual abuse prior to their jail admission.

The proportion of jail inmates who reported regular use of drugs increased between 1996 and 2002. An estimated 69% said they used drugs regularly or at least once a week for a month, up from 64% in 1996. In 2002, 38% of jail inmates reported use of marijuana in the month before the offense; 21% reported use of cocaine or crack; 11%, stimulants (including amphetamines and methamphetamines); and 8%, heroin or other opiates.

Half of all jail inmates in 2002 were held for a violent or drug offense, nearly unchanged from 1996. Forty-six percent of jail inmates in 2002 were on probation or parole at the time of arrest, a slight increase from 45% in 1996.

The nation's prisons held approximately 744,200 fathers and 65,600 mothers at midyear 2007. Parents held in the nation's prisons—52% of state inmates and 63% of federal inmates—reported having an estimated 1,706,600 minor children, accounting for 2.3% of the U.S. resident population under age 18.

Between 2005 and 2006, the number of HIV-positive prisoners decreased 3.1% from 22,676 to 21,980 while the overall prison custody population grew 2.2% during the same period. At yearend 2006, 1.6% of male inmates and 2.4% of female inmates in state and federal prisons were known to be HIV positive or to have confirmed AIDS.

Definitions of Diversity

Diversity has been defined in numerous ways, from narrow definitions to broad definitions. Narrow definitions tend to reflect Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) law and define diversity in terms of race, sex, ethnicity, age, national origin, religion, and disability (Wheeler, 1994).

More inclusive definitions include such characteristics as sexual/affection orientation, values,

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personality characteristics, education, language, physical appearance, marital status, lifestyle, beliefs, and background characteristics such as geographic origin, economic status, and other ways in which we differ (Triandis, 1994). According to the *Diversity Dictionary* (1996), diversity refers to the presence of differing cultures, languages, ethnicity, races, sexual orientations, religious sects, abilities, classes, ages, and national origins of the peoples in an institution or community such as a school, workplace, neighborhood, and so forth.

Diversity, in a career development context, refers to the fact that there are identifiable differences between and among members of various groups. The specific groups that an OWDS works with depend, in part, on geographic location and on the services the agency provides. While OWDSs should gain a basic understanding of the full range of diverse populations, they will need to become very familiar with the groups that they work with most.

Trends in the American Workforce

The American workforce is changing dramatically within the context of diversity, and it will change even more in the future. Demographers have reported that the workforce population will include an increased number of women, more minorities, more aging workers, and people with different lifestyles and varieties of ethnic backgrounds (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 1997).

The U.S. Department of Labor released a report called *Futurework—Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century* on Labor Day, 1999. The report details the diversification of the workforce, the growth of technology, and the impact of growing globalization as summarized below.

In the next century, nearly one out of two Americans will be a member of what today is considered a minority group or protected class. Employers will gain a competitive advantage by capitalizing on America's diversity. The narrowing of some gaps in society shows that we are already making some of the right choices about expanding opportunities for all Americans.

- Wage gaps between the sexes and across racial groups, for example, have narrowed.
- The earnings of African-American and Hispanic women are only 65 and 55 percent, respectively, of white men's average earnings.
- White women earn about 75 cents for every dollar earned by white men. About 40 percent of the pay gap cannot be explained by differences in experiences, skills, or the kinds of jobs held by men and women.
- The unemployment rate of African-American men is still twice that of white men. For African-American teens, unemployment has fallen dramatically over the past six years but remains around 25 percent or higher.
- Three of four working-age people with disabilities who want to work are not working.

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- Half of the total Native American workforce is unemployed.

As the U.S. population becomes more diverse and global competition expands, employers cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the American talent pool. The key to continued growth is in making sure that every American can share in that prosperity. America's diversity is its

destiny. Recognizing and capitalizing on that reality may be one of the nation's greatest challenges, but it is also its greatest opportunity.

Skills and Attitudes Needed to Assist Diverse Groups with Career Planning

The main challenge of working with diverse groups is blending their differing value systems, styles of work, life priorities, customs, religions, and responses to authority into an effective and productive workforce. It is likely that there will be more relationship problems between and among workers in a diverse workforce because of the differences in values and perspectives. Communication may be difficult between offenders and their co-workers, with managers, and with customers because of lack of skill in speaking and writing in English. Offenders may also have difficulty accepting company rules or goals because they are different from their personal ones. For instance, a Native American offender whose culture emphasizes collaboration and a flexible approach to time may experience stress in a competitive work environment with rigid rules about work hours and deadlines.

Far too little research has been done on the career development of racial-ethnic minorities, but that which has been done provides a list of special challenges for you as an OWDS:

- With some groups and some individuals within groups, the facilitation skills you have learned will not be effective. In some cultures, for example, direct eye contact is considered to be impolite. Similarly, in some minority cultures, talking about oneself openly or asking questions about another's life are considered improper.

- Within each minority group there are vast differences among individuals, and it is a mistake to assume that all members of the group have highly similar characteristics. (The word *stereotype* is used to refer to the belief that all members of a given racial-ethnic group think and act alike.) The differences that exist appear to relate to racial-ethnic identity and to the degree of acculturation. The term *racial-ethnic identity* is used to describe the degree to which a minority individual views membership in the group as positive and as a central core of his or her personal identity. The term *acculturation* is used to describe the level to which an individual has given up the unique characteristics of his or her minority culture and embraced the values and characteristics of the majority. Obviously, if an offender's racial-ethnic identity level is low and acculturation level is high, the OWDS can consider the offender as a majority group member.

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- The value systems of many minority groups tend to be group-oriented rather than individualistic. In other words, individuals in these minority cultures may place higher value on being a contributing group member than on being a self-centered road-blazer. Most of American career development and choice theory (described in the Theory module) stresses the importance of knowing yourself well, seeking an occupation or job where you can find self-fulfillment, and gaining personal achievement, irrespective of group goals. Further, the minority groups described here place very high value on the family, perhaps more than on work.

Some concepts that are highly valued by white Americans — such as competition, achievement, time-consciousness, direct and open communication, controlling life by personal decision-making, and use of a planned, scientific approach to problem-solving—may not be understood or valued by members of minority groups. For example, the very idea of long-term career planning may seem odd to an offender whose culture views fate as a more important ingredient than human effort in determining the future. Yet our approaches to career counseling and planning are built upon traditional white, middle class values.

Some of the most pronounced cultural differences could be identified by asking some of these questions (Sue and Sue, 1990):

- *Human nature*: Does the culture consider human nature to be good, bad, or a mixture of both? If it is considered good, career-planning concepts such as a strong self-concept and personal responsibility for career choices may be more acceptable than if human nature is considered bad.

- *Social relationships*: Does the culture value authority (with some persons controlling others) or a collaborative approach (with people being considered as equals)? Is the culture individualistic (rewarding individual achievement) or social (rewarding team work and group achievement)? If group achievement is valued, people may have difficulty adopting an individualistic approach to career choice and planning.

- *Nature*: Does the culture think that nature should be controlled or that its power should be accepted and people live in harmony with it? If nature is viewed as the controlling force, the notion of individual control may seem meaningless.

- *Time orientation*: Does the culture emphasize the past, present, or future? Are its members encouraged to think ahead and plan for the future? If future planning is not valued, individuals may resist following that approach.

- *Action orientation*: Does the culture value internal growth or external action? Are people rewarded for giving attention to their inner beings and growth, or are they rewarded for being purposeful, active, and achieving external visible results? If activity and tangible results are not valued, individuals may not work willingly at making an action plan for the future.

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- *Responsibility*: To whom does the culture assign responsibility for decision making or action? Is the individual responsible for his or her actions? Is the person who is given authority at work responsible? Is a group to which the individual owes allegiance responsible? Are there powers in the universe that control individual lives? The American version of career planning favors assumption of responsibility by individuals; a different perspective would affect how you deal with offenders. For instance, when working with an Asian-American offender, you may need to acknowledge that the opinions of his extended family are an important factor in his career decision making.

Key Groups in the Offender Population

When thinking about diversity, one often thinks about people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The word *race* refers to diversity of a biological nature that affects physical characteristics, such as skin color, height, and hair color. The word *ethnicity* refers to diversity that relates to social and cultural heritage, that is, to differences such as language, values, and customs.

People are said to belong to minority groups if their differences in race, ethnic background, or other conditions result in their being oppressed, openly or not, by the majority group. The majority group is defined as the societal group that has the greatest amount of power. Predominant racial-ethnic minority groups in the United States include African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native Americans. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007) projects that 33,567,000 of 164,232,000 workers, more the 20% of the American workforce, will be made up of racial-ethnic minority persons (that is, non-white and non-Hispanic) by the year 2016.

The African-American group includes people from Haiti, the Caribbean, and Africa, as well as African-Americans. This is currently the largest of the racial-ethnic minority groups, numbering 33 million in 1999 and making up 12% of the nation's population. Terms used to describe this group have evolved extensively during the last five generations. *African-American* or *Afro-American* is currently used by most members of this group to describe themselves.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate for African-Americans in 2007 was 24.5%, nearly three times higher than that of white Americans. About one-third of African-American men in their 20s are in jail, on probation, or on parole. At the same time, the African-American population is becoming increasingly diverse. According to Sue and Sue (1999), "African-Americans vary greatly from one another on factors such as socioeconomic status, educational level, cultural identity, family structure, and reaction to racism." While African-American client preferences for counselor ethnicity are related to the client's stage of racial identity, research has suggested that the most important counselor characteristic for African-American clients is cultural sensitivity (Pomales, Claiborn and LaFromboise, 1986). *Cultural sensitivity* was defined by these authors as the ability to acknowledge that race or culture might play a role in a client's problems.

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In relation to some of the cultural values outlined above, Ho (1987) suggested that African-Americans tend to seek harmony with nature, to live in a present time orientation, to embrace a collective or group identity, to prefer a "doing" mode of activity, and to view human nature as both good and bad. African-Americans also tend to be highly sensitive to interpersonal nuances in counseling, to have strong kinship bonds, and to have a strong commitment to religious values.

In discussing the unique needs of African-American clients, Sue and Sue (1999) offered the following suggestions that OWDSs can adapt to working with offenders:

- During an initial session, it may be helpful to gain an awareness of the client's thoughts and feelings about working with a counselor from a different ethnic background.
- Discuss how the client has responded to racism and discrimination in the past, in both healthy and unhealthy ways.
- Help the client to assess ways in which family members, friends, and other community members have handled similar problems effectively.
- After establishing a positive working relationship, consider shifting the focus to a practical, problem-solving approach.

Hispanic-Americans—made up of people from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, South America, and Central America—form the second-fastest growing minority group. Bacon (1990) notes that the term 'Hispanic American' does not define a race of people. Hispanics can be of African, Caucasian, or Native American ancestry or a mixture several of these. Although the term *Hispanic* is often used on the East Coast of the United States to refer primarily to Cuban and Puerto Rican communities, the terms *Latino* (Latin American origin) and *Chicano* are sometimes preferred, especially among younger groups on the West Coast. Conversely, the term *Chicano* can also be considered derogatory in other geographic areas, such as Texas. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2001) reported that 12.5% of the total U.S. Population was Latino or Hispanic.

Ho (1987) has observed that Hispanic Americans tend to seek harmony with nature, rather than to strive for mastery over it. He also characterized this group as "past-present" in regards to time orientation, meaning that they tend to focus more on the past and the present than on the future. Ho suggests that Hispanic-Americans' preferred mode of activity is "being-in-becoming," a term that refers to the development of the inner self as life's central purpose. Ho also suggests that Hispanic-Americans view human nature as essentially good.

Sue and Sue (1999) emphasize the importance of the family and of a collective, rather than an individual, identity, within the Hispanic cultures. They also suggest the following guidelines when working with Hispanic-American clients:

- *Personalismo* is a central value in Hispanic culture. This means that it is especially important to be personable and respectful with Hispanic clients. One way to express this is to ask for

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clarification in pronouncing their names and take care to pronounce them correctly in subsequent sessions.

- Hispanics who are less acculturated to American norms are likely to be initially more formal and to view any counselor as an authority figure.

- Encourage clients to describe issues and concerns, as they see them, in their own words. Paraphrase what the client has said in order to summarize your understanding of the problem or issue, and check with the client to clarify that your understanding is correct.

- Assess whether a translator may be needed. Do not equate slow speech or long silences as indications of depression or mental dysfunction. These may simply be related to difficulties with English.

- Explore with Hispanic clients how racism, poverty, and the stress of acculturation may impact other problems they are experiencing.

- Whenever Hispanic clients share information about their families, listen with an ear toward understanding the hierarchical structure and the degree of acculturation of the different family members.

- Encourage Hispanic clients to be very clear in describing goals and expectations. Help them to establish concrete time frames for meeting these goals.

Asian-Americans—made up of people from China, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Samoa, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Guam, Micronesian, and Thailand—are the fastest growing minority group in the United States, though they are not widely represented in the offender population. Of all the designations used to denote diverse groups in the United States, *Asian American* is perhaps the least descriptive. Because of the extreme ethnic and cultural variations included in this designation, the term has limited utility beyond the context of geography (Bowen and Jackson, 1992).

Sue and Sue (1999) characterize the Asian-American population as valuing a group or collective identity over a more individualized one. Asian clients are likely to take a hierarchical view of relationships and to defer to authority. They tend to favor a restrained emotional style and to view emotionality/emotional problems as a sign of weakness or immaturity. Ho (1987) describes the Asian-American culture as valuing harmony with nature, as living in a past-present time orientation, viewing human nature as essentially good, and preferring a "doing" mode of activity.

Sue and Sue offer the following guidelines for working effectively with individuals from this population:

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- When possible, avoid asking too many questions, especially personal ones, in an initial session. Asian clients are more likely to share information once they feel that a basic comfort level has been established.

- Take an active and directive role. Asian clients expect that a counselor will share expert knowledge and solutions to problems. Ideally, you can balance this expectation over time with a more active role on the part of the client.

- When Asian clients talk about family issues, be aware that several generations may play an important role in life decisions. Listen for clues that will help you to understand the hierarchy within the family.

- Work with Asian clients should be practical, time-limited, and focused on solving problems in the present or near future.

Finally, there were over two million *Native Americans* or *American Indians* when the 1990 census was taken. Bacon (1990) notes that there are more than 500 federally recognized American Indian tribes; thus, extreme diversity, not homogeneity, is found in their traditions, cultures, and languages. More than one-third resides on reservations. Nearly 200 different languages are spoken by the different tribal groups.

According to Sue and Sue (1999), tribal identity is fundamentally important to Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. Most within-group differences stem from this designation, along with their respective cultural norms. While recognizing tribal differences, the authors identify several core values that are common throughout many Indian cultures. While status in the dominant culture is often reflected through material wealth, respect and honor in Indian culture are gained by sharing and giving. Indians value cooperation and think in terms of collective or group identity over a more individual identity. From an early age, Indians are taught to observe rather than to act impulsively. This caution or reticence may cause outsiders to view them as passive. A related value is that of non-interference with other people and a tendency to mistrust others who wish to interfere with them. Sue and Sue characterize Indians as having a strong "present orientation," meaning that they focus their energy on living in the present—at times, to the extent that punctuality and future planning may be seen as unimportant. Indians seek to live in harmony with nature rather than to control it. Indians are likely to view the family as an intergenerational unit made up of many extended relatives. The authors also point out that Indian clients are likely to revere age as a sign of wisdom.

As an OWDS, you should be aware of several problems that are particularly salient for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. American Indian youth are more than twice as likely as their white counterparts to attempt or complete suicide. This is thought to result from the combined risk factors of alcohol abuse, poverty, boredom, and the breakdown of the Indian family unit. American Indians are also considerably more likely than the general U.S. population to die from alcohol-related causes. The sharing of alcohol and other substances is often an established part of tribal ritual. Moreover, turning down offered drinks or substances is considered a severe affront.

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These factors can make sustained alcohol and drug abuse recovery especially difficult for offenders from this group.

Sue and Sue (1999) offer the following additional guidelines for working effectively with individuals from this population:

- Religious and spiritual beliefs can be critically important. Do not brush them aside as unrelated to the work at hand.
- In some situations, helpers should consider learning about traditional healing methods and practices and may consider collaborating with healers and other key tribal members.
- As much as possible, try to adopt a low profile in the initial session, and do not dominate the client.
- Allow the client to finish his or her statements without interruption.
- Confrontation is considered very rude and should be used only when necessary.

Other Diverse Groups

Government agencies, professional literature, and individuals in the helping professions recognize many other types of diversity. Some of these are briefly described below. Remember that the offenders you serve may have membership in some of these groups along with membership in a racial-ethnic minority, thus making the challenges of their personal career planning and of your work even more complex. When members of these groups are treated differently from members of the majority group, we refer to this practice as discrimination.

Women are considered to be a minority group because they have been and still are subject to discrimination by the majority group. A number of conditions make the career choice and development of women different from that of men. Some of the most significant are the following:

- Women typically need to balance the important role of parent (2/3 of incarcerated females have children under the age of eighteen) with that of worker while also keeping the wife and homemaker roles intact. They do this either by leaving the workforce for some years, thereby interrupting their careers, or by taking on several consuming roles at the same time. Most jobs held by women are low-skill and entry level, with low pay.
- They may experience discrimination or gender stereotyping, particularly if they enter traditionally male-dominated occupations such as management, engineering, or science.
- Given the same level of education and skill as a man, a woman is less likely to be promoted to higher-level positions and less likely to receive as much income.

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- Women are more likely than men to experience sexual harassment in the workplace.

According to Masters (2003), women are less likely than men to commit violent crimes and, thus, are typically incarcerated for such economically driven crimes as shoplifting, burglary, forgery, and welfare fraud. Over half of female offenders have children—a fact that makes incarceration especially painful for them. Female offenders have a tendency to require more intervention than their male counterparts. Masters characterizes female offenders as often involved in co-dependent relationships and passive in their approach to life.

> "Female offenders are rarely liberated women. Many feel powerless and dependent, play subservient roles to men, do not assume responsibility for their lives, are passive, are devoid of skills, and frequently are under the control and domination of a man, often an offender too." (Masters, p. 55)

Not surprisingly, given these characteristics, female offenders are also at risk for domestic violence. For these reasons, it is especially important for members of this group to learn job skills that can enable them to become financially independent. Female offenders also need to learn to take more responsibility for their lives and gradually become more assertive and self-confident. Effective techniques with this group include role playing to boost confidence, conflict resolution, and linking offenders with other women who have been successful and developing support systems or finances for childcare and other needed services.

Sue and Sue (1999) offer the following additional guidelines for working effectively with women:

- Collect and distribute relevant, up-to-date articles on work-related issues that affect women, as well as supportive resources in the community. For example, information on local employers' childcare provisions and the availability of assertiveness training workshops and low-cost business clothing for women could prove especially useful.

- Remember that most counseling and career development theories are based on the male perspective. These theories may need to be expanded or adjusted to meet the needs of women.

- Do not express any attitudes or beliefs that may curtail the career ambitions of women clients or working mothers. For example, a client may not feel comfortable telling you about her search for a construction job if she fears what your reaction will be.

- Be sensitive to special situations where a gender-matched counseling assignment may be in the best interests of the client. For instance, an offender who is dealing with issues surrounding sexual assault, pregnancy, domestic violence, or discrimination may work more comfortably with a female counselor.

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Gays and lesbians are considered to be a minority group because they suffer discrimination and unequal treatment from members of the majority group, in this case heterosexuals. It is important to keep in mind that some offenders may have been involved in same-sex relationships while incarcerated and may or may not continue this pattern after release. Characteristics of gay men and lesbian women include the following:

- Coming to terms with being gay or lesbian appears to progress through several stages, perhaps including shame, acceptance, empowerment, advocacy, and pride. Offenders with whom you work will have varying views of themselves (self-concepts) as they progress through these stages.

- Despite a much higher level of acceptance of homosexuality now than ten years ago, many gays and lesbians are still struggling with whether to take the risk of "coming out."

- There is a significant amount of discrimination in the workplace regarding the hiring and promotion of gays and lesbians. Further, the attitudes of other employees may cause problems for gays and lesbians in interacting and cooperating with others in the workplace.

The following guidelines may prove helpful for working more effectively with gay men and lesbians:

- When working with any client, do not assume heterosexuality. Use inclusive, non-gender specific terms that signal acceptance. For example, rather than asking, "Are you married?" ask, "Do you have a spouse or partner? What does he or she do for a living?"

- Do not ask, "What is your sexual orientation?" to either perceived heterosexual or homosexual offenders. Heterosexual offenders may find the question insulting, while homosexual offenders will ideally share the information voluntarily.

- Avoid addressing every issue within the context of sexual orientation. While this is an important piece of the client's identity, it is not the sum of his or her personality or career situation.

- Develop an active, reliable network of community referral resources for gay and lesbian clients. Take care to refer clients to gay-affirmative organizations rather than those that strive to "reorient" or "heal" their sexual orientation.

- Be aware of the prevalence and risks of HIV and AIDS, but do not equate these equally with homosexuality.

In dealing with members of this group, you may need to take advantage of opportunities to highlight their strengths and accomplishments, make connections with other gays and lesbians who have solved some workplace problems, or provide instruction about their legal rights in the workplace.

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Persons with disabilities of all kinds, both physical and mental, constitute another significant minority group. Like the other groups, they suffer from discrimination and underemployment. They often have some of the following characteristics:

- They may suffer from low self-esteem and a feeling of not being able to control their career choices. We know from the literature of career development that both of these dynamics may present barriers for making satisfying career choices.

- For this reason and because of the disabilities they have, these individuals may have difficulty "selling" themselves to an employer and in being assertive about the employer's legal responsibility, if necessary, to modify the workplace on their behalf.

- Depending upon the disability, they may need support services such as transportation and special equipment, which may cause additional expense for employers and require coordination with appropriate rehabilitation agencies.

When working with an offender who has a disability, take care to use terminology that emphasizes the individual over the disability. This encompasses more than just avoiding outdated and insensitive terms like "cripple". For example, many human services professionals prefer the term "people who are deaf" to "deaf people" or "person with a developmental disability" to "mentally retarded." In either case, "person" or "people" comes first and the disability comes second. Also, it is more appropriate to say, "George uses a wheelchair" than "George is confined to a wheelchair." While these distinctions may seem small to an able-bodied person, advocates for people with disabilities point out that language can be a powerful factor in shaping public and self-perceptions.

Another factor to consider when working with a member of this group is whether the person has been physically, emotionally, or mentally challenged from birth, or whether the disability came as a result of an illness or injury later in life. Those challenged from birth never knew life any other way and may have learned to accept and deal with the disability over many years. On the other hand, people who become disabled later in life have to cope with the loss of abilities they once had. Such an offender may feel an acute sense of loss. If the injury were due to an accident that he or she could have avoided, guilt, grief, and anger may also be involved. If the injury could not have been avoided and was not caused by the offender, anger is likely to be present in the recovery process. Whatever the cause, frustration generally accompanies rehabilitation and recovery for individuals who have become disabled later in life.
An additional sub-group of people with disabilities is made up of offenders who are temporarily disabled. Some offenders, for instance, may have an injury or illness that, while temporary, will still raise special issues in their job search. Many people think of pregnancy as a temporary disability, and it certainly presents unique challenges when working with a female offender who is looking for work.

Another important point when dealing with persons with disabilities is that, under the law, they do

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have a right to work, assuming they have skills to perform the tasks of a specific job. Be sure that you know and understand their rights as specified by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), make them aware of these rights, and help them take advantage of them. You may also have to remind your own agency or those places where you refer offenders for training that they need to offer reasonable accommodation as required by the ADA. More information on this will be presented in a later module.

Juvenile offenders present special challenges because of the dynamics of adolescence, the familiar presence of poverty and drugs, and the frequent belief that "getting caught" constitutes their major problem. Masters (2003) characterizes juvenile offenders as living almost totally in the moment, possibly in part because of the high mortality rate of their peers. These clients may have an unusually difficult time learning to plan for the future. It is particularly important for juvenile offenders to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them when working with correction professionals and to be held accountable for their behavior. Because of their youth and possibility for growth, it may also be important for you to be more open to exploring options in your work with them by conducting in-depth interviews and assessment.

Additionally, Masters suggests involving the peers of young offenders and using appropriate role models that they can relate to. She also points out one positive dimension of working with young offenders: because of their youth, their behaviors are not yet "set in concrete." Young offenders may not have received any guidance in developing a sense of right and wrong and may benefit from any positive influence that you can provide. Juvenile offenders, though often distrustful of counselors and other authority figures, may be open to trying new ideas and can, therefore, learn new patterns of behaving. With careful, well-timed intervention, they may "outgrow" delinquency and go on to lead interesting, productive lives.

The following characteristics are particularly salient for many juvenile offenders and should be considered when working with this group:

- insecurity
- low levels of education
- substance abuse
- gang membership
- low-to-no work history
- frequent victimization in adult prisons
- no (or negative) role models
- the tendency to push limits (not unlike other teens)

Older adults are often considered a minority group because of the discrimination they experience from younger adults. Because of the growth of this group, they are rapidly becoming a majority in terms of numbers. Some relevant characteristics include:

- An increasing number of older adults are choosing to work past age 65, either because of financial need or the desire to use their time in a productive way.

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- Though some employers show discrimination against older adults in hiring and promotion practices, others seek them out, in part because they tend to have a strong work ethic and a depth of skills developed through years of life experience.

- Among older adults of the same chronological age there is a vast difference in physical health and mental sharpness. One size definitely does not fit all.

Just as the number of older adults is increasing in the general population, so are aging offenders, as well. Masters (2003) points out a number of special challenges when working with this group. Many older adults have lived in a criminal justice setting for so long that they have become *institutionalized*. Masters suggests that these offenders have been told what to do for so many years that they may have lost the ability to think and act independently. Such offenders may have particular difficulty making career decisions or actively pursuing a new job. Correctional case managers may contribute to this problem by telling older offenders that they are "too old to work." Further, older offenders do not typically receive employment training while incarcerated.

Consider the following when working with this group:

- Create opportunities to empower older adults to take back responsibility for their lives and to begin making their own decisions again. When possible, offer them small choices (when to meet, which assessment to take first) in order to re-acquaint them with daily life decisions.

- Recognize that, when discussing career options, older adults may "grieve" over poor decisions and missed opportunities. Offer them time to share their thoughts, and use facilitation skills to help them express what they are feeling.

- Actively encourage older adults to identify and communicate their strengths (varied experience and work habits, for example) to employers and to discuss their long incarceration history in an open, unguarded way.

Persons of various religious beliefs and creeds can be considered minority groups. Traditionally, the Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations have been the dominant religions in the United States. Individuals who belong to other denominations (Islam, Judaism, Seventh-day Adventism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, etc.) may become subject to discrimination. Characteristics that pertain to these groups include the following:

- Religious beliefs may affect some aspect of their work lives, such as needing to take time off at times that are normal work hours for others, being unable to attend Friday or Saturday work-related events, or needing alternative menu items in the cafeteria.

- Religious beliefs may limit some offenders' career options. For instance, some individuals may feel comfortable only when working for an organization that is affiliated with their faith community.

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- Religious beliefs may affect their health habits or the medical procedures they are willing to accept.

- Religious beliefs may cause them to assign a spiritual aspect or meaning to their work that others do not share.

As with the characteristics listed for other diverse groups described in this module, these traits can play out as strengths and/or challenges for offenders who are transitioning to the workforce. For each of us, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, culture, and race are elements that make up who we are. It is important to respect each offender as an individual whose identity is made up of these and other components. By listening for and reflecting your understanding of these themes, you will build an authentic working relationship with offenders that will help you to work through the barriers that they will face during their re-entry into society and the workforce.

Organizational and Individual Barriers for Diverse Populations

Diversity experts were asked to identify barriers that have inhibited the employment, development, retention, and promotion of diverse groups in the workplace (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 1997). Two types of barriers were identified: organizational, coming from the workplace environment; and individual, coming from the employees themselves.

The *organizational barriers* that were identified as most likely to inhibit the advancement of diverse groups in the workplace were as follows:

- *Negative attitudes and discomfort toward people who are different* — Consciously or unconsciously, people tend to feel more comfortable around people who are like themselves. Discomfort may also come from prejudice or lack of familiarity with diverse people.

- *Discrimination and prejudice* — Sometimes ethnic, age, sex, and religious differences are viewed as weaknesses by some people. Differences are seen as liabilities. People who are different are more likely to be discriminated against.

- *Stereotyping* — Stereotyping may lead to people of diverse groups being identified as less intelligent, less hardworking, and less committed. People of color, women, gays, and people with disabilities as well as other diverse people are often not as successful as they could be because stereotypical behavior is still very prevalent in our society.

- *Racism* — Many individuals from minority groups have faced racism that has hindered their opportunities. Race and ethnicity have been, and continue to be used as ways to exclude people.

- *Bias* — Opportunities for advancement can be hindered by managers who practice bias in job assignments, evaluations, and performance reviews and in recommendations for promotions.

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Biased behaviors often make decision-makers reluctant to assign diverse people to challenging, high profile jobs.

- *Organizational culture* — Organizations may have unspoken, unwritten rules that tend to indirectly favor majority culture members. For instance, a company might offer raises only to employees who ask for them directly. Since many women and ethnic minorities have been acculturated to avoid such assertive behavior, they may be less likely to advance in such a company.

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As an OWDS, you will not usually be able to affect organizational barriers directly; however, in your own organizations, you can help prepare offenders to recognize these barriers and find ways to overcome them.

There is also consensus among experts on the *individual barriers* that are likely to hinder the advancement of diverse groups in the workplace. The top barriers were identified as follows:

- *Poor career planning* — Members of diverse groups may lack the long-range planning skills needed to succeed in the world of work. They may not take control of their careers or develop career strategies. They may not know their career options or even how to pursue them.

- *Inadequate skill preparation* — Diverse populations need to acquire the knowledge and skills that make it possible for them to understand, enter, and compete effectively within a workplace environment. They need to participate in on-the-job training, formal training, and employer-sponsored outside study. In addition to these "hard" skills, offenders may need "soft skills" training to improve their interpersonal abilities, as well as such emotional factors as anger management and impulse control.

- *Lack of organizational political savvy* — Diverse groups may have difficulty conforming to company norms, fitting in, adapting to the organization's culture, knowing whom to approach for support, or determining the organization's informal power structure.

- *Lack of proper education* — Technological changes, continuing shifts from manufacturing to services industries, and many jobs that now demand high levels of technical knowledge and skill make it a necessity for diverse groups to obtain a good education. According to diversity experts, a good education can significantly increase job wages and job opportunities for diverse groups.

- *Low self-esteem and poor self-image* — The combination of organizational and individual barriers can have a negative effect on the self-esteem and self-image of diverse populations. These barriers can be so pervasive that they sometimes affect people's perceptions of themselves.

As an OWDS, you can work with offenders to help overcome individual barriers to success at work or at school. You should be particularly prepared to help people overcome the crucial barrier of poor career planning through assessment, career interventions, and the use of facilitation skills.

As indicated by the information provided earlier (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995), the workforce of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Though it presents challenges, this trend is a positive one. American products and services will benefit from the varying streams of culture, experience, and creativity that are feeding into them. The best ideas of other cultures will become incorporated into those of the American culture. At the individual and family level,

life experience will be broadened and enriched by understanding the culture and orientation of

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others.

The move to globalization—the concept of being a citizen of the world rather than of a specific nation—will be easier if we experience it on a day-to-day basis with our fellow-workers as well as on a national level. Workplaces will become a small-scale representation of the world at large.

The Transcultural Approach

As we have seen, your role as an OWDS will require you to work effectively with offenders from a wide range of backgrounds. Work with such a diverse group will present you with unique professional and personal challenges. Various authors have created approaches that may be helpful in meeting these challenges. Their ideas are as follows:

- The transcultural approach is an outlook designed to bridge gaps among culturally diverse social groups.

- The ability to face increased complexity and work across and through cultures is the major theme reflected by people who seek to provide a caring environment that transcends cultural, ethnic, and racial boundaries across national frontiers to develop mutual understanding between people.

- Transcultural facilitation is a method of using cultural knowledge and skills creatively to help others survive and live satisfactorily in a multicultural world.

- Transcultural facilitation challenges workers to use their know-how and resources more flexibly.

- Transcultural facilitation does not require that the worker be an expert in any of the cultures involved or adhere to any school of thought. Rather, transcultural facilitation endeavors to develop open-mindedness on issues pertaining to offenders' value systems.

- Facilitators who deal with multiple cultures can no longer provide facilitation that reflects the value systems of only one or two cultural perspectives.

- Traditional procedures have often been grossly contaminated with stereotypes of individuals, groups, and societies of different backgrounds in which ideas and actions by offenders or people from unfamiliar backgrounds are viewed as inferior rather than different. The transcultural approach stands for self-examination leading to the creation of symmetrical relations between facilitator and offender, leading to a better understanding of ways others view themselves, avoiding self-righteousness.

- Transcultural facilitation emphasizes readiness to adapt and use different methods and strategies that promote access to cultural values salient to those of the facilitator. The

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transcultural approach seeks to have facilitators understand cultural differences and develop a reciprocal approach between facilitator and offender.

Herr and Fabian (1999) summarize the important concepts in transcultural assistance as follows:

- attention to the self-awareness and attitudes of the facilitators
- non-defensive openness to values different from the facilitator's
- facilitator flexibility
- willingness and ability to match interventions to the cultural characteristics and values systems of the offender
- respect for the impact of cultures on the attitudes and behaviors of persons

Some members of each of the groups described in this module have characteristics that make ideal career development—or in many cases even finding a job—challenging. As OWDSs are likely to have a case load with a large proportion of individuals identified with two or more of these diverse groups, you are not likely to be successful in every case. You will sometimes be assisting these individuals simply to find a job rather than to accomplish the ideal. Many will not have the time, opportunity, or motivation to acquire the training and work skills needed to improve their status dramatically. Some will have barriers so profound that they will be difficult or impossible to overcome. In some cases you will need to consult with other members of your team to get ideas on how to be helpful.

So, with the lack of research and the real barriers experienced by many members of these diverse groups, what are some guidelines OWDSs can apply when working with these populations? Here are some of the most important:

- Examine yourself to determine whether you have attitudes or beliefs related to diverse groups that make it difficult or impossible for you to work with its members. Examine your biases honestly. Try to understand where they come from. Ask yourself whether your attitudes are a true reflection of your current thinking or remnants from the past. Start a meaningful dialogue with others about your beliefs. Talk openly with your team members, your family, friends, and faith community members. Listen to what others have to say, and use their ideas to challenge and clarify your own.
- Remember that the most basic helping or facilitating skill is that of having respect for and accepting each individual as he or she is. This attitude alone will go a long way to make a bridge between you and the offender.

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- Avoid falling into the common stereotypes that are associated with specific groups. Assess each individual for his or her own personal characteristics and needs.
- During the initial interview, attempt to identify the offender's membership in any of these groups. Begin to think about how you may need to adapt the usual approaches that you use for case management in order to be sensitive to each individual's strengths and challenges.
- When in doubt about how an offender's culture, religion, or other characteristic may affect some aspect of the career choice or job placement process, ask the offender to tell you.
- Be aware of the way you communicate with persons in these groups, both verbally and non-verbally, to ensure that you do not convey disrespect or disagreement with the value system of the individual or culture that he or she represents.
- Make adaptations in the plan for dealing with specific offenders based on what you learn during the intake interview.
- In regard to discrimination, listen for any evidence of infringement on legal rights during intake and follow-through interviews. If there is any, inform offenders about their rights under the appropriate legislation and how they can seek a remedy.

Manipulation

As a corrections professional, you have, no doubt, become familiar with the personality dynamics of offenders. You have probably studied, formally or informally, the traits associated with manipulation. While these traits will not be covered in the in-class portion of the training, some key concepts in understanding and managing manipulation are reviewed here. As you read them, you may be struck with the seeming paradox that this information is being presented within the same module as facilitation skills. This may make you wonder whether the use of facilitation skills with offenders can increase your vulnerability to being manipulated. As with many other issues, there is no simple "yes or no" answer to this question. However, you should consider that the careful, skillful use of attending, encouraging, questioning, and reflecting will *not necessarily* lead to manipulation as long as you use these techniques within the context of a workforce development (and not a therapeutic) role. This will be discussed in class in some depth, along with a role play demonstration of the kinds of boundaries that will enable you to use facilitation skills without taking on a greater risk of being manipulated.

As an OWDS, you must always be aware of the fact that you are working with individuals who have committed crimes for which they are or have served a sentence of incarceration. While it is important to treat each person as an individual, it is also necessary to think about the characteristics that offenders share as a population. Many of the offenders you will be providing services to have been incarcerated more than once in their lives or may have spent a significant portion of their young adult life in prison or jail. In order to survive "the streets" (in a criminal atmosphere) and prison or jail, many offenders have developed and enhanced their skills at manipulation.

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“Manipulation” itself is not necessarily negative. For example, when you are able to get a 3-year-old child to eat peas by pretending that the spoon is an airplane, you are using a positive form of manipulation. You are manipulating the situation to help the child get something that he or she needs. However, the manipulative behaviors that offenders use are not positive in this same way because they are rooted in a sociopath personality pattern. Many individuals who are or have been incarcerated (offenders) are self-serving in the way that he or she uses negative manipulation to control others. To understand what this means, let’s review the following characteristics:

1. Cognitive Style - Impulsive

   Individuals who demonstrate behavior or actions with minimal to no thought for consequences and outcomes. Offenders often react to feelings and thoughts with an immediate, quick response rather than thought and reason.

2. Value System - Asocial or Antisocial

   Society as a whole sets basic standards for living within “society.” The offender will tend to be set apart by behaviors, such as rebellion, consistent lack of ability to follow rules, intentional behavior against “norms” or “checking out” behavior. These may be daily interactions that demonstrate a lack of interest in “fitting in” with society, and may include hermit behavior and association with organizations/groups that behave outside societal norms.

3. Energy Level - High (Persistence)

   Many offenders have an uncanny knack for persistence. This may be demonstrated through persuasion or through “not taking no for an answer.” They will consistently ask “why” and ask for “special consideration or exceptions” to policy or rules.

4. Experience Anxiety - Low (Remorse)

   Often, there will be a lack of sincere remorse on the part of offenders for either crimes or behaviors that impact others. They present a “Whatever” attitude (“Whatever happens is fine--I can deal with it”), or may appear at times as a “victim” (“Poor me”).

Some of the common characteristics you may see demonstrated by an offender are:

- *Immature Emotions, Irresponsible Behavior* - Given the lack of “thinking through actions,” often the behaviors demonstrated will be immature and very reactive to a situation. The lack of ability to “follow rules of society” will appear as irresponsible behavior.

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- *Self Centered (me, myself, and I)* - This is probably the most consistent of the characteristics demonstrated. The individual will be concerned about such questions as: "What's in it for me?" "How does it impact me?" and "What can I get out of it?" Often you will hear statements like, "If I help you, what do I get?" "Why should I help? I do my time by looking out for number one."

- *Little Regard for the Needs or Rights of Others* - It is not surprising, given the above "self centered" characteristics, that these individuals are not very caring or sensitive toward others. Do not be fooled. When they demonstrate caring behavior, the underlying motive may be self-serving.

- *Feels Little-to-No Guilt* – When individuals are always focused on themselves, it is hard for them to care much about the impact their actions have on others. Often offender attitudes about others will be characterized by such comments as: "They deserved it," "They shouldn't have been such a fool," or "It didn't hurt anyone."

- *Adept at Manipulation and Frequently Escapes Consequences for Behavior* - Due to their ability to be persistent, repeat offenders have over time developed skills in communication to manipulate and get out of trouble. They will use others' "weaknesses or vulnerabilities" to shift the focus off themselves or their behaviors or to "talk their way out" of trouble. They have an "excuse" for most everything that happens in their lives.

- *Perceives Kindness From Others As a Weakness* - Given their high needs for survival ("me first"), they often perceive another person's kindness as a chance to "get over on" the nice person. They perceive, "if you are nice to me, then you can 'be had' or taken advantage of easily."

- *Lack of Insight Into Own Behavior* - Due to the lack of thought and reasoning for most of their actions and behaviors, they do not spend a lot of time trying to improve upon their personalities. They will consistently portray themselves as the "victim" in most circumstances.

- *Antisocial/Criminal Behaviors Rewards Outweigh Consequences* - As you work with offenders you will no doubt hear that they can make more money in one day doing criminal activity than you make in a month. This is a great example of the perception that the "money" (criminal behavior) outweighs the little bit of "time" (consequences) they may have to spend in jail or prison.

- *Preys on Others to Meet Own Needs* - Often offenders will prey upon the weaker or more vulnerable. They are adept at finding weaknesses in others and using those to their advantage. It is usual for the sociopath to get others to do things for them. This may even mean something illegal or against policy and rules.

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- *Ability to Present Self-Positively to Meet Needs* - To become adept at manipulation, the offender has had to develop good communication and acting skills. They can appear to be

  model inmates or the most motivated clients, but the driving motivation is not for pro-social outcomes. It may be very self-centered.

- *Need for Immediate Gratification* - As indicated above, emotional immaturity is a core characteristic for many offenders. There are many similarities between the thought patterns and behaviors of children and offenders. Both exhibit the attitudes: "I want it now!" and "I'm going to get what is mine!"

As an OWDS the majority of your clients will demonstrate one or all of the personality traits described above. How many or how few of these traits will vary with each individual. It is important to be aware that manipulation is a survival skill for most offenders—both inside the prison or jail and on the streets.

As a professional you may feel that your skills and experience will keep you from being manipulated by a client. According to *Games Criminal Play* by Allen and Bosta (1981):

> "The idea, 'It can't happen to me!' is a widely practiced attitude . . . throughout the world. Criminals rely upon the public's general acceptance of this idea of passivity and self-confidence. Everyone should realize that without the slightest doubt, IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU."

It is a fact that the friendly and cooperative, as well as the aggressive and demanding offender can manipulate you. The key is to know that there are basic techniques for a "set-up" for manipulation and some warning signs or behaviors to watch out for.

The Set Up

Observation

- Body Language
- Listening
- Verbal
- Actions

Offenders have mastered the art of "observation." Think about the fact that they have been confined to a small space and environment for 24 hours a day, seven days per week, in a very rigid and structured correctional environment. Most offenders get very good at observing staff and will use this skill, whether in a prison environment or in an office in the community. They are going to watch you for indicators as to weaknesses or areas of vulnerability. For example, if you are completing an assessment with an individual and your body language suggests that you

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lack confidence or seem a bit intimidated about working with an offender (i.e., lack of eye contact, low voice, need for extra space between you and the client) the offender will observe this. He or she may then choose to manipulate the situation by acting aggressively in order to scare you, or by taking more control of the interview for personal gain.

Selection

- Excessive friendliness or over familiarity
- Lack of experience or knowledge
- Discovery of a "weakness"—"buttons"
- Reputation (soft, mellow, hard)

The offender is going to quickly try to find out as much about your personality as possible. They will often do this by chatting off topic for long periods of time or trying to get information about your personal life. If they are able to obtain information about you personally, the offender may perceive you as "friendly or familiar." As noted above, this is perceived as a "weakness" to the sociopath and he or she will try to use it to manipulate you. At times, you may understandably be new to a job and lack the experience to know all the rules. This could lead to a problem if you pretend you have more experience than you do. Offenders are very skilled at spotting a "bluff" or a lack of knowledge. Offenders are looking for "buttons." There are certain personality types that are more difficult for us to work with than others and there are groups/types of people we prefer not to work with (i.e., ethnic minorities, females, and certain religions). It may be a type of crime, or a living circumstance (i.e., living together without marriage, homosexual relationship). Whatever your "buttons" (and we ALL have them), they can be used against you if discovered by the offender.

Each of you over time has established a style of working and behaving as an OWDS. What is yours? Are you firm, fair, and consistent? Are you "black and white" on issues with little room for discussion in the gray area? Whatever your style, be aware that offenders will try to learn it (or already know it) and will use it to their advantage when necessary.

Testing

- Develop theory
- Make Assumptions
- Test limits/lines
- Note inconsistencies
- May be fast or slow

Offenders are usually manipulating to get their way. Most manipulations are very small, such as extra time to do an assignment, being given a pen or pencil that they would normally have to buy, getting out of trouble for being late or being given another chance to prove themselves. Of course, you have heard the horror stories of the staff who "packs" drugs (brings into a secure

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facility) or the staff member who falls in love with an offender. These would be worst case examples of manipulation. Regardless of the degree, all manipulation starts with an offender developing a "theory" about you which includes the observations, selection (buttons, experience etc.), and testing you to see if they can manipulate or "con" you. They will make adjustments when necessary, if they did not get the response they want (their way) and try again. Remember that persistence is a classic technique. A manipulation may be tested in one visit with you or may be built over time.

Regardless of the level of manipulation or the strategy used by the offender, there are some warning signs to watch for. If an offender engages in the following behaviors, you may be in the process of being manipulated:

Support System - Offender offers to help you, appears to be very "loyal" to you through actions or words or indicates an ability to "trust" you more than others.

Use of Empathy or Sympathy - Offender seems to want to compare how much you have in common or are alike, shares similarities in life problems, is on "your side" or indicates "we are in this together," or shares feelings and compares them to yours.

Plea for Help - Offenders share a desire to be "rehabilitated" or a lack of confidence ("I'm a failure"). They may share a need to have only your help ("You're the only one who can help me") or a closeness with you ("I'm asking just this once" or "I need to share this with someone").

The We/They Syndrome - The offender may attempt to separate you from other staff by making negative comments about others in your organization or about other service providers ("You are not like the rest of them"). The offender may use his/her background to have something in common or trying to pit you against other staff by sharing gossip or things he or she has heard.

Fear of Confrontation - The offender will use your "buttons" and may be friendly or aggressive. He or she may try to intimate or threaten you through body language (i.e., staring, invading personal space, raising voice or negative gestures). On the flip side, the offender may try to be a "protector" or ask that you "look the other way" on minor rule/policy violations. They may test you to see what happens if they defy orders or instructions and push your patience.

Sex - Probably the most feared manipulation is sexual. The offender may be complimentary in a personal nature (your dress, looks, and personality). He or she may invade personal space or demonstrate affection (i.e., hand holding longer than usual during a handshake, brushing by and touching, placing a hand on shoulder or leg). An offender may also express a need for companionship, or share feelings of loneliness.

Research shows that it is natural as a human to project our own feelings onto others with

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sensitivity toward certain characteristics because of our emotional state. It is critical that you are aware of times in your life when you may be more or less vulnerable--when your guard may be down or you may be distracted. This may be obvious during stressful times in your life, such as a death in the family, divorce or separation, or trouble with children. It is just as critical during times when you may be very happy such as a wedding, the arrival of a baby, the purchase of a new car, or an upcoming vacation.

The more people meet, the more they tend to like each other. This is true with OWDSs and offenders. There is nothing wrong with "liking" the offender you are working with as a person and fellow human. However, problems may occur when the professional relationship and personal relationship are not clearly separate. We all, as humans, have natural needs to be "liked." The more we are exposed to people the more we get to know them on a personal basis. This creates a greater need to be "liked" regardless of whether the interactions are negative or positive. It is critical that you utilize the following strategies to ensure that your interactions are professional:

Know Yourself

- **Buttons/Prejudices and Biases** - It is important, as mentioned before, that you know your "buttons." Admit your prejudices and biases. We all have some level of prejudice and/or biases. It is natural to have preferences about whom we associate with and whom we like. Some buttons may involve things that you cannot change about your personality. However, if you are consciously aware of key offender behaviors or types of offenders that are harder for you to interact with professionally, you will be able to use some forethought and preemptive strategies in order to interact with the offender as you would with others.

- **Emotional State** - It is critical that you know your state of mind: Is this a "stressful" time in your life? What is happening in your world that may impact your working performance and professionalism either negatively or positively? Stay focused. Try to minimize the impact that your personal life has on your professional work.

Red Flags

- **Intuition** - Your "gut instinct" is your best defense against manipulation. You will have a feel for what is right and wrong or what may not feel "ok." Go with it! If you sense you are "being had," speak up. Notify your supervisor and confront the offender (see the next section entitled "COMMUNICATE" below).

- **Need to Check your Back** - One of the best tools for avoiding manipulation is to think to yourself, "If my boss/supervisor or someone who I highly respect was standing here, would I behave this way, answer questions this way, or respond this way to this client?" If you have to look over your shoulder to make sure no one is watching, then you <u>should not</u> be doing, telling, or sharing it. You know the rules and

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you are aware of when you are you making an exception to one. A good "golden rule" for you to consider is if you do this for one offender, are you willing to do it for everyone on your caseload? If not, is there sufficient justification so that if it went public, your decision would be clear to anyone who may review it?

- **Secrets** - If you have to lower your voice so as not be overheard or you ever have to say to a client "this is just between us or keep this a secret" then you are definitely

  being manipulated and have crossed professional lines. There are to be NO SECRETS WITH OFFENDERS/CLIENTS.

Communicate

- **Utilize Peers, Supervisor, Mentors** - The best defense negative manipulation is to make your work with offenders "public." It is hard to manipulate when everyone knows your playbook and game plan. If you feel that you are "being had," talk to peers or professionals to get a clear perspective.

- **Confront Offender** - As an OWDS you need to be a role model and set the professional tone for working with the offender. When you feel you are being manipulated or know you have been manipulated, it is critical that you confront the offender. Always confront the offender in a professional manner. First, state the facts (1) you know what he or she did or you have been observing A and B behavior; (2) you have discussed this with your supervisor; and (3) this is what you plan to do about it or this is the expected change in behavior. Some key guidelines to review before you confront an offender are:
  - know your authority
  - do not threaten
  - state clear consequences
  - make sure you are clear about behaviors observed or perceived
  - make sure that results/expectations are monitored and the offender is held accountable

- **Say "NO" & Follow Through** - Some OWDSs will find it hard to say "no" to an offender. This is because, as service providers, we want to help. Offenders will "test the limits," and just like children, offenders will see where your boundaries are and what they will be able to "get away with" while on your caseload. In most cases, the direct approach is the best. You should, of course, have the courtesy to hear the person out and then make your decision. If the decision is "no," just say "no! Also, make sure that you give a brief explanation as to why you are saying "no." This may mean you will have to confront the manipulative behavior in addition to saying "no." In some cases, you may not have all the information that you need to make a decision or you may want to verify information regarding the request. If this is the case, indicate that you will do some checking and get back to the offender in an appropriate

period of time. Determine a deadline and STICK TO IT! It is critical to your professional relationship with the offender that you keep your word and follow through on deadlines and/or tasks that you have committed to with the offender. Remember that you are a role model and need to demonstrate positive pro-social behaviors.

Admit Mistakes

- **Easier at Lowest Level** - Be the first to say, "I've been had." If you have worked with an offender multiple times and you just have a feeling that the interactions are moving from professional to personal, tell someone. Talk to a peer or supervisor. If you suspect or realize that you are getting attached, do something about it. Change your behavior or talk to someone. The earlier you stop the manipulation process, the easier it will be to put the professional relationship back on track and you may save your professional reputation or career.

- **Listen to Others** - If someone shares concerns with you about your interactions with a client, don't get defensive. Instead, reevaluate your interactions. Ask yourself, "Why would a co-worker perceive this behavior/interaction as unprofessional?" or get more detailed feedback. Even if the feedback is inaccurate, something in your behavior or interactions with offenders may be leading peers to perceive your interactions as unprofessional. This is an important opportunity to do a bit of "professional" self-reflection.

- **Tell Others** - Take risks. Talk to each other. There is safety in numbers. The things we share about mistakes we make as OWDSs may be some of the best training for other staff members and ourselves. The only bad mistakes are mistakes from which no one has learned a valuable lesson. It can be very difficult to say "I'm wrong," but there is safety in numbers. If you are willing to share when you have made errors in judgment or have been manipulated, then you are helping to create an environment that supports people taking risks and learning from mistakes. It is important that we all do not have to "learn from experience," but may be able to learn from others' experiences. Make sure that you are not one of those who say, "I had to learn it on my own. So can they." Instead, be someone who says, "I made that mistake once and I do not want anyone else to have to experience it for himself or herself". Sharing and communicating manipulation "war stories" with peers and other professionals in the field is one way to ensure that the OWDS profession remains true to the ethical standards.

Conclusion

Throughout the process of working with transitioning offenders, you will employ all of the facilitation skills described in this module with a broad range of individuals. When combined with skills and concepts contained in the rest of the course, facilitation skills will enable you to assist offenders in establishing goals, finding ways to overcome barriers, and constructing a

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workable plan to achieve established goals.

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