Inmates’ Life Skills Curriculum

For The New South Wales Department of Corrective Services
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range and Conditions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module One: Community Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module Two: Communications</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This book on Life Skills has been developed by Suzanne Wilde, Senior Education Officer in wide consultation with experienced practitioners in their respective program areas.

The curriculum supports the Department's Program Pathways Operational Plan as it aims to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to inmate education programs across the state by providing guidelines for life skills programs which address low self esteem. The curriculum allows a planned and structured approach to inmate programs.

This curriculum is aligned to current "best practice" in adult education through its focus on competency based training. The curriculum is "student centred" as it recognises that each student brings knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learning situation which can be used as a basis for further development.

Suzanne Wilde is to be congratulated for her initiative, enthusiasm and leadership in creating and producing this curriculum. I commend this document to all teachers.

Dr B M Noad
Principal
Inmate Education Programs
Preface

The NSW Department of Corrective Services Inmate Life Skills Curriculum is designed to be used by teachers working within Correctional Centres.

Aims:

1. The Curriculum aims to address those factors which have been identified as increasing the risk of offending.

   * Low Self Esteem
   * Impulsiveness
   * Inflexibility
   * Lack of Focus

   The area of dependencies is only touched on very briefly as this is best dealt with by other Inmate Development Services.

2. The curriculum aims at broadening the options available to students on release.

Content:

The curriculum covers two broad content areas:

   Living Within Communities
   Living With Oneself

For the purpose of the document these areas are titled Community Studies and Communication Skills.

The document provides broad guidelines for the delivery of these areas but only suggests strategies. Specific delivery strategies are the responsibility of the teacher, in negotiation with the student group.
Practical skills are recommended as the most appropriate carrier for the attitudinal content. These skills should involve planning and anticipating outcomes wherever possible.

Some appropriate programmes which may help to develop planning and predicting are:

- Cooking
- Cartooning (comic strips)
- Basic Woodwork/Welding
- Participation in Gaol Committees
- Art

Group work is recommended wherever possible to encourage better communication and conflict resolution skills.

The program may be delivered at any delivery level depending on the competence and experience of the students and may be delivered at multiple levels within the one class/group. The Range and Conditions of delivery determine the level at which the student has accomplished each element.

Each element within each of the two modules allows for at least three of the Mayer Key Competencies to be addressed at the student’s individual level and some allow for more.

Students are assessed on these key competencies as well as on the content of the modules in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes developed.

Suzanne Wilde
Senior Education Officer
NSW Department of Corrective Services.
Range And Conditions For Delivery At Each Level

Level One

1. Content will be within the scope of personal knowledge/experience.
2. Peer support will be encouraged.
3. Teacher support will be direct.
4. Tasks will be clearly outlined and presented.
5. Material used will be from familiar sources.

Level Two

1. Content will be personally relevant though not necessarily within the scope of personal knowledge/experience.
2. Peer support will be encouraged.
3. Teacher support will be direct when required and available at all times.
4. Tasks will be clearly outlined and presented.
5. Material used will be from familiar sources.

Level Three

1. Content may be broad and outside personal experience but should be relevant.
2. Peer support will be encouraged.
3. Teacher support will be indirect.
4. Tasks may be redefined and renegotiated according to need.
5. Material used will be from a variety of sources and should introduce the unfamiliar.

Level Four

1. Content need not be personally relevant or within the scope of personal knowledge/experience.
2. Peer support will be encouraged.
3. Teacher support will be indirect.
4. Tasks may be redefined and renegotiated.
5. Material used will be from a variety of sources.
Module One

Community Studies

Nominal Duration 40 Hours

COMPETENCY 1

Demonstrate an awareness that the role of the individual within a range of communities encompasses both rights and responsibilities.
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.1 (Introduction to Communities)

Recognise that all individuals belong to several communities and identify individual communities such as:
- Family
- Peer Group
- Town/city/suburb
- Gaol/wing
- Work community
- Social/sporting/church group
- Education Class group
- Country
- Global Community

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this element students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge that communities influence the way in which their members live e.g.
   - Foods eaten
   - Hours of work/sleep/recreation
   - Work ethic
   - Health

2. Demonstrate an understanding that different communities place different expectations on the individual and that these may or may not be compatible e.g.
   - Work and family expectations may clash for the wage earner.
   - Peer group and local community expectations may be incompatible for an adolescent.

3. Identify those communities to which they individually belong and the expectations placed on them by different communities.
Examples of assessment tasks

* Demonstrate an understanding of key words used within the element e.g. community, expectation, family... 

* List all communities to which he/she belongs. 

* Recognise the role community expectations play in an individual's behaviour.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
4. Working with others and in teams.

Suggested strategies:

1. Discussion groups e.g. choose three hypothetical family communities and list the influences which they have on their members using whiteboard or butcher's paper. In what ways are their influences similar/different. Hypothetical families may include (i) Two parents, two children, one wage earner. (ii) Single parent who works outside the home. (ii) Single parent who does not work outside the home. (iv) Two parents who work outside the home, one child. (v) Two parents who work outside the home, multiple children. Or any other hypothetical family by negotiation.

2. Collecting and collating newspaper/magazine articles on specific communities e.g. families, sporting groups, social groups and noting the influences which these groups might have on their members.

3. Writing exercises (poetry and prose) including letters to family members, creative writing exercises based on communities to which students belong.

4. Mapping and graphing information about the communities to which students belong e.g. Number in family, average age in class group, ethnicity in wing/unit.

5. Informal debating "That family expectations of adolescents are unrealistic"

6. Collating types of expectations placed on individuals by the different communities to which they belong.
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.2 (Family and Friends)

Identify family/peer group pressures and be better equipped to make informed choices when subject to them.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this element students will have:

1. Identified their role within the family and peer group.
2. Compared the expectations placed on them by family and friends.
3. Recognised those expectations which are easily met and those which are difficult.
4. Explored their emotional response to meeting the expectations of others.
5. Recognised their rights as individuals to say "NO" to unreasonable demands.
6. Completed an individual depth study into either families or peer groups (nominal duration 5 hours) which may consist of a collection of newspaper articles with brief comments, a written assignment or other study through negotiation.

Examples of assessment tasks.

*Completion of a depth study which will be presented to other class members.

*Demonstrated understanding of expectations.

*Demonstrated understanding of the rights of individuals.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
5. Using technology.
Suggested Strategies:

1. Group discussion e.g. the different roles each individual plays within a defined community and how these roles are defined by community expectations, how these roles can be redefined, through negotiation, where they are unsuitable to the individuals.

2. Listing and compiling the different expectations placed by different communities.

3. Writing exercises (poetry or prose) based on the two communities being discussed e.g. What my peer group does for recreation. What I dislike about being a father/mother/child within the family group. The best or worst part of being a group member.

N.B. The depth study which is an assessable component of this element should be completed in terms of the range and conditions which apply to the rest of the element within class time and with obvious teacher support wherever necessary.
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.3 (Communities and Rules)

Recognise that all community members have responsibilities to all other members.

Element 1.4

By the end of the unit students will be able to recognise the role of government and laws in creating a stable life style for community members.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will have:

1. Identified their different roles within the different communities to which they belong e.g.

   Father within a family
   Inmate within Correctional Centre
   Student within a class
   Sweeper within a unit

2. Identified that there are rules which govern their individual behaviour which may not apply to other community members who have other roles e.g. The roles of mother and child each have their own rules to conform to within a family.

3. Identified that these rules act to stabilise the local community.

4. Recognised that the broader community is also stabilised by rules in the form of formal laws.

5. Demonstrated an understanding of the need for laws.

6. Identified that there is a complete set of unwritten rules which governs life in any community e.g. within a gaol.

Examples of assessment tasks:

   *Clearly demonstrate an understanding of the need for rules by writing, discussion, participation.
Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
4. Working with others and in teams.

Suggested Strategies:

1. Group discussion on the way in which rules are formulated and their reasons.

2. Charting and Graphing the informal rules as compared with the formal rules e.g. within the gaol community the unofficial code of conduct often has more bearing than the official code of conduct.

3. Guest Speakers (from Law Society, Local Police) Usually the Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are very happy to speak to groups about their role and they have two distinct advantages (i) they are already security cleared (ii) they don't wear uniforms.

4. Role play (and reverse role play) of situations where rules (written or unwritten) are operational e.g. between father and son, inmate and case officer.

5. Debating in an informal manner such topics as "Communities have more rules now than they had one hundred years ago", "Rules deny freedom of the individual".

6. View the video "The Legal Check-up", produced by the Law Foundation of New South Wales, and use it to generate discussion. This video is particularly valuable in that it stresses continually the importance of thinking before you act and can thus be support material for the necessary thinking skills which are needed for behavioural change. Law Foundation material is available from most community libraries and some gaol libraries.
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.5 (Parenting)

Understand the role of the parent as the primary carer of the child.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will have:

1. Identified that children are exposed to influences from all the communities to which they belong:

   - Family
   - Peer group
   - School/Pre-school

   and that, as with adults, these influences are sometimes in conflict.

2. Identified the parental role as guide through this conflict.

3. Recognised that children are individuals with personal rights.


5. Successfully completed a depth study (nominal duration 5 hours) into an area of personal interest or need e.g. dealing with babies (feeding, bathing, changing, immunisation), children's developmental stages, living with adolescents, school education.

Examples of Assessment Tasks:

* Demonstrate, by written or oral presentation, an understanding of the concept of parenting and of the parent as primary carer.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
Suggested strategies:

1. Group discussion, formal and informal debating on a variety of topics e.g. The value of old adages... Children should be seen and not heard, Spare the rod and spoil the child etc. The changing role of parents in the 90s. The value of immunisation.

2. Preparation of compare and contrast charts on child care in different cultures/cultural difference in family structure (matriarchal/patriarchal) etc..

3. Collecting and analysing newspaper articles on a given topic, e.g. child abuse, children smoking, education practice.

4. Written assignments (poetry/prose/script) on specific interest topics.

5. Role play e.g. Parent with difficult toddler, adolescent with difficult parent.
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.6 (Living with Others)

Recognise that all individuals have strengths and weaknesses regardless of race, sex, religion, physical or intellectual disability.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will have:

1. Identified their own strengths and weaknesses and openly discussed them.
2. Recognised strengths and weaknesses in others.
3. Explored one other culture in a depth study (nominal duration 5 hours) with emphasis on the way of life of the people within that culture e.g. Eskimo parenting, Japanese work ethic, Islamic gender expectations.
4. Become familiar with the Australian Anti Discrimination Act and N.S.W. laws regarding discrimination.

Examples of Assessment Task:

- Written assignment on a culture different to the student’s own.
- Oral debate on such topics as Australia’s Immigration Policy, the Gay Rights Movement, the uses and abuses of sheltered workshops.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
4. Working with others and in teams.
Suggested Strategies:

1. Group Discussion: What is discrimination? How are Correctional Centre inmates discriminated against? How does stereotyping people effect the way they may be treated?

2. Written exercises comparing and contrasting the role of women today with that of forty/eighty years ago.

3. Mapping charting and graphing groups within the gaol according to race, religion, height, colour etc.

4. Peer Tutoring from group members who belong to minority groups.

5. Guest speakers from minority groups
Module 1. Community Studies

Element 1.7 (The Global Community)

**Develop an awareness of the individual's role within the global community.**

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will have:

1. Gained knowledge of major current global issues, their causes and effects e.g. Global warming, War zones, Environmental issues, the contrast between first and third world countries, the spread of HIV/AIDS.

2. Prepared a suggested solution to one global problem which addresses a maximum number of factors.

3. Recognised the role of the individual within global issues and that the individual can have impact.

4. Undertaken a depth study *(nominal time 5 hours)* on the individual and the community using as an example one outstanding individual who has achieved a global impact e.g. Fred Hollows, Mother Teresa ......

Examples of Assessment Tasks:

* Mapping assignment locating sites of global issues.

* Presentation of Depth Study to other class members:

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
4. Working with others and in teams.
Suggested Strategies

1. Group discussion on such topics as the value of world leaders as agents of change, causes behind global conflict, the disparity between first and third world living standards etc.

2. Mapping, graphing, charting current events of global importance.

3. Written assignments (poetry/prose) on a range of interest topics.

4. Multi media presentation of the results of depth studies.
Module Two

Communications

Nominal Duration 40 Hours

COMPETENCY TWO

Demonstrate increased skills in the transfer of meaning as both receiver and sender.
Module 2. Communications

Element 2.1 (Getting the message)

Define COMMUNICATION as "the transfer of meaning" and understand that it is a two way process.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will have:

1. Identified that communication is an ongoing process and that it takes many forms.

2. Identified that there are many causes of communication blockage and that they can occur at any stage of the process i.e. Receiving
   - Decoding
   - Persuasion
   - Action

3. Identified specific causes of communication breakdown at each stage e.g.
   - Meaning not received accurately or at all owing to auditory/literacy/delivery problems.
   - Meaning not decoded accurately or at all owing to language/cultural background.
   - Meaning does not persuade owing to lack of background information, cultural differences in interpretation.
   - Meaning not acted upon owing to physical intervention.

4. Identified that communication is as much the responsibility of the receiver as of the sender and that in everyday communication sender and receiver exchange roles on an ongoing basis.

5. Generated strategies for recognising and remediating communication breakdowns.

Examples of assessment tasks.

*Role play unsuccessful and successful verbal communication.

*Demonstrate an awareness of and use of feedback and paraphrasing during a discussion.
Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
4. Working with others and in teams.

Suggested Strategies:

1. Group discussion on cultural differences and their effects on communication.
2. Role play situations where effective communication is critical.
3. Research exercises into the origin of words or non verbal signals.
4. Written and oral presentations which explain aspects of communication to the rest of the class.
Module 2. Communications

Element 2.2 (Focusing on the Message)

Demonstrate familiarity with the concept of focussing and practically apply this technique.

Performance Criteria

To successfully complete this element students will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of FOCUS THINKING.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of CONSEQUENCES.
3. Understand the concepts behind OPINIONS.
4. Have taken part in practical exercises which demonstrate the need for focussing.

Examples of assessment tasks:

*The students are here being assessed on a behavioural change as well as on the specific skill of focusing and assessment tasks should be structured to allow for informal observation of this change. If the students are able to demonstrate that there is a carry over from this area into other areas of study and/or communication then they have been successful in this element.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
Suggested Strategies:

1. Discuss the concept of FOCUS THINKING using examples, where appropriate, of the consequences of thinking on an inappropriate focus e.g. The inmate who becomes so concerned with making a phone call at the right time that he neglects to talk about the real reason he is phoning when he finally gets through.

2. Practical focusing. THINK about the chair you are sitting on. Think of all its components: back, seat, legs etc. What is it made of? by whom is it made? Time this exercise for three minutes. Ask the students if their thoughts strayed from the subject during the thinking time. Try to elicit honest answers.

Now have the students try to think of ways to improve the chair. This should be a very short exercise and lead to ....

3. Group Discussion. How can we improve this chair? Look, as a group, at the consequences of each change suggested. In cost/ Employment loss/gain/ Environmental impact etc.

5. Taking Sides. Choose a current, but non-threatening subject from current affairs which requires an opinion e.g. Who will win the football this week-end? Have students write their answer to this and give reasons. Then form two random groups to take sides in a discussion and form their arguments into a debate.
Module 2. Communications

Element 2.3 (Relating to Others)

Demonstrate increased skills in interpersonal relations.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will be able to:

1. Recognise that all relationships are the responsibility of all parties involved in them.

2. Identify the different roles which are played within a relationship: e.g.: controller and controlled, equal partnerships: and recognise that they will play different roles within different relationships.

3. Identified causes of conflict within relationships as role conflicts or communication breakdowns.

4. Planned a resolution to a relationship conflict which they are experiencing/have experienced.

5. Defined the distinctions between passive, assertive and aggressive behaviour.

6. Demonstrated an understanding of a win/win solution.

Examples of Assessment Tasks:

*Have students work out a resolution to a personal conflict in their lives. This should not be a major conflict unless the student is very confident of the support of his peers within the class.

*Role play successful and unsuccessful conflict resolution.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
Suggested strategies:

1. Group discussion of conflict resolution techniques and strategies leading to role play situations.

2. Reasoning from the general to the particular e.g. If these techniques work in a number of sample situations how can I apply them to a particular situation?

3. Letter writing (informal and formal) to communicate a cause of conflict with a friend, family member, business house.
Module 2. Communications

Element 2.4 (How we Understand the Message)

Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of Information, Logic and Emotion and practise critical thinking strategies.

Performance Criteria:

To successfully complete this unit students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between Information, Logic and Emotion as they are used to influence actions.

2. Critically examine statements to identify when these factors are being used to influence their opinions and actions.

Examples of assessment tasks:

* Critically examine a current affairs newspaper article or T.V. report and evaluate the ways in which it attempts to influence people.

* Demonstrate the use of information, logic and emotions when attempting to influence the class group to a point of view.

Key Competencies to be met:

1. Collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information.
2. Communicating ideas and information.
3. Planning and Organising Activities.
5. Solving Problems.
Suggested Strategies:

1. Examine critically the following statements (sample statements only. The statements used should be relevant to the class group).
   There is a high rate of unemployment, especially among teenagers.
   In some fields there are many job vacancies and jobs which cannot be filled.
   Therefore this proves that the unemployed do not really want to work.

   Which parts of these statements are information? Which parts rely on logic? Which parts are trying to appeal to the emotions?

   What is wrong with the statements? Why?

2. Group Discussion......... What information is most reliable? What information is least reliable? How is logic used to convince the audience? How does the emotional mood of the statement influence the audience?

3. What are the consequences (outcomes) of accepting information without looking at where it comes from and without examining it critically?

4. Critically examine the following statements (suitable statements to be used) e.g.

   The Commonwealth Department of Defence reports Airforce sightings of unidentifiable lights in the southern sky.

   The Indonesian Airforce has increased its number of aircraft in recent months.

   This indicates that the Indonesians are carrying out manoeuvres over Australian territory.
Resources

Student stationery

Daily newspapers

Student Workbooks

Timer, stop watch or other

Weekly magazines e.g. Time, The Bulletin

Life Skills Kit: The Umbrella Series, TAFE Counselling Service, Cable House, (Available from Technical Extension Service Bookshop. Prospect Place, Perth 6000)

Butcher's paper

Whiteboard and markers

Overhead projector

Atlases and other reference material

Video player
BIBLIOGRAPHY

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Publications

Guideline Notes for Education Staff Working in Prisons
Fitness Literacy Package
Horticulture and Landscaping Curriculum
"I'll Need A Job When I Get Out" - Employment Skills Program
Inmates Physical Fitness and Recreation Curriculum
Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum
Literacy Package for Inmates from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds
NSW Prisoner Education Course Handbook
Opportunities to Learn: A Guide for Prisoners (available in 9 languages)
Prisoner Literacy Resource Package
Vocational Art Studies Curriculum
About Face - Inmates Handbook "This is The Most Important Time Of Your Life"
Making More Of Me: Student Activity Book
Tournament Draws: Inmate Handbook

Further Information

The Principal
Inmate Education Programs
NSW Department of Corrective Services
GPO Box 31
Sydney NSW 2001
(02) 289 1333