# VALUE-BASED PROGRAMMING:
# A PRIMER

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*ABSTRACT: The following article outlines an approach to developing "value-based programming" by articulating program values and incorporating those values into a mission statement. The next step includes developing operational definitions of those values and integrating the values into the daily activities of the program. Examples are presented as well as are suggestions for further study*

*Key words: value-based programming, youth treatment, Balanced Approach to Restorative Justice (BARJ), mission statements, child and youth care work*

## INTRODUCTION

What is "value-based programming"? Simply put, this model involves identifying your program's professional values and incorporating those values into your daily activities. It sounds simple and logical, but is too often lacking in our basic operations.

How do programs develop? Sometimes a need is identified and people work to develop a program to meet that need. They identify a client population, begin looking for resources to serve that population, pursue funding sources and, hopefully, begin to provide a program for their clients. Another route is for an established agency to expand their services to the identified needs of their regular clients or new populations. Sometimes, programming takes on a "flavor of the month" feel as funding priorities change and the population that needed substance abuse treatment last year is receiving job development skills this year in order to cope with the continual cycle of money for demonstration grants but little support for on-going services. As practitioners know, there are continual and significant overlaps between the different service populations, with the current label often a function of age, severity of problems, or who identifies the problem behavior (mental health agency, school, court, etc.).

Our profession, child and youth care practice, becomes more sophisticated and effective each year as we identify new approaches and attitudes that help us keep up with increasingly complex problems involving the children, youth, and families we serve. Many treatment approaches increase our effectiveness. These include: multidisciplinary approaches to individual and system issues; the identification of risk and protective factors; the adoption of a relationship-based, strength-based,

family-based, client-involved, solution-focused approach; the considera-
tion of cultural factors; and the response to gender-specific issues. Yet,
often programs don't have the resources to provide all these tools, or they
function under bureaucracies that don't understand or value these services.

Finally, even with some or all of these tools, what are we trying to
build? Too often, we keep on hammering out the same old activities, each
doing business as we always have, or not understanding the goals of the
therapist, the treatment coordinator, the counselor, the probation officer
(e.g., do you still use a point system? Why?). Value-based programming
is a vehicle to get everyone on the same page, promoting the same values
and outcomes.

### Elements of Value-Based Programming

Thomas Lickona, in *Educating for Character*, differentiates between
moral values (those that tell us what we ought to do) and non-moral
values (values related to what we want or like to do). He further defines
moral values as universal and non-universal, citing the 1948 United
Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an example of universal
moral values.

> This landmark document asserts that *every* citizen of *every* nation
> has the right to: life, liberty, and freedom from personal attack;
> freedom from slavery; recognition before the law and the pre-
> sumption of innocence until proven guilty; freedom from torture;
> freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of expression; priva-
> cy, family, and correspondence; freedom to participate freely in
> community life; education; and a standard of living adequate for
> maintaining health and well-being. (Lickona, 1991, p. 38)

According to Lickona, non-universal moral values are values specific
to the individual and that are not universally binding, such as religious
values or personal beliefs as to what people ought to do. For further infor-
mation and suggestions for incorporating the values of respect and
responsibility into the educational system, see *Educating for Character:
How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility.* (Lickona, 1991)

To incorporate value-based programming into your agency, you first
must identify the professional values relevant to the service you are
providing. Note that these must be professional values, acceptable to the
governing authority, not personal values. Your personal values may or
may not be appropriate for your professional function. For example, a
personal belief that atonement results from service or pain, relationship
always is more important than rules (or vice versa), clients are always
victims (or violators), or that punishment rehabilitates very well may not
further the work of your agency. If you don't agree with the program
values, you can (and perhaps should) work to get those values modified,
but you must, meanwhile, support the program values. Nothing is more

detrimental to a program than staff who undercut or ignore agreed-upon values.

Usually, a program's values can be found in the mission statement. However, many mission statements are not statements of the mission of the program but a flowery statement of all the current, politically correct, therapeutically inspired, globally focused catch phrases that sound good to the Board of Directors or the funding resources that no one on staff can remember. Another option is no mission statement (common in public agencies) since "everyone knows what the service is for". (Usually, everyone doesn't know.) Mission statements may also reflect esoteric values of the overall agency without being specific to different services within the agency. Unless everyone in the program knows the mission statement (at least in general terms) and the mission statement can be used regularly to compare to daily activities to see if the program is on track, it probably falls into the "everyone's got one so we do too" category.

Program mission statements must be developed in conjunction with the administration responsible for the service being provided. Staff may have valuable input and bring a level of expertise that contributes to the task, but if the "boss" (Board of Directors, Department Director, Agency Administrator, etc.) says "that's not your job", you will need to find a way to formulate your professional approach within the organization's frame of reference. Once you understand their frame of reference, sometimes it is as simple as your choice of language, sometimes you may need to gently educate, and sometimes you may need to choose another place of employment. (However, if you don't make an attempt to help upgrade what you consider a substandard approach, it is unlikely to improve.)

So, you need to identify professional values appropriate to the population being served and fashion those values into a short, specific, and useful mission statement that is agreeable to the administration of the program. Here is an example.

### The Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice

In the field of juvenile corrections, there has been a long-standing debate as to the purpose of the service. Does the juvenile justice system exist to keep the community safe? Or is the primary purpose to treat the identified offenders? Are close custody services simply for custody or should they focus on treatment? Are staff there to maintain control or provide rehabilitative services? Before or only after adjudication?

In response to this debate, Maloney, Romig, and Armstrong (1988) formulated a new paradigm to address this issue. Rather than pick a side, they incorporated both points of view into a model called the *balanced approach to juvenile justice.* This model consisted of three values, community safety, accountability, and competency development and directed that all three issues be addressed each time a youth was dealt with by the juvenile justice system. Therefore, each case would be evaluated and a response made to the safety of the community, holding the offender accountable for

their actions, and identifying and providing services to help the offender develop the skills needed to live in the community in a law-abiding way. This model gained popularity because it provided a blueprint for balancing elements previously in conflict and allowed juvenile justice practitioners to build case plans and provide services to meet the needs of all the stakeholders.

In fact, the balanced approach has been combined with the concept of *restorative justice* (rather than retributive justice) to form the "Balanced Approach to Restorative Justice" (BARJ) which has been adopted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as one element of their official approach to juvenile justice in the United States (OJJDP, 1998.) For a collection of essays regarding restorative justice, see *The Spiritual Roots of Restorative Justice.* (Hadley, ed., 2001)

### The Pitchford Boys Ranch Experience

Prior to the national acceptance of BARJ, the staff and administration of Pitchford Boys Ranch, a residential treatment center for delinquent adolescent boys run by the Douglas County Juvenile Department in Roseburg, Oregon, formulated a mission statement built around the balanced approach. Community safety was reformulated to include safety for everyone--the community, the youth in the program, and the staff. Accountability for one's actions was seen as an important value both because all youth in the program were adjudicated for criminal activity (either very serious or numerous offences) and because there often is little motivation to change if accountability can be avoided. Competency development encompassed the more usual treatment services, identifying and addressing skills needed to promote successful performance in the community.

At this point, the program values were identified as *safety, accountability*, and *competency development*. In addition, staff felt their function was to provide education to the youth regarding these values. The following is the Preamble and Mission Statement that was developed.

### MISSION STATEMENT

**PREAMBLE:**

Pitchford Boys Ranch exists to divert juvenile offenders from placement in the State closed custody system and deal with them in the least restrictive community setting possible. To achieve this goal, Pitchford Boys Ranch will deal with all boys placed in its custody using the "Balanced Approach". The Balanced Approach dictates that three areas be considered in planning, service provision, and recommendations for each client. Those three areas are community safety, accountability for one's behavior, and the development of competency (skills) needed to be a successful member of the community.

Pitchford Boys Ranch will address the first issue, *Community Safety*, in the following manner: "All aspects of daily programming, treatment

planning and provision, and recommendations for future action will consider and address the safety of all concerned. This includes the safety of the child, the safety of the community, and the safety of the staff."

Pitchford Boys Ranch will address the second issue, *Accountability for One's Behavior*, in the following manner: "All aspects of daily programming, treatment planning and provision, and recommendations for future action will consider and address the need for accountability for one's behavior through the steps of owning one's behavior, accepting the consequences for that behavior, making amends when appropriate, and working to improve behavior in the future."

Pitchford Boys Ranch will address the third issue, *Development of Competency* (skills) Needed to be a Successful Member of the Community, in the following manner: "All aspects of daily programming, treatment planning and provision, and recommendations for future action will consider and address identifying and teaching the skills necessary to live safely and responsibly in the community."

## MISSION
"THE MISSION OF PITCHFORD BOYS RANCH IS TO IDENTIFY AND TEACH THE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS TO LIVE SAFELY, LEGALLY, AND RESPONSIBLY IN THE COMMUNITY."

### Implementing Value-Based Programming
The first step is educating staff and youth on the program values and how these values interact with daily activities. In this example, safety was the number one value--when an unsafe situation was identified, all other activity stopped until safety was restored. Remember that safety was defined as everyone's safety as well as the safety of the community.

Accountability was the second value, and an operational definition was developed. Accountability was defined as owning one's behavior, accepting the consequences for that behavior, making amends where appropriate, and working to improve behavior in the future. Note: sometimes accountability was needed to accept the helpful behaviors as well as the unhelpful ones--delinquent adolescents often have more trouble accepting their "good deeds" than their transgressions. Accountability assignments and accountability group processing were incorporated into the daily operations of the program.

Competency development covered the more traditional treatment services, identifying issues and providing treatment to address those issues. The program developed a menu of individualized treatment goals as well as a six-point scale for measuring progress. Treatment goals were coordinated so that each youth had one set of goals across all disciplines--mental health and substance abuse services, educational personnel, and probation and parole services worked together with residential staff to provide appropriate services to meet those goals.

*The Next Level*

Pitchford Boys Ranch, the first such program in Oregon and regarded as one of the best residential youth treatment programs for delinquent boys in the state, no longer exists--having been closed due to lack of state support and reductions in funding. However, value-based programming continues in a new youth facility, the Douglas County Juvenile Detention and Shelter Care Facility. This facility combines a detention unit and a shelter unit, and provides a court-committed short-term treatment program based in the detention unit. Detention youth usually stay for days, shelter youth stay sometimes for weeks, and treatment youth stay for three to four months. The value-based approach used with all youth in the facility has been modified to include the "practice values" of *helpfulness* and *mutual respect.* These values also are operationally defined, staff are trained in modeling and promoting these attitudes, and the youth are educated and encouraged to learn and adopt the same attitudes towards each other and the staff.

Safety is still the number one value and all else stops until safety is assured throughout the facility. Accountability assignments and groups are still incorporated into daily programming. Values are introduced during orientation and staff present "value groups" Monday through Friday. Monday is Safety Day (every day is Safety Day), Tuesday addresses Accountability, Wednesday is for Competency Development, Thursday promotes Mutual Respect and Friday covers Helpfulness. Values and their operational definitions are posted on the walls. Interventions often start with phrases such as "Is that safe? Is that helpful?"

In addition, staff present competency development groups Sunday evening through Thursday evening. Topics are Values (Sunday), Living Clean and Sober (Monday), Managing Emotions (Tuesday), Understanding and Tolerance (Wednesday), and Citizenship Skills (Thursday). A cognitive/behavioral-based curriculum is either adapted from a variety of treatment sources or developed by staff. Experiential activities are used when possible.

Again, the program values are understood by all staff and incorporated into all aspects of daily programming. Even in a short-term facility, repeated stays by many of the youth promote the understanding and incorporation of these values into their thinking and performance. Note: a reccurring comment from past clients to other professionals as they move through the various processes of the juvenile justice system is that they feel they were treated with respect in the facility.

*Another Example of a Value-Based Model*

Another model suitable for value-based programming can be found in the "Circle of Courage" described in *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Bendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002, pp. 43-68). The Circle of Courage encompasses the values of "belonging", "mastery",

"independence" and "generosity" in a strength-based approach to "mending the broken circle" that many youth experience.

### *An Area for Further Exploration*

Another emerging area of child and youth care that seems appropriate for the development of value-based programming is the focus on faith-based organizations and their work in this field (Branch, 2002). What values are these programs built upon and how do these values get expressed in daily operations and activities? How do these values promote the well-being and healthy development of the children and youth involved? Note: Answering these questions is an appropriate exercise for all programs serving children and youth.

### SUMMARY

To begin the process of value-based programming, first establish your professional program values in conjunction with staff and the administration. Next, formulate these values into a simple and specific mission statement.

Operationally define each value. Develop the definition so that everyone knows what the value means and can tell when the value is being followed. Educate the staff and other participants so everyone knows the program's purpose and has a common language to address that purpose.

Incorporate the values into your daily operations. Look for activities and curriculum that support and promote those values. Begin to define and support behaviors that demonstrate the values.

Explain your values and their operational use to other involved parties, including families and other service providers. Work with other service providers to formulate treatment goals and activities built around the values. Coordinate treatment goals to provide everyone with one set of clear and understandable, desired outcomes to eliminate confusion over which goals go with which provider and who is responsible for working on which goal.

Continue to evaluate program activities and processes to confirm congruence with the program values. Are program decisions related to the program values? If an activity or program element does not promote the values, why are you doing it? Can it be redesigned to support the values?

Take special care to share values and related processes during transition planning and activities so that progress made in the program can be supported after transition.

Periodically review the program values. Are they still relevant? How do these values promote the well-being and healthy development of the children and youth involved? Can the values be defined in a clearer fashion or restructured to better address the program's purpose? Is everyone aware of the values, and is staff comfortable with their skills in applying

the values to daily living? Have you avoided the slide into "staff convenience" and "personal values" dictating staff behavior?

It takes work to develop and maintain a value-based program. Once the values are identified and the Mission Statement developed, staff must be trained to understand and use the values on a daily basis. The values must be incorporated into rules, procedures, and activities. New staff must be socialized into the program culture, and care must be taken to continue to incorporate new elements into the overall blueprint. However, the benefits outweigh the effort as your staff learn to coordinate their efforts to promote appropriate behavior and growth through modeling, teaching, and supporting the development of those values. Using the program values as a touchstone gives direction to efforts that all can understand.

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