



# Rehabilitation News

*Improving Public Safety Through Evidence-based Rehabilitation*

## Highlights

Members of the first class of inmates trained to become certified alcohol and drug counselors at California State Prison, Solano, now work at Options Recovery Services in Berkeley.

## Inside this issue:

“Time is life.” 2

“I am part of the solution.” 2

He offers them hope. 3

Mentors develop a rapport with clients. 3

Special Issue

June 2011

## Members of First Class Trained in Mentor Program at California State Prison, Solano Now Working as Substance Abuse Counselors in Berkeley

By the time he was released from prison on January 27, 2010, Lindsay Bolar had been locked up for 20 years. Now, he is a fixture at Options Recovery Services in Berkeley, where he works as an alcohol and drug abuse Counselor Associate and lives in the transitional living facility. A drug addict for 35 years in his former life, he has invaluable experience with recovery, which he uses to facilitate screening, run groups and give lectures. Today, Bolar and two other counselors are manning a table at the Berkeley Alcohol and Substance Abuse Providers Conference to answer questions about the Options. A Bluetooth over his ear, Bolar is wearing a black shirt and a violet and silver paisley tie. He tells the story about recently serving as the keynote speaker for an \$85-a-plate dinner at the Shattuck Hotel in Berkeley for the “Suitcase Clinic,” run by University of California Berkeley students who volun-

teer their time for people at risk. The audience, largely professionals, thought he was a Berkeley professor, he says. When they found out that he just finished 20 years in prison, their jaws dropped. It was an image “that could have been on YouTube,” he smiles. Bolar is a member of the first class of 47 long-term inmates, most of them “lifers,” from the Offender Mentor Certification Program (OMCP) at California State Prison (CSP), Solano in Vacaville who were trained to become certified alcohol and drug counselors by the California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC). The class participated in 570 hours of programming. In order to obtain certification, they must pass an international exam, competing with those on the outside, and complete 4,000 hours of internship.

While in prison, the inmates use their

**Lindsay Bolar, a member of the first class of the Offender Mentor Certification Program, California State Prison, Solano, which trains inmates to become certified substance abuse counselors, now works as a Counselor Associate at Options Recovery Services in Berkeley.**





Tom Gorham, Director of Options Recovery Services in Berkeley, helped train inmates as substance abuse counselors at CSP-Solano

***“Time is life.  
When you take  
time out to listen  
to someone, you’re  
giving your life.”***

***Lindsay Bolar,  
Associate  
Counselor,  
Options Recovery  
Services***



Instructors from the U.S. Navy Drug and Alcohol Counselor School in San Diego helped teach in the OMCP

skills to assist fellow offenders to recover from substance abuse. Those who are eventually released, like Bolar, can use their training to obtain a job. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is the first state corrections system in the nation to train inmates to become certified alcohol and drug counselors. Bolar also serves as an “Ambassador Host” for the Downtown Berkeley Association, where he engages in outreach on the street to address problems ranging from drug abuse to mental illness. The knowledge he has acquired through the OMCP program, he says, “has made me a kind of ‘go-to’ guy.” When walking down the street, he often hears, “Hey, Lindsay, can I holler at you, man?”

**“Time is life.”**

He uses the skills he’s learned to help people. “Time is life,” he says. “When you take time out to listen to someone, you’re giving your life.”

He doesn’t just do his job. “I go the extra mile when it’s called for,” he says. If he takes someone off the street to help with their addiction, some say, “You got a dollar?”

He answers, “I got a program.” Some come in defiant, he notes, but he teaches them to trust their inner voice

“where their higher power is.” After about 30 or 40 days, they’re volunteering to help others.

“I cry at the graduations,” he says. Every lifer who graduated from the OMCP program got a job immediately because “we’ve got something to prove,” Bolar comments. “It’s not just about me anymore. I’m doing it for the people in prison. A lot of lifers are doing remarkable work on the yards and in the community.”

**“I not part of the problem anymore, I’m part of the solution.”**

“I’m not part of the problem anymore,” Bolar says. “I’m part of the solution.”

He’s part of society now, he points out. He pays taxes. He goes to Chamber of Commerce meetings. He’s a concerned citizen. He’s involved in the community. He participates in his church. He sees his grandson now three times a week.

“Prison is a state of consciousness,” Bolar believes. “We are the only creatures that can put ourselves in ‘prison.’” Today, “I’ve got a goal,” he says. “I’ve got a reason to live.”

Bolar and the other mentors from the OMCP at CSP-Solano “work very well with our particular population,” according to Tom Gorham, Program Director for Options Recovery Services and President of the Addiction Professional Association of California, who helped train the OMCP class.

“Every person who comes in to drug treatment has a struggle,” he says. The mentors from CSP-Solano have a special connection with these individuals who have lost so much in their addiction.

“That’s the power of the story,” says Gorham. Options clients see the challenges the mentors have overcome. “Our clients say, ‘If he can do it, I can do it.’” The mentors have received “top-notch training,” notes Gorham, but this “intangible” connection because of their life experience is critical.

Options appointed a welcoming committee for the mentors coming out of prison. Often, parolees are met with “scorn and fear,” says Gorham. At Options, “they know they’re welcome, that we care about them.”

Working at Options offers them the opportunity to continue acquiring their hours of training to become certified counselors. After a period of transition, the Counselor Associates receive \$10 an hour, which eventually increases to \$14 an hour. Once a mentor passes his oral exams to complete CAADAC certification, he can make \$18 an hour.

#### **He offers them hope.**

Cameron Clark was incarcerated for 18 years. He was 17 when he went to prison for a gang-related crime and given a 16 years-to-life sentence. Released in January 2011, he now also works as a substance abuse Counselor Associate at Options. He runs a class every morning. Clark is also certified in Denial Management and Relapse Prevention.

Most people who have an alcohol and drug problem, he says, have a correctional system problem too. He offers them hope. He tells them, “Yes I was in prison for 18 years for second-degree

murder.” He was an accessory to the crime. He shows them that if he can recover from addiction and turn his life around, so can they.

Wearing a beige, button-down shirt with a striped olive, yellow and cream tie, Clark came to recognize through his involvement in the OMCP program that alcohol and drug abuse is not the cause, but the symptom, of the addict’s problems. The program helped him address issues relating to his upbringing that contributed to his behavior earlier in life.

#### **Mentors develop a rapport with clients.**

He learned that, “We self-medicate because of what we feel inside – usually guilt and shame.” To do that, the mentors must develop a rapport with the “clients.” They learned how to approach them and help them discover what was driving them.

Males are taught early in life that “men don’t cry and don’t share,” observes Clark, so that they are not perceived as “weak or soft.” Clark says that when he was a boy, his father abused his mother. Anger flared in him because “I couldn’t protect her.” This was the reason he wanted to be a mentor, to help fathers of other children from engaging in anger and abuse.

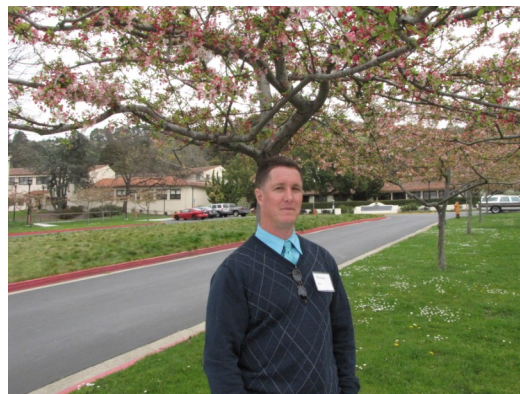


**OMCP graduates must pass an international exam to be certified as alcohol and drug counselors.**

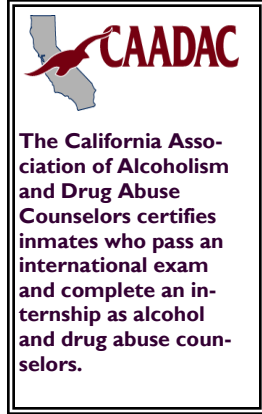
*Working at Options offers the OMCP graduates the opportunity to continue acquiring their hours of training to become certified counselors.*



**Cameron Clark, OMCP graduate, now an Associate Counselor, Options Recovery Services**



**Eric Borchert, also an OMCP graduate, now an Associate Counselor, Options Recovery Services**



***“We deal with people who feel they have lost all. I can tell them, ‘I just came from 19 years in prison.’ I show them so they too can start a new life.”***

**Eric Borchert,  
Associate Counselor,  
Options Recovery  
Services**



What he didn't receive in his family of origin, he obtained from a gang – acceptance, nurture, acknowledgement and identity (including a gang nickname). Like the desire for a father clapping when his son hits a home run, Clark became addicted to pleasing his fellow gang members. This took him to high-risk situations to bring acceptance. “My addiction was acceptance,” he says, “and the high-risk adrenalin” associated with the dangerous situations he put himself in to become accepted. Clark is married, has a son, and he just checked in to San Francisco State University. He qualified for a grant through Project Rebound, which helps former inmates obtain education. He has created a curriculum, “Gang Addiction Prevention.” Cameron wants to augment his education in substance abuse and expand his gang prevention efforts into the realm of treatment.

—  
Eric Borchert, released from CSP-Solano in January 2011, after being incarcerated since he was 16 years old, has also joined Options as a substance abuse counselor. He serves as a model of someone who had fallen to the depths and risen again. “We deal with people who feel they have lost all,” he says. “Some are homeless. I can tell them, ‘I just came from 19 years in prison.’ ‘I don't hide from being a lifer. I show them so they too can start a new life.’”

When a man came into Options with a warrant for his arrest, Borchert told him to turn himself in. “It will show that you desire to change,” he told him, and that it would put him on the right path. He walked him to the parole office. Because of the parolee's honesty and willingness to follow directions, he was not arrested.

Wearing an aquamarine shirt and black and teal tie with an over-sweater, Borchert says his appearance shows

“what I want to be.” Those he is helping need a vision, a goal, he says. His appearance helps show them that they too can change.

At CSP-Solano, he found that the mentors were able to impact their fellow inmates because they were peers – they ate with them, played sports with them. Their fellow inmates would say, in effect, “There is someone who's been in my shoes, and I've watched him change. That's the life I want.”

“I try to live my life modeling what I say and what I believe,” says Borchert. A mentor would not ask his fellow offenders to do anything he wasn't doing himself. Borchert says that he has reached a point in his life “where I want to make a difference,” not only to help others recover from substance abuse but also for others who cross his path each day.

He describes a recent visit to the park with his family, when he spotted a boy, about five. The child's mother and older sister were spending time together, and the boy was tossing a football alone. The ball got caught in a tree branch and Borchert pulled it down for him. Borchert spent 20 minutes with the boy, showing him how to catch the ball right, and as he was leaving, he turned around and saw the boy showing his sister how to catch the ball.

“I feel blessed by being able to give back to society,” says Borchert. He also feels responsible to make the program work. “If I mess up, my fellows won't be hired,” he says. “I am blessed by those who are still incarcerated. They look at me as a role model.”

If he hadn't gone to prison he would not have learned his life lessons, Borchert says. “I'm alive today.”

###