

SMART Grant Forensic CBT

A new grant funded experimental training program to integrate cognitive-behavioral principles to probation work.

Earlier this year, the United States Bureau of Justice announced that they would award a handful of “*Smart Probation*” grants to projects designed to develop innovative practices in probation.

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) and the Muskie School of Southern Maine collaborated with the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) on a *Smart grant* application, seeking funding for a project called **Forensic CBT**, an experimental program that will enhance officers’ assessment skills and train them in the use of cognitive-behavioral techniques to challenge probationers’ criminal thinking. Only eight applications throughout the nation were awarded *Smart grants*, **Forensic CBT** was one of them.

The Forensic CBT model has been designed for Probation Officers to be used with medium and high risk probationers. It is intended to provide officers with a practical structured approach for challenging their clients’ criminal thinking.

The next stage in this project involves recruiting 40 Connecticut Probation Officers with excellent communication skills who want to learn to use cognitive-behavioral techniques to better identify and alter their clients’ criminal thinking patterns. Initial training and ongoing coaching in the **Forensic CBT** program will be held at Central Connecticut State University. The **Forensic CBT** training will be conducted in *short sessions*, spread out over the course of several months, so that officers have adequate time to *learn, practice, and apply* the new techniques in ongoing supervision sessions.

In recent years, similar training programs have been introduced in a number of U.S. and Canadian probation agencies. Officers who completed the training program in Canada have reported increases in skills, effectiveness, and overall job satisfaction. The Canadian program has also shown significant reductions in probation-client recidivism.

If you would like to be considered for selection into the **Forensic CBT** program, please contact your Chief.