

Rick Pendery - Second Chance Program Raising Self-Respect in New Mexico Inmates

A unique social rehabilitation model is now in place in the criminal justice system of New Mexico. The program not only offers drug rehabilitation, but also engenders self-respect in the incarcerated as a way to help reduce criminal tendencies. The program is overseen by Rick Pendery, the national executive director of the Second Chance Centers, and Joy Westrum, the president of the Second Chance Program. The idea here is to shift the inmates moral code from one based on criminality to one that is socially desirable, Pendery explains. Its a common sense approach based on self-survival and survival for others. If it doesnt make sense to him, he wont follow it. Pendery continues, Using The Way to Happiness booklet by L. Ron Hubbard, which is a non-religious moral code, these guys are changing their viewpoints about right and wrong and are coming out with a different basis for decisions in their life. That is one of the reasons we get such a low recidivism rate. Independent university studies show that, in earlier pilot programs, over a five-year period criminal recidivism dropped to less than ten percent for those who participated in at least one third of the Second Chance program prior to release. Westrum has seen this program delivered to thousands of inmates. The Way to Happiness can help an individual see how moral conduct can improve his survival. When that happens, you have a good chance that he will change his own behavior by his own free will. This is such an effective way to create permanent personality changes. When in the Second Chance Program, the inmates are called students. According to Pendery, The booklet we use has 21 precepts or moral truths that are taught to the student in a classroom under close supervision, using various study tools learned in a previous course to ensure full comprehension of each moral concept. The student actually practices applying each precept in his daily life, until he really incorporates that precept into his life. We have observed improvement with inmates in interpersonal relations, improved responsibility in life, blaming others less, and so forth. In touring the program for evaluation, Dr. Alfonso Paredes, M.D. and Professor Emeritus of the University of California, Los Angeles School of Behavioral Science stated, It was particularly important to me to have interacted personally with the inmates, shaking hands, talking with them, and asking many questions. I observed first hand the rehabilitative process and the responses of hard-core drug abusers and law offenders to the program. I have had the opportunity to do many visits to substance abuse rehabilitative programs throughout the U.S. for the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. I have had administrative responsibilities for statewide substance abuse rehabilitative systems, as well as for programs in major academic institutions in the U.S. I have never been as deeply impressed as I was during my visit to the Second Chance Program. When asked how this program is related to Scientology, Westrum says, Scientology is a world recognized religion. Its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, researched many areas of life, in addition to the work he did with Scientology. Second Chance uses manuals that are based upon research Mr. Hubbard did in the field of drug abuse and criminal behavior. It is secular and non-religious. Second Chance Program, Inc. uses these manuals through a licensing agreement with the secular organization, Criminon International. The manuals have been evaluated by the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., which determined that they compare favorably to best practice in the criminal justice field. She continues, Anyone, of any religion, can use the research findings of L. Ron Hubbard without being part of the church or the religion. Westrum concludes, From what I have observed the benefits that these students gain from using our program are applicable to their lives long after they have left the correctional institution. By the time they have finished these courses they have usually found new self-respect, which gives them a whole new outlook on life.

About the Author

For more information go to: [Second Chance Program](#)

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