



**COLORADO**

Office of Children,  
Youth & Families

Division of Youth Corrections

# What is CBT?

## Evidence Based Principle #4: Skill Train with Directed Practice



Cognitive behavioral therapy is a treatment that focuses on patterns of thinking and the beliefs, attitudes and values that underlie thinking.

CBT has only recently come into prominence as one of the few approaches to psychotherapy that has been broadly validated with research, although it has been used in psychological therapy for more than 40 years.

It is reliably effective with a wide variety of personal problems and behaviors, including those important to criminal justice, such as substance abuse and anti-social, aggressive, delin-

quent and criminal behavior.

CBT places responsibility in the hands of clients while supplying them with the tools to solve their problems, focusing on the present rather than the past. People taking part in CBT learn specific skills that can be used to solve the problems they confront all the time as well as skills they can use to achieve legitimate goals and objectives.

CBT first concentrates on developing skills to recognize distorted or unrealistic thinking

when it happens, and then to changing that thinking or belief to mollify or eliminate problematic behavior.

Positive findings from research on CBT are common. Over the years, studies have shown the therapy is effective with various problems, including mood disorders, anxiety and personality and behavioral disorders. Unlike other traditional and popular therapies, CBT has been the subject of more than 400 clinical trials involving a broad range of conditions and populations.

### Source:

Clark, P. (2010). Preventing future crime with cognitive behavioral therapy: What is CBT? *NIJ Journal*, 265.

Development Services Group, Inc. (2010). "Cognitive Behavior Treatment." Literature Review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

