

Partners in Good Corrections

One of the most significant challenges in the field of corrections today is the role and responsibility of the community in helping to safely reintegrate increasing numbers of offenders. Community programming reduces the risk of recidivism and is a fundamental component of the overall correctional strategy, as specified in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. CSC relies on service providers in the community and actively encourages and seeks innovative approaches to community corrections.

Since the late 1960s, CSC has contracted with non-profit, voluntary agencies such as the John Howard Society, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, St. Leonard's House and the Salvation Army to provide services to released offenders. As well, some of these agencies provide community supervision in remote areas or residential facilities and programming to offenders with specialized needs. In addition to its affiliations with community-based organizations, CSC maintains a volunteer program and also works with Aboriginal and faith communities.

1. John Howard Society

The John Howard Society of Canada is part of a movement dedicated to understanding and responding to problems involving crime and criminal justice system. There are 55 offices across Canada. Each John Howard Society operates independently, but they cooperate through the John Howard Society of Canada. The Society:

- works with people who have come into conflict with the law;
- promotes changes in the criminal justice process that will assist their clients to become law-abiding citizens;
- conducts public education on matters relating criminal law and its application;
- promotes crime prevention through community and social development activities;
- prepares position papers and briefs related to issues of adult and youth corrections and justice.

Branches and affiliates provide a wide range of services and programs for those who have been in conflict with the law and their families, including:

- aftercare services for those leaving prison;
- education for youth at the primary prevention level;
- training and employment services;
- counseling;
- literacy and life;
- victim-offender reconciliation/restitution programs;
- residential programs.

2. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Elizabeth Fry Societies provide a network of programs and services designed to meet the needs of women offenders, from the time a woman is arrested through to her discharge from prison and return to the community. Professional staff and volunteers, governed by volunteer community boards of directors, provide direct services, including:

- life skills training;
- counseling (regarding issues such as shoplifting, incest, sexual abuse, employment and financial assistance) for young offenders and victims of violence;
- dispute resolution;
- accommodation, residential services, satellite housing, drop-in centers;
- court assistance;
- emotional support;
- release planning and supervision for bail, probation and parole, temporary absences, community service orders;
- community crime prevention and diversion initiatives.

In addition to these services, the various societies, through their boards of directors, volunteers and staff, monitor impending changes in the law and in government policies that may have an effect on the status of women offenders.

3. The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an International Christian Church and since its beginnings in 1865 has embarked on schemes for the social betterment whereby evolving social services meet endemic needs of specific crises worldwide. These services include medical - hospitals and long-term care, social, educational, disabled, missing persons and family welfare and other community services impacting restoration and rehabilitation. The Salvation Army serves in 109 countries and territories with 175 languages used in its work.

The Salvation Army is identified with clergy – identified as officers, enrolled members as soldiers and complemented by a solid base of adherents and friends. Within its ministry and service, a strong base of lay and non-lay persons represent a work force of over 110,000 employees, many non-aligned with any membership in The Salvation Army and certainly representative of all cultures, ethnic groups and peoples.

The Salvation Army enjoys a valued partnership in the field of corrections with federal and provincial governments and other agencies such as the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry, John Howard Society, St. Leonard's Society and L'Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec (ASRSQ).

4. St. Leonard's Society

The St. Leonard's Society of Canada is a membership-based, charitable organization dedicated to community safety. The mission of SLSC is to promote a humane and informed justice policy and responsible leadership to foster safe communities. It:

- endorses evidence-based approaches to criminal and social justice;
- conducts research and develops policy;
- supports its member affiliates; and
- advances collaborative relationships and communication among individuals and organizations dedicated to social justice.

The Society has affiliates across Canada, providing programs and services in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. St. Leonard's and its affiliates developed and initiated LifeLine In-Reach services.

Principal activities

The Society and its affiliates work with offenders to help change the behaviour that led to the crime and to promote a sense of responsibility. In keeping with its mission, St. Leonard's Society of Canada aims to assist people in conflict with the law and prevent recidivism through the following activities:

- providing educational programs such as its annual Bolton Day conferences; advocating for improved policies, procedures and services within the criminal justice system;
 - conducting public education and outreach to help the community understand its responsibility in both preventing crime and responding to it, through print, broadcast and electronic publications;
 - researching best practices in community corrections;

- supporting its affiliate's halfway houses and other support programs; and
- helping to organize and participate in networks that bring together government and voluntary sector agencies to work together to improve the justice system.

5. L'Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec

L'Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec's (ASRSQ) mission is to collectively support the members and volunteers in its network and to promote the participation of citizens and community organizations in the areas of crime prevention, reintegration and rehabilitation of adult offenders, while working to improve the criminal justice system.

The association represents 50 non-profit corporations that operate at 109 service points in Quebec. A variety of services is offered, including halfway houses, employment, various specialized programs to assist offenders with mental health problems and sex offenders. Each year these organizations accommodate over 20,000 persons in conflict with the law.

The association believes that the active participation of citizens in the community in resolving the problems associated with crime contributes to the social development and consequently the well-being of our communities. ASRSQ's role is to identify solutions to the problems of adult crime through empowerment of the individual. These solutions must be fair and satisfactory to the victim, society and the offender.

Lastly, the ASRSQ performs a number of mandates: informing its members and the community on major issues (see Website at www.asrsq.ca), training professional and volunteer staff, and researching and analyzing legislation pertaining to the areas of endeavour associated with its mandate.

6. Canadian Training Institute

The Canadian Training Institute (CTI) is a national voluntary organization that contributes to the healthy development of individuals, families and communities through training, consultation, collaborative action, dissemination of information and undertaking of applied research demonstration projects.

CTI is committed to fostering equality and life long learning by enhancing services that assist individuals to participate as responsible, valued and contributing members of Canadian society.

CTI assists in the development of knowledge, skills and services that reduce crime, promote active participation and ultimately contribute to healthy individuals, agencies and communities.

7. Canadian Criminal Justice Association

The Canadian Criminal Justice Association (CCJA) is an independent national voluntary organization working for an improved criminal justice system in Canada. The Association was founded in 1919.

Recognizing that the criminal justice system must serve the needs of all people, the CCJA is an umbrella organization representing all elements of the criminal justice system, **including the public**. It exists to promote rational, informed, and responsible debate in order to develop a more humane, equitable, and effective justice system.

The Canadian Criminal Justice Association is committed to its purpose which is reflected in its efforts to:

- Provide the public, criminal justice participants, and concerned observers with balanced information and education on justice issues through:
 - publications;
 - conferences, seminars, congresses;
 - training opportunities;
- Create opportunities for debate, consult and advise, initiate change, monitor progress, and strive for improvement in the areas of:
 - crime prevention;
 - community-based programs;
 - public policy;
 - justice programs and services;
 - legislation;
- Advocate for fairness, equity and the protection of rights;
- Foster communication, collegiality, consensus and cooperation among all;
- Promote research and the advancement of knowledge.

8. Volunteers

CSC's volunteer program is one way of ensuring citizens' involvement in corrections. Volunteers provide a link between a correctional facility and the local community in which it operates, thus helping CSC to maintain a positive presence.

Approximately 10,000 citizens across Canada participate in programs and activities for offenders — ranging from one-time activities to regular involvement. Most people are occasional volunteers, but about 3,000 provide ongoing services. Volunteers come from all walks of life and include military personnel, students, homemakers, trades people, teachers, accountants, nurses and retirees.

What volunteers offer offenders

By giving their time and sharing their skills with offenders, volunteers present a positive role model and show that someone on the “outside” cares. Knowing that there are people who support them can go a long way toward helping offenders realize their worth as members of the community and successfully making a new start.

Benefits to volunteers

As CSC volunteers, community members can gain valuable knowledge, skills and experience in a field of great diversity and interest. They also have the satisfaction of knowing that they are contributing to the safety of their own communities.

Volunteer involvement

Volunteers contribute to a variety of institution based programs including:

- chaplaincy and Aboriginal Elders guidance;
- substance abuse programs;
- social and recreational activities;
- tutoring, classroom and workshop instruction;

- multicultural activities.

As well, trained volunteers provide offender classification services, post-sentence reports and casemanagement assistance to parole officers. Under the direction of a parole officer, volunteers with special skills e.g., mental health professionals or teachers may be assigned to an offender who requires assistance in the volunteer's area of expertise. Volunteers may also serve as citizen escorts, accompanying offenders to substance abuse treatment programs or community projects. Citizen escorts must first complete at least six months of active participation in other programs.

Training

Volunteers receive orientation on the correctional environment and training on the rights, responsibilities and roles of CSC volunteers and on the importance of following CSC policies and procedures. Positive and supportive relationships between staff and volunteers are encouraged.

National Volunteer Association

Since November 2001, the National Volunteer Association (NVA) has provided volunteers with a national voice. Its membership is comprised of both volunteers and CSC staff members. The NVA provides opportunities for networking, information sharing and professional enrichment in an effort to renew and revitalize CSC's volunteer core.

9. Aboriginal Communities

Many offender reintegration initiatives involve members of Canada's Aboriginal communities. For example, they teach Native culture, traditions and spirituality, as well as provide advice to offenders, CSC staff and members of the National Parole Board. Aboriginal community members are also involved in visiting programs, social and recreational activities and many other programs and services offered to offenders.

10. Faith-based Communities

Prison ministry programs enlist the resources of a broad range of faith communities in partnership with CSC to promote spiritual healing and ensure the safe reintegration of offenders. The clientele includes both offenders in custody and on release, offenders' partners, families, the community, and victims of crime.

Community chaplains

Community chaplains work with institutional chaplains to build relationships with offenders prior to their release, and with the local parole office to participate in the supervision strategy. In addition to meeting to the spiritual needs of the offender, community chaplains are engaged in community development work and public education, and in helping offenders link with local resources. Their activities include:

- supportive counseling, group work, drop-in services, individual support;
- volunteer training, classroom and workshop training, community education;
- institutional work;
- worship services;
- promoting advocacy;

- building friendships;
- developing mentorship groups.

Circles of Support and Accountability

Through the community chaplaincy, approximately 65 Circles of Support and Accountability are in place for sexual offenders throughout Canada. The circles, organized primarily by faith groups, form a "covenant" with a released sexual offender to accept the circle's help and advice, to stick to their treatment plan, and to act responsibly in the community. In the absence of these circles, there would be very limited support for released sexual offenders who have served their full sentence, thus leaving them at risk of re-offending. For its part, the circle helps released sexual offenders by advocating on their behalf, holding discussions with them about their attitudes and behaviors, mediating community concerns and developing meaningful relationships.