



SPECIAL REPORT

Inmate Services and
Conditions of Custody in
Saskatchewan
Correctional Centres

October 2002

4



Programming



Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

Programming

Introduction

One of Corrections' primary objectives is to rehabilitate inmates and reintegrate them into the community. This can only be accomplished with work, educational, and treatment programs specifically designed to meet that objective. The safety of our communities depends to a large extent on the success of these programs.

Inmates who return to the community without receiving rehabilitative or reintegrative programming are usually at a higher risk to re-offend than those who have. They may, in fact, present a higher risk than they did when they were admitted to jail.

In the interests of both the community and the inmates, Corrections must deliver the programming necessary to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates.

Corrections has recently conducted its own review of programming which candidly addresses the strengths and weaknesses of current programming resources and recommends improvements based on leading research in the area. The following discussion of inmate programming and a description of Corrections' plans for improvement is essentially a summary of Corrections' own review.

Programming Theory

For the purposes of this section, "programming" refers to education or training designed to improve inmates' chances of rehabilitation and reintegration into society, thereby lowering recidivism rates.

The important role inmate programming plays in reducing recidivism has been long known and is recognized in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which calls for work, education and training programs for all inmates.

There was an unfortunate trend in the field of corrections in the past decade in discussions about programming to conclude, based on the perceived ineffectiveness of various programming initiatives, that nothing works. This perception has since been countered by research that shows that programming results in a general decline in recidivism of 10%.

Gendreau and Goggin note that although 10% may seem low, it is in line with medical interventions that are deemed successful. They also state that when one considers only the programs that have been shown empirically to be effective, meaning those that are "behavioural/highly structured in nature and target the criminogenic [leading to crime] attitudes, values and behaviours of higher risk inmates," the decline in recidivism rises to 25% to 30%.¹

Research in the last decade has identified several common characteristics in programs that reduce recidivism rates. Although authors differ slightly in their lists of characteristics, the following is representative of the lists encountered in our research.

- + The programs "address empirically proven criminogenic factors (needs) like poor cognitive competencies and social skills, alcohol and drug problems, delinquent peer contacts, lack of prosocial bonding, educational and vocational deficits."
- + The programs are adaptable to the learning styles of the inmates.
- + Prior to admission to a program, inmates are thoroughly assessed to determine criminogenic needs and suitability for specific programs.
- + Programming resources are directed at inmates with a higher risk of re-offending.
- + Programs are well structured and staff members are sufficiently trained and supportive of program methods and goals.
- + To the extent possible, programs are delivered in the community.
- + The institution "is emotionally and socially

¹ Paul Gendreau and Claire Goggin, "Principles of Effective Correctional Programming," *Forum* 8.3 (1996).



Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

responsive as well as structured, norm-oriented and controlling."

- + Staff members are carefully selected, with specific training, and are continuously supervised.
- + The programs strengthen inmates' existing protections against re-offending such as an "easy temperament, experiences of self-efficacy in education or in leisure activities, attachment to a stable reference person, [and] social support from outside the family."
- + Programs include relapse prevention and after-care components to preserve positive effects of programming.²

Corrections' Strategic Correctional Program

In 1998, Saskatchewan Corrections committed itself to implementing a programming strategy based on international research into effective programming. We look forward to Corrections' continued progress, as there is need for improvement.

Programs offered in the correctional centres in 1999, for example, included programs addressing anger management, education, substance abuse, employment, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and problem solving. However, there was little consistency and continuity between the correctional centres.

For example, it was not uncommon for a program to be offered in one centre only, or for a program to be delivered differently in the four centres, making it difficult for a transferred inmate to continue a program in the new centre.

Furthermore, most of the programs were educational with no attempt to fit the program to the inmates' social and psychological circum-

stances: "few [programs] were cognitive skill based, possessed a relapse prevention component, or contained an evaluation component."³

To address the shortcomings identified in programming, Corrections developed a strategic correctional program plan, which emphasizes the use of effective programming. To be considered effective, a program must satisfy several criteria, four of which are:

- + Programs must be directed at identified criminogenic needs;
- + Programs must use cognitive skills training;
- + Programs must be delivered by trainers who are adequately trained and fully support the program; and
- + Programs must include a relapse prevention component.

Corrections determined that as of the end of 1999, only three programs in the province met the requirements of effective program principles and desired impact on inmate behaviour: the Inmate Substance Abuse Pre-Release Program offered at the male centres, the Child Visiting Program offered at Pine Grove, and the Cognitive Skills Program offered at Regina.

Corrections' strategic plan commits the Division to evaluating "existing programs to determine if they address identified criminogenic needs (attitudes, values and behaviours that support a criminal lifestyle)⁴ and meet the requirements of effective programming. Under the plan, non-relevant programs will be discontinued, program gaps will be identified, and existing relevant programs will be strengthened."⁵ The plan also calls for consistency and continuity between correctional facilities.

Using a validated risk/needs assessment,⁶ Corrections has determined that its program

² Friedrich Lösel, "The Importance of Offender Programming: German and International Evaluations," *Proceedings: Beyond Prisons*, Kingston, Ontario, March 1998, 13.

³ Saskatchewan Department of Justice, Corrections Division, *Strategic Correctional Program Plan* (internal document, 2000), 3.

⁴ "Predicting Adult Inmate Recidivism," *Research Summary, Corrections Research and Development 2.2* (March 1997). See also: Paul Gendreau, "What Works in Community Corrections: Promising Approaches in reducing Criminal Behaviour," in *Proceedings of the 1994 Conference of the International Community Corrections Association*, ed. Barbara J. Auerbach and Thomas C. Castellano (American Correctional Association, 1998).

⁵ *Strategic Correctional Program Plan 11*.



Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

strategy "must address needs associated with drug and alcohol use, family and marital relationships, and employment."⁷ Accordingly, the following core programs were recommended:

- + Substance Abuse,
- + Anger and Emotion / Violence Aggression,
- + Cognitive Skills,
- + Employment Skills,
- + Sex Abuse,
- + Domestic Violence, and
- + Basic Education / Literacy.

It was determined that some would be new, and some would be current programs that have been revised and strengthened.

Corrections proposes a strong emphasis on community-based programs with a relapse prevention component. To meet the unique needs of women and aboriginal inmates, research will be conducted into the specific needs of these two groups and appropriate programs will be developed.⁸

To meet its programming goals for inmates, Corrections intends to accomplish the following:

- + Identify priority criminogenic needs provincially and by location (correctional facilities and community) and determine what core programs will be implemented;
- + Evaluate existing programs in terms of their compliance with the principles of effectiveness and meeting the Core Program criteria;
- + Implement programs that meet the criteria for effective programming to meet the priority criminogenic needs;
- + Develop programs to meet the needs of specific groups (aboriginals, women),
- + Develop partnerships to maximize resources, with for example, CSC, Aboriginal Organizations, Mental Health, and Social Services;



- + Provide a greater emphasis on skill development and employment readiness through PRISM Industries; and
- + Implement a program evaluation framework and accreditation process to ensure the validity of programs.⁹

By 2002, work toward meeting these goals was well under way. The four correctional centres have a total of eight staff trained in Cognitive Skills, a certified program that addresses criminal attitudes. The three men's centres have a total of four staff members trained in OSAPP, a certified substance abuse program. Pine Grove has developed a substance abuse program that is based on the principles and characteristics of effective programming and has one person trained to deliver this program.

The Regina centre has implemented an Aboriginal life skills program called Balanced Lifestyles, while the Prince Albert centre has adopted a cognitive skills program called Discovery. These programs have not yet been

⁶ Saskatchewan Corrections uses Manitoba's risk/needs assessment, which has been validated for an inmate profile similar to Saskatchewan's. "Validated" means compared with (1) risk assessments that have been proven through empirical research to predict future recidivism and (2) internal research based on accepted methodologies in consultation with experts in the field of criminal risk assessment.

⁷ *Strategic Correctional Program Plan 6.*

⁸ *Strategic Correctional Program Plan 7-8.*

⁹ *Strategic Correctional Program Plan 14.*



Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

evaluated for compliance with accreditation standards or determined to be effective programs. There are seven staff members with education degrees who provide adult upgrading services, and eight out of ten of the current PRISM Industries supervisors have either an education degree or a journeyman certificate. The PRISM program is currently in the process of being redeveloped as an employment skills training program based upon the criteria of effective programming.

The Saskatoon, Regina and Pine Grove correctional centres have an education teacher who delivers Adult Upgrading and GED. Prince Albert has two education teachers.

abilities have criminogenic needs that Corrections needs to address.¹⁰

RECOMMENDATION

+ Provide effective programming to inmates with mental or learning disabilities comparable to the programming available to other inmates.

Of special importance is the need to base programming as far as possible within the community. Naturally, this needs to be done with due consideration to safety and security. However, the significantly improved effectiveness of community-based programming has been proven and challenges long-held beliefs about the need for closer security and control.¹¹



To fully realize the benefits of community-based programming, Corrections and the community will need to work together.



Comments and Recommendations

While there are many strengths and sound directions in Corrections' strategic plan, it does not include a discussion of program availability for inmates with mental or learning disabilities. Corrections has a duty to accommodate these inmates under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Accommodation will include ensuring that these inmates have opportunities to participate in reintegration and rehabilitation programming adapted to their special needs and comparable to the programming available to other inmates. Furthermore, inmates with mental or learning dis-

To fully realize the benefits of community-based programming, Corrections and the community will need to work together. In some instances, this may require a shift in attitude about inmates from one that would prefer to see them banished from the community towards one that sees inmates as future members of our community who need help adjusting to a law-abiding and productive lifestyle.

RECOMMENDATION

+ Use public education programs to emphasize the need to help inmates adjust to a law-abiding and productive lifestyle, and the consequent benefit to everyone in the community.

The core programs envisioned in the strategic plan promise to significantly reduce recidivism

¹⁰ Correctional Service of Canada acknowledges its obligation to accommodate inmates with learning or mental disabilities in *Commissioner's Directive 700: Case Management*.

¹¹ David Robinson, "Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Cognitive Skills Training, Correctional Research and Development," *Forum* 8.3 (1996). Robinson has shown that recidivism rates dropped 66.3% for community-based programming and 16.2% for institutional-based programming.



Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

rates. Implementation of the strategic plan, however, may prove difficult. We have heard that some centres' need to use program space to house sentenced and remand inmates limits the space available for program delivery (see "Bed Space").

Corrections may also face problems securing the resources to train facilitators for the envisioned core programs.

Effective program delivery is an essential part of Corrections' mission "to promote safe communities by providing a range of controls and reintegration opportunities for inmates." Space and training resources cannot be considered optional if this mission is to be realized.

RECOMMENDATION

+ Secure sufficient resources to implement the strategic correctional program plan.



Conclusion

We have been advised that implementation of Corrections' strategic program plan will take several years. It does not yet have a full complement of trained staff, and several core programs still need to be developed. To date, Corrections has developed two core programs that are being offered in all four centres: Cognitive Skills and the Offender Substance Abuse Prevention Program. Saskatchewan Corrections recently entered into an agreement with Corrections Service of Canada to coordinate resources, and this should facilitate progress in this area.

Corrections' strategic correctional program plan is based on leading research into programming that reduces inmate recidivism. It is an ambitious plan that deserves support.

COMMENDATION

+ For developing a progressive, strategic correctional program that promises to have a significant impact on the levels of inmate recidivism.



Programming

SPECIAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Provide effective programming to inmates with mental or learning disabilities comparable to the programming available to other inmates.
- + Use public education programs to emphasize the need to help inmates adjust to a law-abiding and productive lifestyle, and the consequent benefit to everyone in the community.
- + Secure sufficient resources to implement the strategic correctional program plan.

COMMENDATION

- + For developing a progressive, strategic correctional program that promises to have a significant impact on the levels of inmate recidivism.