



SPECIAL REPORT

Inmate Services and  
Conditions of Custody in  
Saskatchewan  
Correctional Centres

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# Case Management



## Inmate Services and Conditions of Custody in Saskatchewan Correctional Centres

# Case Management

## Introduction

Once effective programs are in place, they have to be delivered at the right times to the right people. This is the responsibility of each inmate's case manager, who coordinates inmate rehabilitation and reintegration needs with available programming.

In May 1998, managers in the correctional system reviewed the case management system and identified three areas of concern.<sup>1</sup> They discovered that there was no systematic and standardized approach to case management, there was a lack of evaluation methods and therefore quality control, and there was limited opportunity for staff to develop appropriate skills.

In response, Corrections established an Integrated Case Management Committee to review current practices. By 2000, the committee had completed its review and Corrections was well on its way to implementing a new initiative, which it has termed "Integrated Case Management," explained as follows:

*Integrated Case Management provides for a collaborative and coordinated team approach to managing an inmate's sentence, with the objective of successfully reintegrating the inmate into the community and contributing to the overall safety of the community. It involves all internal personnel actively engaged with an inmate, as well as partners outside of Corrections Division (i.e. Police, Prosecutions, social services, Mental Health, Parole, community Justice Workers, community agencies, etc.). It focuses on involving the inmate and taking into consideration the concerns of the victim.<sup>2</sup>*

Corrections' review is thorough and frank, and the plans for improvements are based on recognized empirical and theoretical research on

inmate rehabilitation and reintegration. The review addresses all the significant issues in case management and the resulting Integrated Case Management Initiative incorporates the best practices recommended by current research.

There would be little to be gained by duplicating Corrections' review. For this reason, the following discussion of case management in Saskatchewan's correctional institutions is restricted to a summary of Corrections' findings and objectives followed by our comments and recommendations.

## Findings of the Integrated Case Management Committee

The Integrated Case Management Committee discovered a number of problems with the existing case management system. Above all, it found that the existing operational structures actually inhibited good case management.

- + Integration of inmate services inside the correctional institutions and with outside agencies was limited.
- + The risk/needs assessment, which was to be the base for case management decisions, was not clearly understood or effectively applied. Furthermore, inmates were not always being placed in the programs indicated by their risk/needs assessment.
- + Case management reports were not standardized, which led to inconsistencies and inefficiencies.
- + The existing technology did not meet the needs of the envisioned integrated system.
- + Inmate and victim issues were not being systematically addressed.
- + Quality control needed improvement.
- + Accountability and responsibilities were not clearly defined for all levels of the organization.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan Justice, Corrections Division, *Discussion Paper on Integrated Case Management* (internal document, January 1999), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Saskatchewan Justice, Corrections Division, "Integrated Case Management Policy (Phase 1)", 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Integrated Case Management Policy (Phase 1)" 3.



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### Corrections' Response

Corrections' Integrated Case Management Policy, which was launched in June 2000, addresses the shortcomings of the previous case management system. The Executive Director of Corrections summed up the overall goals of the new integrated system as:

- + Effective and timely communication and information sharing between and among all stakeholders, including the inmate and the victim;
- + One inmate, one case plan; and
- + Effective case plans that manage inmate risk through the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including the inmate.<sup>4</sup>

In 1998, the concept of Integrated Case Management was new to correctional staff in Saskatchewan. To ease the transition to new case management procedures, Corrections decided to implement integrated case management in two phases.

The first phase, which began in June 2000, introduced standards and procedures for integrated case management. It also initiated standards for time lines, involved all correctional workers and inmates in the case management process, and initiated regular contact between the correctional centres and Corrections' Community Operations Branch.

One year after introducing the first phase of its Integrated Case Management initiative, Corrections undertook reviewing staff understanding and compliance and determining training needs. It discovered that there was substantial support for the concept of integrated case management and that progress toward acceptable levels of compliance and understanding was promising. There were, however, several areas that needed attention.

There was a widespread need to improve the staff members' abilities to use Corrections' risk/needs assessment tool and to apply the results to case planning. This is a serious con-

cern, as these assessments play a central role in the integrated case management initiative because case plans are based on the results. Some staff also had difficulty relating specific programming to criminogenic needs. This is also an integral part of the case management initiative.

Integration implies ongoing communication between partners in the justice system, and the review noted that communication needed improvement. There was general support for the concept of accountability, which would clarify the responsibilities of each staff member and manager.

File organization was inconsistent, and in some cases deemed to be unacceptable. Case managers and inmates commonly left case plans unsigned. It's not known if this means that inmates didn't agree with their case plans or if this was simply an oversight.

Ironically, inmates housed in secure areas, arguably the inmates with the highest risks/needs, received very little case management. This is a regrettable situation. Research has shown that inmates with the highest risk/needs benefit the most from correctional programming.

Despite the need for improvement in several areas, the study concluded that there was substantial support for the concept of integrated case management and that progress toward acceptable levels of compliance and understanding was sufficient to warrant implementation of the second phase of the initiative.

Phase two, which was implemented in June 2002, will address the "integration of services, such as the development of joint case plans (consultation/case conferencing); the holding of pre-release case plan reviews; the sharing of information—assisted by the completion of standardized . . . forms [available on the in-house computer network]; the expansion of stakeholder involvement; and the development of post-release community linkages."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Memo from Don Head, Executive Director of Corrections, to directors and regional managers (May 26, 2000).



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## Comments and Recommendations

The current time frame for completing an inmate's case plan is twenty-eight days. Corrections' review of the Integrated Case Management Initiative revealed that in the province's four main correctional institutions, case plans were only completed within twenty-eight days 53% of the time. It is our understanding that this does not mean that the amount of time allowed is not long enough given staff member's other responsibilities, but rather that some staff members have not yet fully embraced the concept of integrated case management and the importance of a sound case plan.

Research has consistently shown that programming is most effective when it is initiated immediately after an offence, before an inmate becomes hardened by the consequences of his offence. Case managers generally manage only three or four cases at a time, and many case managers are able to complete the case plans within a week of an inmate's admission to the centre.

The importance of a timely case plan is also evident when one notes that the average sentence for inmates in these centres is only about four months.

Considering all of this, it would be better if Corrections reduced the time frame for completing case plans to better reflect the integral part case plans play in meeting Corrections' objectives for inmates. Twenty-eight days to complete a case plan may well miss the period in an inmate's sentence when he or she is the most receptive to rehabilitation.

There is also a matter of perception: if there is an increased sense of urgency attached to the completion of the case plan, inmates may be more likely to recognize its importance to their rehabilitation and reintegration.

### RECOMMENDATION

+ Emphasize the need to complete an inmate's case plan as soon as possible, preferably within the first week following admission.

Inmates in the secure areas of Saskatchewan's correctional centres receive little or no case management, yet research on case management shows that program intervention is most effective with high-risk inmates. This inconsistency between theory and practice needs to be resolved. The needs of inmates in secure areas are discussed in "Segregation."

### RECOMMENDATION

+ Provide case management and programming to inmates in segregation.

On any given day, approximately 80% of the remand inmates in Saskatchewan's correctional centres have served or will be serving thirty or more days on remand status.

At present, with the exception of Pine Grove (Pine Grove does not differentiate between remand and sentenced inmates), time on the remand unit is usually idle time. Other than an hour or two of daily exercise, access to the chaplain and Elder, and occasional access to library books, there is no programming. Work is generally limited to one or two positions as the unit cleaner.

Since these inmates are on remand status, they are under no obligation to participate in any kind of programming. Even so, many if not all would benefit from programming. If programming were offered, some inmates would undoubtedly volunteer to address their needs, others would volunteer simply to ease the boredom, and some wouldn't be interested. Even if only some of the remand inmates benefited from their participation in programming, it would be an improvement on the current situation where none benefit.

<sup>5</sup> Saskatchewan Justice, Corrections Division, "Integrated Case Management Policy (Phase 2)", 3.



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### RECOMMENDATION

+ Offer case management and programming to remand inmates.

### Conclusion

Corrections' Integrated Case Management Initiative is progressive and ambitious. It is too early to tell how long it will be before the new system is operating optimally, and of course it is too early to calculate the benefits. Nevertheless, it promises to be a marked improvement over previous practices.

### COMMENDATION

+ For developing the Integrated Case Management Initiative to better meet the needs



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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Emphasize the need to complete an inmate's case plan as soon as possible, preferably within the first week following admission.
- + Provide case management and programming to inmates in segregation.
- + Offer case management and programming to remand inmates.

#### COMMENDATION

- + For developing the Integrated Case Management Initiative to better meet the needs of inmates and ultimately the community at large.