



SPECIAL REPORT

Inmate Services and  
Conditions of Custody in  
Saskatchewan  
Correctional Centres

October 2002

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A black and white photograph of a long, narrow prison hallway with metal bars on both sides, receding into the distance.

# Staff Training



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

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## Introduction

Corrections workers play an integral role in the delivery of services to remanded and sentenced inmates in Saskatchewan's four correctional centres.

As front line workers in daily contact with inmates, their performance plays a large role in the success or failure of the institution's rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. For this reason, expectations for correctional workers are high. They must be committed to Corrections' mission to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates and be willing to comport themselves professionally at all times.

Because of the key role corrections workers play in the delivery of services to inmates, we decided that a separate section addressing their initial and ongoing training was in order.

## Evolution of The Role of the Corrections Worker

Before discussing the present-day qualifications of a corrections worker, the reader may find it helpful to look at the role of a corrections worker in its historical context. The role of prison staff changed dramatically in the last half of the twentieth century.

Prior to the 1940s, prisons employed "guards." A guard's principal function was keeping close watch over inmates in order to prevent misconduct or escape. Guards were not required to possess any special skills other than being tough. They were often quick to resort to force because they had not been trained to use any other method of control. It was during this era that the press, movie companies and authors impressed on the public mind an image of a prison guard as a wall-walking, gun-toting, club-swinging boss, and unfortunately some guards tried to live up to that image.

When behaviourists introduced treatment and rehabilitation concepts to the prison systems, the guard mentality started to fall out of favour. The

new approach required hiring people who were intelligent, compassionate and understanding, as well as being willing and capable of supervising and interacting closely with inmates. With this new approach, Corrections entered the age of the correctional professional charged with the responsibility of reforming people.

Although the role of a corrections worker was changing, there was no formal training available to people interested in a career in corrections work; training was received on the job. In Saskatchewan, that changed in 1977 following the Prince Albert Correctional Centre riot and the resulting Moore Inquiry, which recommended significant changes to the recruitment and training of institutional personnel.

The Minister of the day accepted the recommendations of the report and ordered their implementation. The following is a summary of the recommendations directed at training and recruitment:

- + All institutional staff members were to be trained in First Aid,
- + All new staff were to be provided training prior to being deployed in an institution, and
- + Staff members were to be knowledgeable about inmate programming.

To implement these recommendations, Corrections developed a partnership with the School of Human Justice at the University of Regina and implemented a Central Training Coordinator position to develop and oversee the training of all new institutional recruits. The new program was called the Corrections Worker Training Program.

This program has evolved since it was first introduced, and is now offered by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences. Today, new corrections workers also have to undergo 6 weeks of in-service training at a correctional centre.

At about the same time that formal training was introduced, Corrections adopted the Living Unit Concept, which brought several significant



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changes for corrections workers. This new concept envisions a normalized living environment that is based on:

*...The objective of using the day-to-day routines and living environment to teach and reinforce to inmates the realities of non-incarceration living, to assist inmates in learning to successfully cope with personal care and group living responsibilities, and to minimize the impact of institutionalization. Hence, the inmate is responsible for following regular work routines, taking care of self and his personal living space, some meal preparation, wearing of own clothing, and successfully living in a residential-like group living situation."<sup>1</sup>*

knowledge, skills and personal attributes that must be brought to the job. The following is a summary of the Commission's profile.

Corrections Workers must:

- + Be knowledgeable about the criminal justice process, public health issues and risk factors, and human behaviour and counseling methodologies in an institutional environment;
- + Be knowledgeable about the different needs of male and female inmates, various cultural and spiritual belief systems, and the special needs of some inmates;
- + Possess good oral and written communication skills;
- + Be able to accurately assess the program needs of inmates and effectively and professionally intervene when conflict arises;



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In keeping with this new concept, both security and case management responsibilities were blended into the corrections workers' job description, with an increased emphasis on inmate counselling.

Presently, to be hired as a correctional worker, one must bring certain knowledge, skills and personal attributes to the job. Knowledge and skills are gained through life experience or formal training. Personal attributes are those enduring aspects of one's personality that tend to persist throughout one's life.

The Public Service Commission's Core Competency Profile for Institutional Corrections Workers provides a detailed description of the

- + Be able to work effectively with inmates in support of their reintegration and rehabilitation plans;
- + Understand how to follow policies and directives within the limits set by the Act and Regulations;
- + Be able to work with computerized data systems;
- + Possess a current first aid/CPR certificate, and be able to identify behaviours that are potentially dangerous to the safety and security of the institution; and
- + Be positive, trustworthy, mature, sensible, understanding and supportive.

<sup>1</sup> Terry Youngman, Saskatchewan Living Unit Review (July 1992).



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**Pre-Employment Training**

There are two routes a candidate for the position of correctional worker can take. Some will complete the 48-week Correctional Worker Training Program offered by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) before applying for a corrections worker position. Successful applicants who have chosen this route will still have to complete Corrections' on-site induction training (197.5 hours).

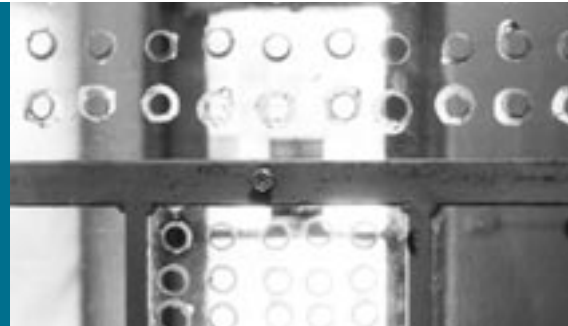
Successful applicants who have not taken the Corrections Worker Training Program are expected to complete the induction training and then obtain a corrections worker certificate of achievement from SIAST. The certificate of achievement requires completion of several

stance abuse, professional responsibilities and code of ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Classes for the certificate of achievement obtained after completion of the Induction Training Program are essentially an abridgement of many of the courses in the Correctional Worker Training Program.

The Induction Training Program, which is taught at the correctional centres, focuses on staff and inmate safety and institutional security, and familiarizes candidates with the front-line operation of a correctional centre. Instructors also explain how corrections workers are to incorporate Corrections' mission, values, guiding principles and objectives into their duties.

Of particular interest to the Ombudsman is the course material that addresses the applicability of the rule of law and the duty of fairness in correctional centres.



SIAST classes from the Corrections Worker Training Program and is to be completed during the probation period, which lasts roughly a year.

The Corrections Worker Training Program includes classes that address the following aspects of correctional worker responsibilities and duties: communication skills, first aid, prevention of the spread of communicable diseases, coping with workplace diversity, physical fitness, the justice system and corrections' role in the justice system, roles of provincial and federal corrections, prison cultures, young inmate issues, female inmate issues, aboriginal inmate issues, community-based justice, institutional security, inmate discipline, staff/inmate relations, sub-

Of particular interest to the Ombudsman is the course material that addresses the applicability of the rule of law and the duty of fairness in correctional centres. We discovered that nine of the twenty-five modules taught in Induction Training refer to the rule of law and duty of fairness, although these subjects receive the most attention in modules such as Inmate Rights, Discipline Procedures, Role of a Corrections Worker, and Mission, Goals and Principles. Four hours are allocated to the module on Inmate rights, which directly addresses the rule of law and the duty of fairness. Corrections has estimated that several days are spent indirectly addressing the rule of law and duty of fairness.

<sup>2</sup> The list is a summary of the detailed course outline published by SIAST.



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Of the eleven major areas of focus in the Corrections Worker Training Program, three are directly related to the rule of law and the duty of fairness, namely, The Rule of Law, The Duty to Act Fairly, and Inmate Rights and Responsibilities. Students spend five days of class time and another five days completing tests and assignments in these three areas. The knowledge gained in these areas is reinforced in the work for the other eight major areas.

Between the Corrections Working Training Program and the Induction Training, we believe the key points regarding the rule of law and the duty of fairness as they apply to corrections work are adequately covered.

### Post-employment training

As can be seen, applicants for the position of corrections worker must be highly qualified. Considering the nature of their work, this is as it should be. However, it is not enough to start with high qualifications. Knowledge and skills need to be continually upgraded if corrections workers are to competently do their part in meeting

Corrections' objectives. This is proving to be a challenge.

All employees presently employed in the correctional centres have completed the Induction Training Program, but not all employees have completed the Corrections Worker Training Program. As a result, there are varying degrees of understanding of the rule of law and duty of fairness.

Since at least 1998, Corrections has been addressing the need to bring all employees up to an acceptable level of understanding through activities such as workshops, refresher courses, and unit meetings.

Corrections' best estimate is that presently 75% of employees have an understanding of the rule of law and duty of fairness that meets standards, which it believes is a significant increase over prior years. The other 25% would benefit from additional training.

With regard to ongoing training, Corrections is falling short of its own objectives. Both the

Corrections Workers Training Program and the Induction Training Program provide a comprehensive and in-depth training on the role and responsibilities of a corrections worker. Corrections augments this with some ongoing training.

Since 1999, Corrections has been paying close attention to its training programs and prepares an annual analysis of its activities to determine if it is meeting its objectives. Corrections is still experiencing some difficulty getting full reports of staff training activity, and consequently, they believe that training activities appear to be fewer than they actually are. Despite this, the data is accurate enough to provide a reasonable indicator of progress.

For comparison, Corrections uses the training benchmarks established by the Conference Board of Canada

#### BENCHMARK COMPARISON-EXTERNAL

Benchmark	Conference Board Of Canada	Prov. Gov't	Corrections Division
% of staff participating in formal training	70.3%	N/A	72%
# of training days/employee	5 days	3 days	4.3 days
\$ invested/employee annually	\$543	\$170	(A) \$90.20 (B) \$858.47
total \$ invested as a % of salaries	1.6%	0.5%	(A) 0.18% (B) 1.31%

Note: (A) Using investment in learning costs only  
(B) Using both investment in learning costs PLUS costs of conducting training



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and the Provincial Government. The key benchmarks are the percentage of staff participating in formal learning, the number of training days per employee, the dollars invested in training annually per employee, and the total dollars invested as a percentage of total salary and wages.

Although Corrections data may be incomplete, the table on the previous page shows that Saskatchewan Corrections has a way to go to meet the benchmarks set by the Conference Board and the Provincial Government.

Presently, Corrections' training dollars are focused on what it refers to as technical/mandatory training, which includes courses such as CPR/first aid, fire training, case management training, suicide prevention, and occupational health and safety. Far less emphasis is placed on human relations skills such as effective listening, team building, and staff/inmate dynamics.

Given the importance Corrections places on dynamic security, this seems to be out of balance. On the other hand, Corrections does not have unlimited training dollars and is legally obligated to provide many of the courses not related to human relations skills.

Education and training need to be tested or reviewed from time to time to ensure that staff members' knowledge and skills continue to meet standards. Corrections conducts performance assessments on all new employees at five months and eleven months. If any problems are noted, the corrections worker and the supervisor prepare a plan for improvement.

The eleven-month assessment is the last one a new employee will receive, and after this, corrections workers do not receive any performance reviews. As a result, Corrections has no formal way of assessing its training needs, which it must do if it is to meet its objectives for inmates.

## Conclusion

In the last several years, Corrections has been placing an increasing emphasis on training generally and the rule of law and duty of fairness specifically. It has achieved significant progress, but there is still room for improvement before it meets the high standards that it has set for all its corrections workers.

To achieve those standards, we believe regular assessments and more ongoing training based on those results will have to be incorporated into its long-range plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Continue efforts to increase the percentage of corrections workers who meet the required standard for knowledge of the rule of law and duty of fairness.
- + Implement a process to determine individual corrections workers' training needs.
- + Take steps to ensure that training is available to meet identified ongoing training needs.



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