



Research Snippet

Pawsitive Directions Canine Program (PDCP): Nova Institution for Women

KEY WORDS: *Pawsitive Directions Canine Program (PDCP), Nova Institution for Women*

Impetus

In 1996, the Pawsitive Directions Canine Program (PDCP) was established at the Nova Institution for Women under the direction of program coordinator and trainer Heather A. Logan.

The PDCP is a canine-handler training program introducing women offenders to the basics of dog husbandry and training, relying on principles of operant conditioning and pet-facilitated therapy (PFT). Encompassing three phases, the program aims to: teach offenders' skills associated with canine care and training, promote ties with the community, foster responsibility and nurturing, make dogs available for adoption, and provide shelter for homeless dogs. Recognizing the inherent links between these activities and one's ability to address traditional criminogenic need areas, involvement in the program ultimately contributes to the safe reintegration of women offenders into the community by promoting a prosocial lifestyle. Exclusive to Nova Institution for Women, no other correctional program of its nature is currently being offered at any other correctional facility in Canada.

Nearly ten years have passed since Taylor & Blanchette's (2001) assessment of PDCP, prompting the current initiative to provide updated data on PDCP program outcomes.

What we did

Program information and outcomes were gathered from Nova Institution and an environmental scan of work pertaining to PDCP in Canada and internationally was conducted.

What we found

To date, 87 women have participated in the program, with 58 dogs trained and placed in the community. The dogs have been rescued from local animal shelters, and have been adopted to local families or trained as service dogs. In total, 32 service dogs are working in various capacities within the community including a senior's facility, for children with autism and cerebral palsy, and as a guide dog. Additionally, 25 women have found full or part time employment in the canine industry as a direct result of the experience, skills, and qualifications obtained by engaging in the PDCP.

Examples of employment outcomes include: veterinarian's assistant, dog trainer and walker, working in a dog daycare, and as a business owner.

PDCP has also gained international exposure in Paris, France (December 2005) as a program highlighted at the International Corrections Program Symposium. It has also been featured in "Dogs in Canada", "Dogs with Jobs", "Readers Digest" and in the recently published book, *More Great Dog Stories* by Roxanne Snopek. Television exposure has come from the "Fifth Estate" and "Live at Five".

As two participants in PDCP explain (Challinor, 2009, p. 19):

"...(the dog) is my buddy and we are meant to help each other. Without me, he would be dead. Without him, I would be lost and still headed down the wrong path. Eventually after I have trained him completely, he will go on to help someone else and knowing that I have played a major part in that is an exceptional feeling"

"I'm doing WOSAP, and that program teaches you to think about yourself and what you do whereas this program (Pawsitive Directions) makes you apply what you learned in WOSAP. It's great because the two programs are linked"

What it means

These outcomes highlight the significant contributions being made to reintegration efforts for these women offenders. They also provide support for the success of the women, the success of the program, and the success of established working relationship among the community, the staff and the women at Nova Institution.

References

- Challinor, L.A. (2009). *To study the educational and therapeutic benefits of using abandoned dogs in the rehabilitation of prisoners: USA, Canada*. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia: Churchill Fellowship Report 2009.
- Taylor, K., & Blanchette, K. (2001). *Results of an Evaluation of the Pawsitive Directions Canine Program at Nova Institution for Women*. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.

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For more information

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