



Research at a glance

Community-Based Sexual Offender Maintenance Treatment Programming: An Evaluation

KEY WORDS: *Sex offender treatment outcome, community treatment of sex offenders, Relapse Prevention outcome*

Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada applies evidence based practice in the treatment and supervision of sex offenders that aims to reduce criminal reoffending. Research on the effectiveness of various approaches to risk management is required to contribute to the understanding of the best strategies to managing this population.

What we did

The study describes two streams of community based sex offender relapse prevention (RP) maintenance programs offered in the Greater Toronto area and compares the recidivism rates of program participants to base rates and normative rates for sex offenders. The Traditional Maintenance group was offered by specialised CSC staff to lower risk sex offenders; the Structured Maintenance group included higher risk sex offenders and was contracted to specialists at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry (now called the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health), but included the participation of parole officers and CSC psychologists. Offenders who participated in the programs between 1993 and 2005 were followed for an average of 6.75 years.

Recidivism was defined as a charge or conviction for a new offense following release. All charges, including those that did not ultimately result in conviction, were counted as a reoffense. Only official documentation was utilized; in most cases, this information came from CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre, a national database of offense histories). Recidivism data were cumulative, i.e., all *sexual* reoffenses were also part of *violent* reoffenses, which were then counted as part of *general* reoffenses.

What we found

Participants in the two RP Maintenance Programs had a combined rate of sexual recidivism of 6.18%. This rate compares favourably to the base rate

established through meta-analytical research that shows sexual offenders in general (regardless of treatment status and all risk levels confounded) have sexual recidivism rates of 13 to 14% for a 5 to 6 years follow-up. Both streams of the RP Maintenance Program demonstrated lower levels of reoffending than would be expected given actuarial projections. The Traditional Maintenance group had a 64% lower rate of sexual recidivism than the normative sample (3.2% actual recidivism vs. 9% for the normative sample). The Structured Maintenance group had a 50% reduction in recidivism (13.13% vs. 26% for the normative group). About 37% were returned to custody for technical violations and deteriorating behaviour at some point during supervision.

What it means

Overall, the results add to the body of evidence supporting community-based maintenance programs that adhere to best practice models which include informed supervision and skills-based relapse prevention counselling.

For more information

Wilson, R., Cortoni, F., Picheca, J., Stirpe, T., & Nunes, K., *Community-Based Sexual Offender Maintenance Treatment Programming: An Evaluation*. Research Report R-188, Ottawa: Correctional Service Canada.

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