



Research at a glance

Visitation and Post-Release Outcome Among Federally-Sentenced Offenders

KEY WORDS: *visitation, private family visits, recidivism*

Why we did this study

Few studies examine the effects of visitation on re-offending. Altogether, the limited research conducted to date has demonstrated positive relationships between offenders' participation in visitation programs and greater family stability, improved institutional behaviours, and lower rates of recidivism.

To date there has been no Canadian investigation of whether general institutional visits and private family visits succeed in their goal of encouraging inmates to develop and maintain family and community ties, ultimately assisting them to become law-abiding citizens.

What we did

In order to address these gaps in the literature, we examined the association between both general visits and private family visits and re-offence rates in a large sample of Canadian Federal offenders. Data from the Correctional Service of Canada's automated offender data system were used to investigate this association. Analyses involved all offenders released in fiscal year 2005-06 for whom all relevant data were available ($N=6,537$). Using these data, a series of logistic regressions and Cox regressions were conducted.

What we found

The results demonstrated a positive association between receiving visits and lower likelihoods of readmission, after accounting for the influence of ethnicity, gender, age at release, sentence type, offence type, and assessed risk. Analyses based on the number of visits received revealed that offenders who received 6.7 visits (the average among offenders who received visits) had odds of readmission approximately 14% lower than their counterparts who did not receive visits. Similarly, offenders who participated in 2.0 private family visits (the average among those with PFVs) had odds of readmission about 22% lower than those who did not participate.

Characteristics of the visits were also found to be associated with readmission, with more recent visits and private family visits, visits from parents and children, and private family visits with spouses all associated with a decreased likelihood of readmission.

Finally, participation was much more consistently associated with readmission generally than with re-offending and indeed, in most analyses, participants in visitation was *not* associated with re-offending. Receiving visits from a spouse was the exception, with offenders receiving such visits having lower odds of re-offending than their counterparts who did not receive such visits. This pattern suggests that the impact of visitation may be primarily apparent in readmission for reasons such as breach of conditions.

What it means

Visited offenders, relative to non-visited offenders, were less likely to be re-admitted; therefore, visited offenders had more successful outcomes upon release. Knowledge of this link reinforces the value of correctional visitation programs as a potential tool in managing risk of readmission.

For more information

Derkzen, D., Gobeil, R., & Gileno, J. (2009). *Visitation and Post-Release Outcome Among Federally-Sentenced Offenders*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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