



Research in Brief

Participant Feedback on the Effectiveness of Women Offender Correctional Programs

Participants provide positive feedback and identify areas for improvement in women's correctional programming.

Why we did this study

In 2010, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) implemented a comprehensive model of women offender correctional programming (WOCP). The gender-informed model was conceived as a continuum. It provides a series of program components from admission (Engagement, Moderate and High intensity programs) to community release (Self-Management program), depending on a women's level of risk and identified needs. The goal was to enhance program accessibility and participation, while facilitating successful treatment gains and offender reintegration.

Accordingly, CSC conducted a comprehensive study to examine the effectiveness of WOCP components. The current review summarizes participant feedback for all elements of the WOCP model.

What we did

All women who participated in one or more programs in the WOCP continuum between 2010 and 2014 were asked to provide feedback at the end of each program. They were asked to rate certain aspects of the programs and provide qualitative feedback. A total of 1,463 feedback forms were collected and analyzed for overall ratings and key themes in participant responses.

What we found

The majority of participant ratings were positive, especially in regards to the evaluation of the program facilitators. Women perceived the facilitators as being very responsive to individual needs and goals (85%), while demonstrating genuine concern (82%). Participants also indicated they were very confident in their facilitators' abilities to help them meet their program goals (83%).

Over 60% of ratings indicated that the groups worked well together to achieve program goals. A portion of participants, however, found that talking in a larger group format was uncomfortable (22%). The remaining 78% were at least somewhat comfortable

with sharing in a group setting. Overall, 80% of the ratings indicated that participants perceived the program as being successful in helping them identify the changes they needed to make.

Qualitative responses indicated that the programs assisted women in learning how to identify and cope with their problematic behaviours. Additionally, they found the sessions regarding effective goal setting helpful. Responses also showed that women perceived a need for more programming in a similar format in the community to help in their reintegration.

Consistent with participant ratings, some comments indicated that women felt more comfortable while working in smaller groups. Several also suggested offering different group compositions based on the range of education levels and learning abilities among the women. As for feedback on content and materials, recurring themes suggested there was too much repetition across programs. They also noted a lack of organization and clarity with the session materials (e.g., typos, unclear instructions).

What it means

Ratings and feedback showed that most participants in the WOCP components found the programs to be beneficial. Potential areas for improvement included better group composition (e.g., smaller groups, matched learning abilities), reduced repetition in program content, and better material organization. Finally, there were also recommendations for providing more programming in the community to maintain program skills and assist in reintegration.

For more information

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