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RESEARCH REPORT

An Assessment of the Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP)

2017 N° R-385

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An Assessment of the Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP)

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Executive Summary

Key words: *women-centred training, correctional staff training, prison staff training, effective correctional training, correctional officer training*

The Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Women Offender Sector (WOS) delivers the Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP) to all Primary Workers/Older Sisters (CX-02 deployments, recruits, or promotions) and all Behavioural Counsellors who will be working in women offender institutions. The objective of the WCTOP is to provide staff who work with women offenders an understanding of what it means to be women-centred with women and gain knowledge on the specific needs of women offenders. More specifically, the goals of the training program are to equip staff with an understanding of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices*, the policies and procedures related to working with women, and the ability to set boundaries and recognize the balance between safety and security and the empowerment and reintegration of women offenders.

Although WCTOP is considered to provide valuable information to staff on the specific needs of women offenders, the effectiveness and perceived benefit of the training has yet to be assessed. Accordingly, the current project was an assessment of the 10-day WCTOP. Using participant and facilitator feedback on training, pre- and post-training knowledge questionnaires, and a follow-up knowledge retention and application survey, the current study assessed the training implementation and effectiveness.

With respect to knowledge presentation, facilitators and participants found the way in which the training was presented to be effective. Facilitators found the role play exercises to be of particular value, while the participants found effective communication, the women-centred approach, and Aboriginal cultural awareness to be of most value. Areas for possible improvement included organization of content and pertinent/useful materials. Participants considered the session on 'Aboriginal culture awareness' to be the most useful, while the session on 'Personal and team issues' was considered to be the least useful. In terms of knowledge retention, participants' average scores on the knowledge assessment questionnaire increased from 63% to 79% pre- to immediately and 8-months post-training.

Survey results completed by 31 staff members at 8-months post-training found that the majority considered the WCTOP training to be at least "moderately helpful" in completing their job duties working with women offenders. In terms of knowledge application, the training sessions most applied by staff were 'empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices as well as respect and dignity', 'health, self-injury, and suicide', 'conflict theory and communication skills', and 'supportive environment and shared responsibility'.

As a whole, WCTOP has met its objectives of increasing knowledge and awareness of the policies and procedures that govern women offenders. In addition, participants demonstrated an understanding of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices*.

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Introduction

In Canada, federally-sentenced women offenders comprise a small and unique subset of the total federal offender population. Although only 5-6% of the federally incarcerated population are women, in the last ten years, the number of women admitted to federal jurisdiction has increased nearly 39% from 236 (2004-05) to 327 (2013-14). At the end of fiscal year 2013-14, there were 631 women incarcerated within Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) facilities and 484 women on active community supervision (Public Safety Canada, 2014).

Women offenders are a unique population, and correctional policies, programs and practices respect their differences and are responsive to their needs. CSC is mandated by the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) to address offenders' needs and assist in their successful reintegration through the provision of effective correctional programming. The CCRA also requires correctional programs to respect gender, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic differences, and it specifically outlines that CSC is to provide programs designed to meet the needs of women offenders. Consequently, five regional facilities and one Aboriginal Healing Lodge were designed to specifically meet the needs of federal women offenders in Canada. There are five principles which guide the development and delivery of interventions and services for women federal offenders in Canada: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environments, and shared responsibility (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1990). These principles were developed from a task force on federally-sentenced women in 1990. Since its inception, *Creating Choices* has remained the correctional philosophy for women offenders, encouraging a holistic approach to dealing with the specific needs of women. These principles in combination with the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity form the basis of correctional operations and programming for women offenders.

With respect to staff training, CSC's Women Offender Sector (WOS) is the unit responsible for developing, implementing, and/or collaborating with other sectors who are responsible for specialized training for staff who work directly with women offenders. The specific training required varies depending on an individual's previous experience and current role. All Primary Workers/Older Sisters (CX-02 deployments, recruits, or promotions) and all Behavioural Counsellors who are going to work in a women offender institution are required to complete a 10-day Women-Centred Orientation Program (WCTOP). It should be noted that all

recruits must participate in CTP, but only those designated to work in women offender institutions complete WCTOP. In addition to this 10-day program, there are three additional women-centered training programs available. Participating in these programs varies by position held and previous training exposure. These programs include: 1) the Abridged Program (3 days)¹ 2) the Women-Centred Training One-Day Overview² and 3) Women Centred Refresher (1-day)³. Participation in these programs varies by position and previous training exposure. Of relevance to the current study is the effectiveness of the 10-day WCTOP.

Training Program Profile

The primary objective of WCTOP is to provide staff who work with women offenders an understanding of what it means to work in a women-centred environment and gain knowledge on the specific needs of women offenders. More specifically, the goals of the training program are to equip staff with an understanding of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices*, the policies and procedures related to working with women, and the ability to set boundaries and recognize the balance between safety and security and the empowerment and reintegration of women offenders. The WCTOP examined at the time of this research study was a 10-day course which covered 15 sessions and concluded with a final exam. A list of all sessions is provided in Table 1. Although not included in Table 1, pre-training reading material is required as part of the 10 day WCTOP. The material provides an overview of the role of the Women Offender Sector, women offender institutions, and a profile of women offenders.

¹ The Abridged Program Target Group includes Programs Officers (Correctional/Aboriginal/Social), Parole Officers, Parole Officer Supervisors, Teachers, Nurses, Managers – Assessment and Interventions, Managers – Intensive Intervention Strategy, and Correctional Managers working in women offender institutions or women supervision units. This includes Parole officers dedicated to the supervision of women offenders not belonging to a women supervision unit.

² One Day Overview target group includes Wardens/Kikawinaws*, Deputy Wardens/Assistant Kikawinaws*, Assistant Wardens, and Area Directors working in women offender institutions or women supervision units.

*Kikawinaw is a term used for a Warden employed at a healing lodge.

³ One-day refresher is only required for those who have already completed WCTOP or the Abridged Program but is not required for those who have only completed the one-day overview. It is intended as a review of the material for continuous development offered every three years.

Table 1

List of 10-Day WCTOP Sessions

Day	Session
1	Session 1: Introduction to WCTOP
2	Session 2: Empowerment & Meaningful & Responsible Choices
3	Session 3: Respect & Dignity
4	Session 4: Substance Abuse Session 5: Groups with Special Needs
5	Session 6: Aboriginal Culture Awareness
6	Session 7: Mental Health
7	Session 8: Self-injury & Suicide Session 9: Child Abuse
8	Session 10: Trauma Session 11: Conflict Theory & Communication Skills Study Session
9	Session 12: Surviving Family Violence Session 13: Supportive Environment
10	Session 14: Shared Responsibility Session 15: Personal & Team Issues WCTOP Exam

The Present Study

Although the WCTOP training is considered to provide valuable information to staff on the specific needs of women offenders, the effectiveness and perceived benefit of such training has yet to be assessed. Accordingly, the current project was an assessment of the 10-day WCTOP.

Using participant and facilitator feedback on training, pre- and post-training knowledge questionnaires, and follow-up knowledge retention and application survey, the study assessed the training implementation and effectiveness by focusing on four key knowledge targets: (1) *knowledge presentation* (i.e., training content and delivery); (2) *knowledge acquisition*; (3) *knowledge retention*; and (4) *knowledge application*. More specifically, the following research questions were assessed:

- Is the training program organized in such a way that the format facilitates staff learning and the session objectives are being met? (i.e., *knowledge presentation*);
- Is WCTOP effective in improving staff baseline knowledge of the women-centred approach? (i.e., *knowledge acquisition*); and

- Is WCTOP effective in equipping staff with necessary information and preparing them for working with women offenders? (i.e., *knowledge retention & application*).

Method

Participants

Participants included staff members who participated in the 10-day training program and WCTOP facilitators who administered a training session between October 2013 and March 2015.

Procedure & Materials

Research Branch staff members worked closely with WOS to develop, distribute, and collect all data for the present study.

Pre-training

Prior to the initial training session, staff members participating in the training filled out a consent/demographic form and a knowledge assessment questionnaire. The consent/demographic form included consent to participate in the current research study, as well as questions for descriptive purposes (i.e., age, gender, highest level of education completed) and questions regarding participants' previous experience working in a correctional setting. The knowledge assessment questionnaire contained 13 questions regarding corrections and women offender information in order to assess staff members' already existing knowledge on these topics prior to receiving the training program. The questionnaire can be scored for a total of 32 points. This questionnaire (included the correct responses bolded) is provided in Appendix A. Pre-training data (i.e., consent/demographic and knowledge assessment) was obtained for 99 staff members who began the training.

Immediately Post-training

Following delivery of all the training sessions, staff member participants were asked to complete the same knowledge assessment questionnaire administered pre-training. This was done to assess post-training *knowledge acquisition*. Staff participants were also asked to complete a participant feedback questionnaire that asked questions regarding training facilitation (i.e., strengths and weaknesses, effective and non-effective aspects). Similarly, facilitators were asked to complete a facilitator feedback questionnaire that asked questions about training content, presentation, and overall experience in delivering the training program. The facilitator feedback questionnaire included only open-ended responses, whereas the participant feedback

questionnaire included a combination of closed (e.g., Likert-scale) and open-ended responses. These feedback forms were done to assess the *knowledge presentation* of the WCTOP.

Immediate post-training knowledge assessment questionnaire data was obtained for 98 of the 99 staff members who completed the pre-training knowledge assessment questionnaire (i.e., 99%). Feedback regarding the training program was received from 101 staff members⁴ who completed the participant feedback questionnaire and 15 facilitators who completed the facilitator feedback questionnaire.

All assessments administered during the training period were mailed to Research Branch staff by the WCTOP facilitator.

Post-training 8 month follow-up

At 8-months post-training, all staff member participants were sent an online questionnaire (developed and administered via SNAP software). This questionnaire was designed to assess *knowledge retention*, and, therefore, included the same questions asked in the knowledge assessment questionnaire delivered pre- and immediately post-training. It was also designed to assess staff members' application of the training while working with women offenders (i.e., *knowledge application*), and, therefore, included additional closed and open-ended questions that asked about the impact that WCTOP has had on their abilities to work with women offenders. This questionnaire is presented in Appendix C.

A total of 31 staff members completed the 8-month post-training questionnaire. Thus, there was a 31% (31/99) follow-up response rate.⁵ Of those who responded to the follow-up questionnaire, 19% were male and 81% were female. The age group of respondents was as follows: 20-25 – 13%; 26-35 – 45%; 36-45 – 23%; 45-55 – 19%. Respondents' current region of work was as follows: Pacific – 19%; Prairies – 35%; Ontario – 16%; Atlantic – 29%. In terms of current position staff identified themselves as the following: 71% were Primary Workers, 12% were CX2s⁶, 10% were Behavioural Counsellors, and 6% were in other positions. A total of 23%

⁴ Sample sizes vary slightly between pre- assessment and post- program assessment given a number of absences from the initial pre-assessment and because of logistical issues with the forms for the pre-assessment (i.e., forms were not available for the one of the pre-assessment sessions).

⁵ It should be noted that in order to complete the questionnaire, staff members had to indicate that they have worked as a CSC employee with women offenders since their completion of WCTOP.

⁶ Note: CX2 and Primary Workers reflect the same position and level of responsibility in women offender institutions; however, results reflected the response provided by participants. It is unknown how many of the participants were CX2s who were deployed into a women's institution as a Primary worker.

of respondents indicated that they were deployed into their current position from a men's correctional institution. On average, respondents stated they had been working with women offenders for 7.6 months ($SD = 3.2$) since the completion of WCTOP.

Analyses

Knowledge presentation

The knowledge target area of *knowledge presentation* (i.e., training content and delivery) was assessed using the facilitator and participant feedback. Since the facilitator feedback questionnaire included only open-ended responses, qualitative data analysis was used to summarize facilitator feedback. For the participant feedback questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the closed-ended responses and qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the open-ended responses.

Knowledge acquisition & retention

The knowledge target areas of *knowledge acquisition and retention* were assessed using the knowledge assessment questionnaire that was delivered at three different time points (i.e., pre-training, immediate post-training, and 8-months post-training). Descriptive statistics were used to compare participants' performance scores at the different time points.

Knowledge application

The knowledge target area of knowledge application was assessed using the post-training 8-month follow-up questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the closed-ended responses and qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the open-ended responses. Open-ended questions were qualitatively themed based on the most common responses. Frequencies and percentages were based on the total number of people who provided a qualitative response to the question. As a result, totals do not add to 100% as one person could have multiple themes for a single question. Furthermore, a theme was only developed if it was noted by 3 or more people.

Results

Knowledge Presentation

Facilitator feedback

WCTOP facilitators were invited to complete a feedback questionnaire that asked questions about training content, presentation, and overall experience in delivering the training program. When asked which examples or exercises were most effective during the training, respondents indicated role play exercises (especially with regard to conflict resolution; $n = 9/15$), the mental health session and/or exercises ($n = 4/15$), group discussions ($n = 4/15$), the goal setting SMART principle ($n = 3/15$), guest speakers ($n = 3/15$), the videos ($n = 3/15$), and real world examples ($n = 2$). When asked which examples or exercises were the least effective during the training the most common theme was that the videos need to be updated ($n = 4/14$). A couple of individuals also indicated that the mother/child program is difficult to speak to as, at the time of this program, there were no participants in the mother/child program at the site in which they were based ($n = 2/14$). Other comments included that there could be changes to some terminology, that the exam should be at the very end of all sessions, and that there could be more interaction incorporated into some sessions. In terms of improvements that could be made to the training program, the most common recommendations were that the videos need to be updated ($n = 4/15$) and that more role playing could be added ($n = 3/15$).

Participant feedback

At the end of the WCTOP training, participants were also asked to complete a feedback questionnaire in order to help identify strengths and weaknesses of the program. Regarding pre-session materials, 92% ($n = 93/101$) of participants indicated that they were able to read the pre-session materials that had been provided. Table 2 shows the estimated amount of readings that were completed by participants, as well as the number of hours spent reading. Overall, it appears that the majority of participants were able to complete at least three-quarters of the pre-readings. The estimated number of hours spent reading varied substantially, with the bulk of participants taking less than 20 hours to complete the pre-readings.

Table 2

Estimated Amount of Readings Completed and Number of Hours Spent Reading by Participants

Estimated Amount of Readings Completed	<i>n</i> = 92 % (<i>n</i>)	Estimated Number of Hours Spent Reading	<i>n</i> = 93 % (<i>n</i>)
0% - 25%	-	0 to 5	14 (13)
26% - 50%	7 (6)	6 to 10	27 (25)
51% - 75%	24 (22)	11 to 15	27 (25)
76% - 100%	70 (64)	16-20	18 (17)
		21-25	6 (6)
		25+	8 (7)

When asked about the amount of time spent in training, the majority of participants indicated that it was ‘just right’ (72%, $n = 73/101$), while 22% indicated that it was ‘too long’ ($n = 22/101$) and only 6% indicated that it was ‘too short’ ($n = 6/101$). Participants were also asked the extent to which they agreed with several questions regarding the success of the training (see Table 3). Overall, participants appeared to agree that that training was successful. For instance, over three-quarters strongly agreed that the trainers were organized with good instruction, and that they were knowledgeable with useful feedback. Approximately three-quarters of participants also strongly agreed that the training met their expectations, that there was a good balance of group participation, instruction, and discussion, and that the training was successful in helping to understand women offender issues. Other areas that saw at least 60% of respondents indicating ‘strongly agree’ were clear objectives, helpful exercises and activities, opportunities to develop skills and obtain constructive feedback, and success in helping to understand one’s role at CSC and how to work with women offenders. Two areas that only half of respondents strongly agreed with were that the content was organized and easy to follow, and that the materials distributed were pertinent and useful.

Table 3*Frequency of Participant Agreement with Statements Regarding Success of Training*

	<i>N</i> = 101				
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
The trainers were organized and the quality of instruction was good.	2 (2)	-	2 (2)	17 (17)	79 (80)
The trainers were knowledgeable and offered useful feedback.	1 (1)	-	-	14 (14)	85 (86)
The training met my expectations.	1 (1)	-	11 (11)	18 (18)	70 (71)
The training objectives for each session were clearly identified and followed.	1 (1)	-	5 (5)	33 (33)	61 (62)
The content was organized and easy to follow.	1 (1)	-	6 (6)	39 (39)	54 (55)
The materials distributed were pertinent and useful.	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	45 (45)	50 (50)
The exercises and activities (e.g., group discussions) helped in learning the material.	1 (1)	1 (1)	7 (7)	27 (27)	64 (65)
There was a good balance of group participation, instruction, and discussion.	2 (2)	1 (1)	7 (7)	13 (13)	77 (78)
The training provided sufficient opportunities to develop skills and obtain constructive feedback from peers and facilitators.	1 (1)	-	4 (4)	31 (31)	64 (65)
Overall, the training was successful in helping me to understand women offender issues.	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (3)	23 (23)	72 (72)
Overall, the training was successful in helping me to understand my role at CSC and how to work with women offenders.	1 (1)	-	5 (5)	29 (29)	65 (64)

Participants were also asked to indicate which sessions were the most useful during the training, and these responses are presented in Table 4. It appears that the session on ‘Aboriginal culture awareness’ was considered to be the most useful session, with over three-quarters of participants indicating its usefulness (77%, $n = 78/101$). In contrast, the session on ‘Personal and team issues’ was considered by the participants to be the least useful (29%, $n = 29/101$).

Table 4

Sessions that the Participants Considered Most Useful During Training

Session	<i>N</i> = 101
	% (<i>n</i>)
Session 6: Aboriginal Culture Awareness	77 (78)
Session 8: Self-Injury & Suicide	61 (62)
Session 2: Empowerment & Meaningful & Responsible Choices	59 (60)
Session 7: Mental Health	58 (59)
Session 10: Trauma	53 (54)
Session 5: Groups with Special Needs	51 (51)
Session 9: Child Abuse	51 (51)
Session 12: Surviving Family Violence	50 (50)
Session 4: Substance Abuse	47 (47)
Session 3: Respect & Dignity	44 (44)
Session 13: Supportive Environment	42 (42)
Session 11: Conflict Theory & Communication Skills	39 (39)
Session 14: Shared Responsibility	37 (37)
Session 1: Introduction to WCTOP	32 (32)
Session 15: Personal and Team Issues	29 (29)

Participants were also asked to state which concepts from the training program were the most valuable/important for their role at CSC. A total of 78 participants provided qualitative responses, the most common of which were: effective communication ($n = 17$), the women-centred approach ($n = 17$), Aboriginal culture awareness ($n = 15$), trauma ($n = 11$), mental health ($n = 11$), self-injury and suicide ($n = 11$), and understanding pathways to crime (e.g., background, abuse history; $n = 10$).

As can be seen in Table 5, the large majority of participants found the WCTOP training to be clear and the concepts relevant/important for their role at CSC. A total of 64 participants provided additional (qualitative) comments regarding the training program. The most common responses were those that praised the training instructors for being knowledgeable and helpful ($n = 21$). In terms of recommendations, several of the participants suggested that the materials need updating ($n = 12$; e.g., the videos are out-of-date, the content should more appropriately reflect CSC's current population, some terminology/subject matter should be changed). Furthermore, some participants found the training to be too long ($n = 5$), while others found it to be too short and/or recommended that some sessions could be expanded ($n = 3$). Finally, a few individuals recommended that the exam approach be improved (e.g., having a pre-test review, having several

tests as opposed to a large one because of the large quantity of information learned, and avoiding confusing questions such as those that involve matching; $n = 5$).

Table 5

Frequency of Participant Responses Regarding Concepts Not Clear or Covered in Training

	<i>N</i> = 100	
	Yes	No
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Were there certain concepts that were not clear in the training program?	7 (7)	93 (93)
Were there certain concepts that would be relevant/important for your role at CSC that were not covered in the training program?	10 (10)	90 (90)

Participant Knowledge Acquisition & Retention

Participants were given the knowledge assessment questionnaire at three time points: prior to training, immediately post-training, and 8-months post-training. The questionnaire was scored out of a possible 32 points, and the average scores for the participants at the three time points are presented in Figure 1. The participants' average score on the assessment was found to increase from 62.7% to 78.6% pre- to immediately post-training. At 8-months post-training, the average scored remained at 78.5%. It should be noted that only 29 participants completed the knowledge assessment questionnaire at this follow-up time point.

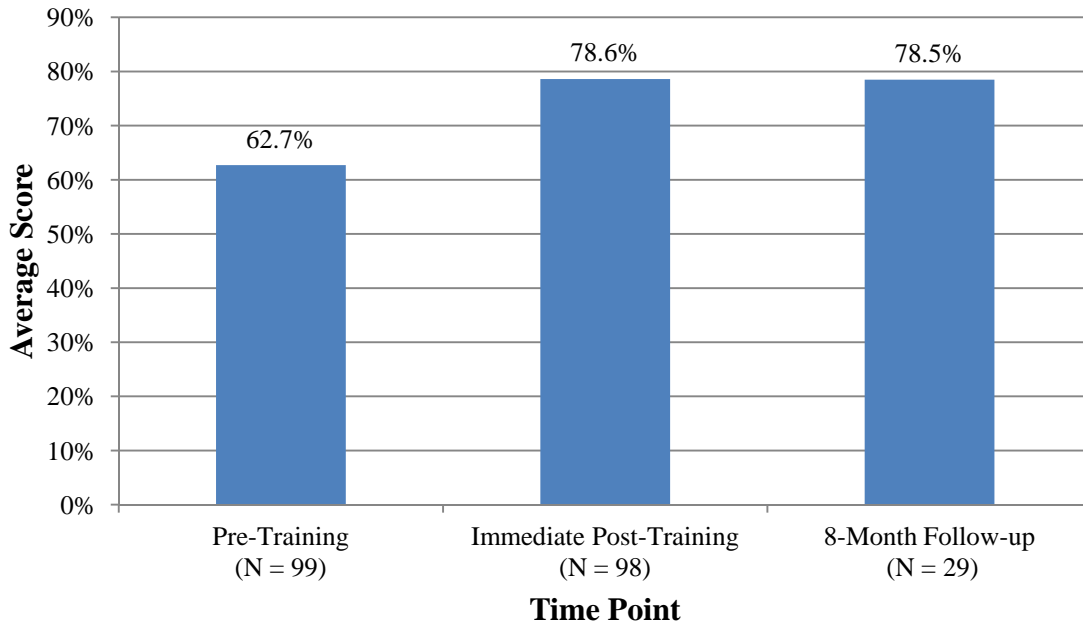


Figure 1. Average Knowledge Assessment Scores at Three Time Points

The frequency of response options chosen by the participants for the individual questions of the knowledge assessment questionnaire at the three different time points can be seen in Appendix B. This was done to demonstrate participants' understanding of the various questions and to assess whether some questions had more variability in the number of correct responses than others. Some interesting trends emerged in terms of participants' responses.

For instance, participants appeared to have difficulty with some of the open-ended and fill-in-the-blank questions, including naming the 5 principles of *Creating Choices* (Q.2), identifying the best *Creating Choices* principle based on a description (Q.3), and the questions with statements regarding core correctional principles (Q.5). With regard to the multiple choice questions, participants demonstrated greater variability in their response options for some questions more than others. These included: the question on which was not one of the reasons why it is important to offer different programming for Aboriginal women offenders (Q.7); the question on which statements is not a good reason why a mental health strategy should be developed differently for men and women offenders (Q.8); and the question on which was a reason for non-suicidal self-injury (Q.10). For the true or false questions, participants appeared to

have more difficulty with the statements ‘schizophrenia is the most common type of psychosis’ and ‘psychosis cannot be passed on genetically’. In correctly identifying stages of trauma, participants appeared to have greater difficulty with ‘release self-blame related to the trauma’, increase trust in others where appropriate, withhold trust where not appropriate’, and understand victimization and transform this to empowerment’. Finally, in being able to correctly identify situations of direct vs. indirect bullying, participants had greater difficulty with ‘blaming someone for something that they have not done’, ‘intimidation’, and ‘trying to make someone look bad in front of others’.

Participate Knowledge Application

At the 8-month post-training follow-up, staff participants were also asked several questions regarding the impact that the training has had on their ability to work with women offenders since having completed the WCTOP.

As can be seen in Table 6, 42% of the participants considered the 10-day training program to be “very helpful” in completing their job duties, while 19% considered it to be “extremely helpful”. Although these two categories comprised the largest proportion of responses, it is interesting to note that almost a quarter of the staff participants responded that the training was only “somewhat helpful”.

Table 6

Frequency of Responses to Question Regarding Helpfulness of WCTOP in Working with Women Offenders

How helpful has the 10-day training program been for completing your job duties in your current employment working with women offenders? (N = 31)				
Not Helpful at All	Somewhat Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very Helpful	Extremely Helpful
% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
3 (1)	23 (7)	13 (4)	42 (13)	19 (6)

The frequencies of responses to the closed-ended questions regarding participants’ application of training sessions in working with women offenders are presented in Table 7. The training sessions which appear to have garnered the greatest amount of application by staff were the sessions on ‘empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices as well as respect and

dignity’, ‘health, self-injury, and suicide’, ‘conflict theory and communication skills’, and ‘supportive environment and shared responsibility’. In contrast, sessions on ‘substance abuse’, ‘groups with special needs’, and ‘child abuse, trauma, and surviving family violence’ were applied less often. Interestingly, the degree of application of the session on ‘personal and team issues’ was quite varied across all response options.

Table 7

Frequencies of Responses to Questions Regarding the Application of Training Session(s) in Working with Women Offenders

How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session(s) on _____ during your employment working with women offenders?	N = 31				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Empowerment, meaningful & responsible choices as well as respect and dignity	3 (1)	6 (2)	23 (7)	52 (16)	16 (5)
Substance abuse	10 (3)	16 (5)	48 (15)	23 (7)	3 (1)
Groups with special needs (e.g., older offenders, pregnant offenders, women serving life and long-term sentences)	7 (2)	10 (3)	50 (15)	23 (7)	10 (3)
Aboriginal cultural awareness	6 (2)	13 (4)	29 (9)	35 (11)	16 (5)
Health, self-injury, and suicide	10 (3)	3 (1)	27 (8)	50 (15)	10 (3)
Child abuse, trauma, and surviving family violence	26 (8)	23 (7)	32 (10)	16 (5)	3 (1)
Conflict theory and communications skills	6 (2)	3 (1)	10 (3)	39 (12)	42 (13)
Supportive environment and shared responsibility	3 (1)	10 (3)	13 (4)	52 (16)	23 (7)
Personal and team issues	10 (3)	16 (5)	26 (8)	16 (5)	32 (10)

Staff participants were also asked to provide concrete examples of having applied the knowledge they acquired in the WCTOP training sessions. These open-ended responses were qualitatively coded, and frequencies were based on the number of participants who responded to a particular question. The frequencies of these qualitative themes are provided in Table 8.

Table 8

Frequencies of Qualitative Themes of Staff Participants' Concrete Examples

Session	Themes	% (n)
Empowerment, meaningful & responsible choices, respect and dignity (N = 23)	When empowering the women to make their own choices and take responsibility for their choices and actions.	65 (15)
	When communicating with the women (be encouraging, offer insight, have discussions, brainstorm solutions).	48 (11)
	In treating the women with respect.	26 (6)
Substance abuse (N = 17)	Has helped to have a better understanding of substance abuse and its effects on the women's lives.	35 (6)
	When discussing substance abuse problems with the women.	35 (6)
	In helping identify when an offender is under the influence or acting differently.	29 (5)
Special needs (N = 30)	Has helped with being aware of and sensitive to different needs.	30 (6)
	In talking/discussing (especially options for pregnant women).	20 (4)
	Use when practicing dynamic security.	15 (3)
Aboriginal cultural awareness (N = 31)	It is important to be culturally aware/sensitive/respectful of customs (e.g., especially when searching cells).	67 (14)
	Understanding their background and needs helps with interactions.	24 (5)
Mental health, self-injury, and suicide (N = 30)	When understanding what's normal for a woman/her triggers.	28 (5)
	In dealing with/responding to instances where an offender has self-harmed.	28 (5)
	Having a better understanding of mental health issues that may affect the offenders.	28 (5)
Child abuse, trauma, and surviving family violence (N = 31)	In being respectful of offenders (e.g., boundaries, being sensitive).	33 (4)
	Understanding/discussing/connecting past experiences/trauma.	25 (3)
Conflict theory and communication skills (N = 31)	Daily interaction with the women requires such skills.	53 (10)
	In helping to sort out conflicts/de-escalate situations using communication.	53 (10)
Supportive environment and shared responsibility (N = 31)	When providing support / positive communication.	55 (11)
	In encouraging offenders to take responsibility for their behaviours/actions (i.e., shared responsibility).	50 (10)
Personal and team issues (N = 31)	During interactions with coworkers/team.	50 (7)

When asked whether there was something that the WCTOP training did not address that has been an issue in their employment working with women offenders, the majority of respondents stated 'no' (77%, $n = 24/31$). When asked whether they have referred back to their training materials (e.g., readings, handbook, and handouts), responses were split with approximately half stating 'yes' (48%, $n = 15/31$), and half stating 'no' (52%, $n = 16/31$). Finally, staff participants were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the training program in general and/or the impact the training has had on their subsequent employment. Just over half of respondents indicated that they found the training informative/comprehensive/useful with great trainers (53%, $n = 8/15$). Other responses included that it has helped provide a different perspective in working with women offenders (27%, $n = 4$), and that it is a good basis or refresher for working with women offenders (20%, $n = 3$).

Discussion

The National Training Standard (NTS) implemented by CSC represents the fundamental learning and development requirements an employee must complete in order to perform certain aspects of their role and responsibility (CSC, 2015). In line with the NTS and as part of the core CTP, all new recruits who will be working with women offenders are required to complete the 10-day WCTOP. The objective of WCTOP is to provide staff who work with women offenders an understanding of what a women-centred approach means and gain knowledge on the specific needs of women offenders. Moreover, to equip staff with an understanding of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices*, the policies and procedures related to working with women, and the ability to set boundaries and recognize the balance between safety and security and the empowerment and reintegration of women offenders. The purpose of the current study was to examine the effectiveness and perceived benefit of the 10-day WCTOP.

Participant and facilitator feedback on training were collected as well as pre- and post-training knowledge questionnaires. A strength of this methodology was the inclusion of a follow-up survey that assessed knowledge retention and application of the training content. The present study assessed the training implementation and effectiveness of the 10-day WCTOP by focusing on four key knowledge targets: (1) *knowledge presentation* (i.e., training content and delivery); (2) *knowledge acquisition*; (3) *knowledge retention*; and (4) *knowledge application*.

As a whole, the 10-day WCTOP appears to have met its objectives of increasing knowledge and awareness of the policies and procedures that govern women offenders. In addition, program participants demonstrated an understanding and knowledge of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices*. With a few exceptions, positive results were found across all areas of the assessment.

With respect to *knowledge presentation*, both facilitators and participants found the way in which the training was presented to be effective. Facilitators found the role play exercises to be of particular value, while participants found effective communication, the women-centred approach, and Aboriginal cultural awareness to be of most value. Areas for possible improvement included organization of content and pertinent/useful materials. For instance, participants strongly emphasized that some materials need updating. Participants considered the session on 'Aboriginal culture awareness' to be the most useful, while the session on 'Personal

and team issues' was considered to be the least useful.

In terms of *knowledge acquisition and retention*, participants' average scores on the knowledge assessment questionnaire increased from 62.7% to 78.6% pre- to immediately post-training, and at 8-months post-training it remained at 78.5%. Examination of responses to individual questions revealed that some participants may have had difficulty with the open-ended, fill-in-the-blank, and matching type questions. This was also reflected in participants' feedback. This may suggest that although many of the participants were more familiar with the program content as a result of program participation, their ability to recall the information verbatim may be limited. This is expected given that the program is primarily an overview of various issues related to women offenders in Canada. An analysis of responses to individual questions also provides possible insight into some content areas where participants may need improved understanding. For instance, a notable proportion of participants were not able to accurately answer fill-in-the-blank questions regarding the Risk Need Responsivity principles.

Knowledge application is the ability of the staff to apply the new material learned in the program. This was assessed by means of asking participants 8 months after they had completed the training, if and how they applied the information. Overall, the majority of participants found the WCTOP training to be at least "moderately helpful" in completing their job duties working with women offenders. The training sessions most applied by staff were 'empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices' as well as 'respect and dignity', 'health, self-injury, and suicide', 'conflict theory and communication skills', and 'supportive environment' and 'shared responsibility'.

The version of WCTOP described in the current report began in 2013-14 and during the same time frame the corresponding data collection began to assess the implementation of WCTOP. Since that time, the program has been revised and a number of changes have been made and implemented. Although it is not ideal to have a program undergo changes during the period in which it is under review, the researchers worked closely with the program developers and provided quarterly updates and roll-ups on the feedback based upon data from program participants and facilitators. The revised program has been modified in terms of its format and content. Specifically, the program now includes 2 days (15-17 hours) of online materials in advance of an 8-day in-class training. Additionally, the information presented was reexamined, and where feasible, more updated content was provided to ensure that it is pertinent to the

current needs of women offenders. For example, since the original 10-day program was developed and implemented, recent research on the profile and typologies of female sexual offenders has been made publically available, and the revised 8-day program includes the latest research on this subject matter. Also recommended were an expansion of content related to the needs of Aboriginal women offenders and a more comprehensive overview of the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity. Further, it is recommended that WOS review, and if need be, revise the WCTOP content regularly, preferably every three years. This will ensure that the material being presented is reflective of the social realities of women offenders in Canada and is responsive to their unique needs.

Limitations

A constraint of the current study was the limited sample size of program participants involved in the assessment data collection; this was especially the case for the 8-month follow-up assessment as only 31% of the original sample completed the survey at this time period. Further, the intent of the 8-month post-training survey was to capture how participants were able to apply their knowledge of the WCTOP content to their current role working with women offenders. Although responses were informative, the 8-month time frame may not have allowed for a sufficient time period for some staff members to have settled into a new position and apply their knowledge in their new role. Future studies examining the effectiveness of WCTOP may wish to consider alternative methods to assess the application of knowledge such as staff interviews or focus groups.

Conclusion

Overall, despite the limited sample size, the findings of this study suggest that WCTOP is beneficial to new staff members who will be working with women offenders. Program developers should ensure that program material is revised and updated regularly in order to meet the NTS standards and to be able to train staff on the current needs of women offenders. Additionally, more comprehensive descriptions of the needs of Aboriginal women and the application of the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity are worthwhile to consider expanding in subsequent iterations of the training program.

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Appendix A: Participant Knowledge Assessment Questionnaire

Women-Centred Training Orientation Program Participant Knowledge Questionnaire

1. Different staff training is necessary when working with women offenders due to gender differences in the offender population. Below is a list of reasons explaining the need for women-centred training. Circle the statement that is NOT correct. (1 point)

- a) Women have different pathways that lead to their criminal behaviour
- b) Women are emotionally needy**
- c) Women are different in the way they communicate
- d) Women have different needs and different levels of need
- e) Women place a greater emphasis on development and growth through relationships with others

2. What are the five principles of *Creating Choices*? (5 points)

- i. Empowerment
- ii. Meaningful & Responsible Choices
- iii. Respect & Dignity
- iv. Supportive Environment
- v. Shared Responsibility

3. Which principle, identified in *Creating Choices*, best describes the following?

The process through which women gain insight into their situation, identify their strengths, and are supported and challenged to take positive action to gain control of their lives. (1 point)

Principle: Empowerment

4. Which type of security, identified in policy and legislation, best describes the following? (1 point)

This type of security involves regular and consistent interaction with offenders and timely analysis of information and sharing through observations and communication (e.g., rapport building). It contributes to a safe working and living environment for staff and offenders and is a key tool to assess an offender's adjustment and stability.

- a) Interactive security
- b) Dynamic security**
- c) Static security
- d) Intervention security

5. The following question contains statements regarding core correctional principles. Please fill in the blanks for the descriptions by using the terms provided below. Not all terms are applicable and a term can only be used once. (0.5 each; 5 points total)

risk	reintegration potential	criminal history	recidivism
low intensity	substance abuse	need	responsivity
high intensity	learning style	high risk	
motivation level	low risk	age at first offence	

- The **need** principle refers to a variety of dynamic factors in an offender's life that are related to her criminal behaviour. These factors are considered ideal targets for correctional intervention. An example of a dynamic factor that is related to criminality is **substance abuse**.
- The **responsivity** principle has to do with matching the style and delivery mode of correctional programming to the participant's capabilities, motivation level and **learning style**.
- The **risk** principle relates to the assessment of future probability of re-offending if identified treatment needs are not met. This concept also relates to the level of intensity required for an offender's intervention. An offender designated as **low risk** should receive **low intensity** intervention, while an offender designated as **high risk** should receive **high intensity** intervention. Effective correctional programming is directly linked to reduction of risk and, therefore, a reduced likelihood of **recidivism**.

6. What information is needed to effectively assess a woman offender for substance use/abuse? (1 point)

- a) The extent to which the substance abuse is associated with her crimes
- b) Whether the woman was under the influence when she committed her offence
- c) Whether the woman commits offences when she is NOT using or drinking
- d) The extent to which the substance abuse affects other aspects of her life (e.g., work, education, family, relationships)
- e) Options a), b), and d)
- f) **All of the above**

7. Which of the following is NOT one of the reasons why it is important to offer different programming for Aboriginal women offenders? (1 point)

- a) Differences in cultural practices and beliefs
- b) Language and communication barriers
- c) Differences in learning styles
- d) **Traditional Aboriginal practices emphasize individual learning and one on one programming**

8. Which one of the following statements is NOT a good reason why a mental health strategy should be developed differently for men and women offenders? (1 point)

- a) Men and women have life experiences that differ in many ways
- b) Men and women experience different types of mental health problems
- c) **Women are more emotionally dependent, which can exacerbate mental illness**
- d) Some mental health problems experienced by women offenders can be linked to traumatic and/or marginalization experiences in their past or current situations

9. Listed below are several statements regarding psychotic disorders. Please indicate if the statement is True or False. (0.5 each; 4 points total)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Schizophrenia is the most common type of psychosis | T / F |
| 2. People with psychosis are more violent | T / F |
| 3. People with psychosis are more likely to withdraw from society | T / F |
| 4. A psychotic disorder is a disease of the brain that disturbs the way you think, act, see, hear and feel | T / F |
| 5. The onset of psychosis is most likely to occur in young adults | T / F |
| 6. Psychosis cannot be passed on genetically | T / F |
| 7. Psychosis cannot be developed from drug use/medical condition | T / F |
| 8. The term psychosis means that a person finds it difficult or impossible to distinguish between what is real and what is not | T / F |

10. Which of the following is a reason for non-suicidal self-injury? (1 point)

- a) To cope with emotions
- b) To feel in control
- c) For instrumental gains
- d) To re-enact past trauma
- e) Options a), b) and c)
- f) **All of the above**

11. How can we help a woman offender learn to set appropriate boundaries for herself? (1 point)

- a) Encourage her to speak up for herself
- b) Establish and maintain consistent and appropriate boundaries while performing job duties
- c) Tell her “no” when it is necessary
- d) **All the above**

12. There are 3 stages of trauma treatment (establish safety, remembrance and mourning, reconnection). To the best of your knowledge, identify which stage of treatment the following statements are referring to. Place the corresponding stage number in the spaces provided. (0.5 each; 6 points total)

Stage 1: Establish safety

Stage 2: Remembrance and mourning

Stage 3: Reconnection

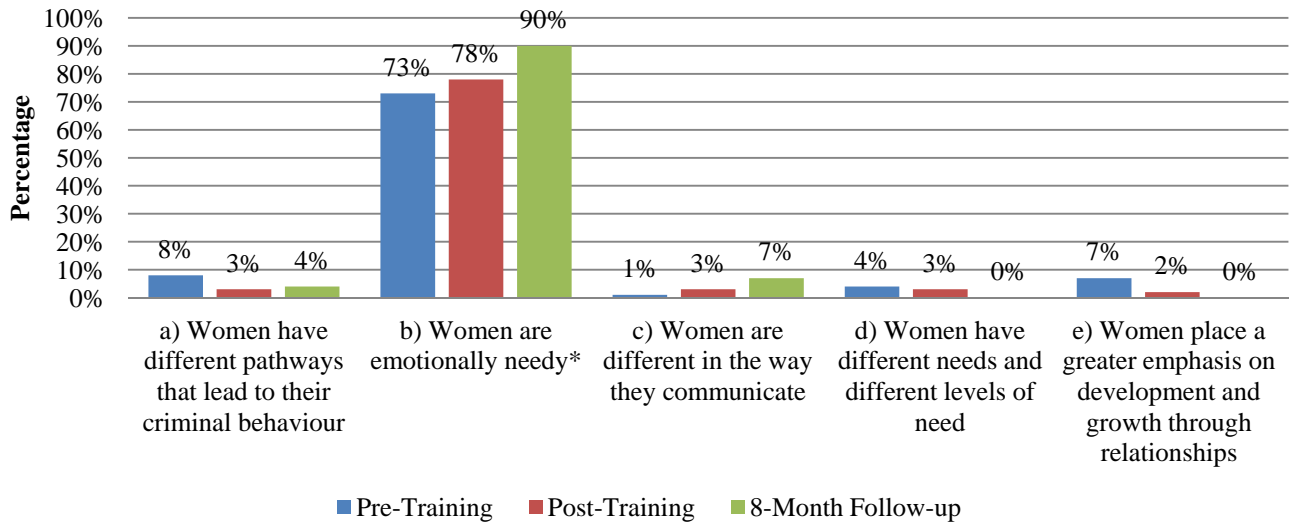
- Process the feelings relating to the trauma 2
- Release self-blame related to the trauma 2
- Develop safe containers for emotions and body sensations 1
- Stop self-harming behaviours 1
- Let walls down and allow connection with others 3
- Tell the story of trauma 2
- Increase trust in others where appropriate, withhold trust where not appropriate 3
- Develop new, positive relationships 3
- Mourn the losses associated with the trauma 2
- Develop new, positive meaning system about the self and the world 3
- Discontinue substance abuse 1
- Understand victimization and transform this to empowerment 3

13. To create a safe and supportive environment, it is important to reduce the level of bullying behaviour within the institution. It is therefore essential to be able to identify different types of bullying when it occurs. For the following behaviours, indicate in the space provided whether the statement is an example of a direct bullying behaviour (**DB**) or an indirect bullying behaviour (**IB**). (0.5 each; 4 points total)

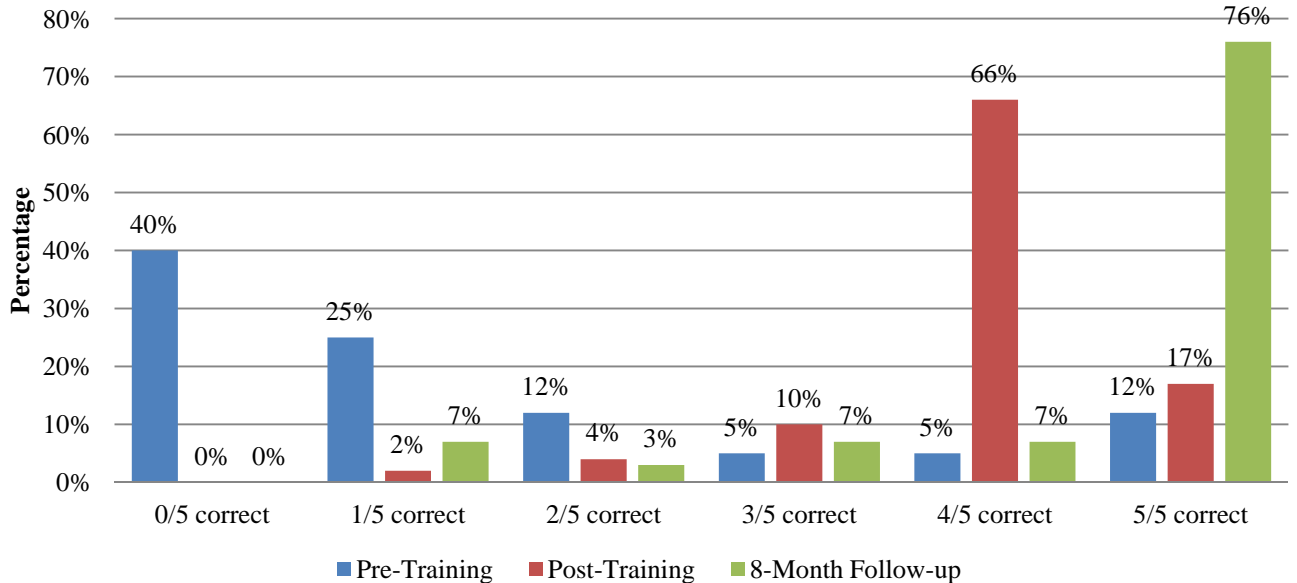
- Blaming someone for something that they have not done **IB**
- Name calling **DB**
- Intimidation **DB**
- Gossiping about someone **IB**
- Threatening someone behind their back **IB**
- Physical violence **DB**
- Trying to make someone look bad in front of others **IB**
- Sexual harassment from another offender **DB**

Appendix B: Responses to Participant Knowledge Assessment Questionnaire at Three Time Points

Q.1. Different staff training is necessary when working with women offenders due to gender differences in the offender population. Below is a list of reasons explaining the need for women-centred training. Circle the statement that is NOT correct.

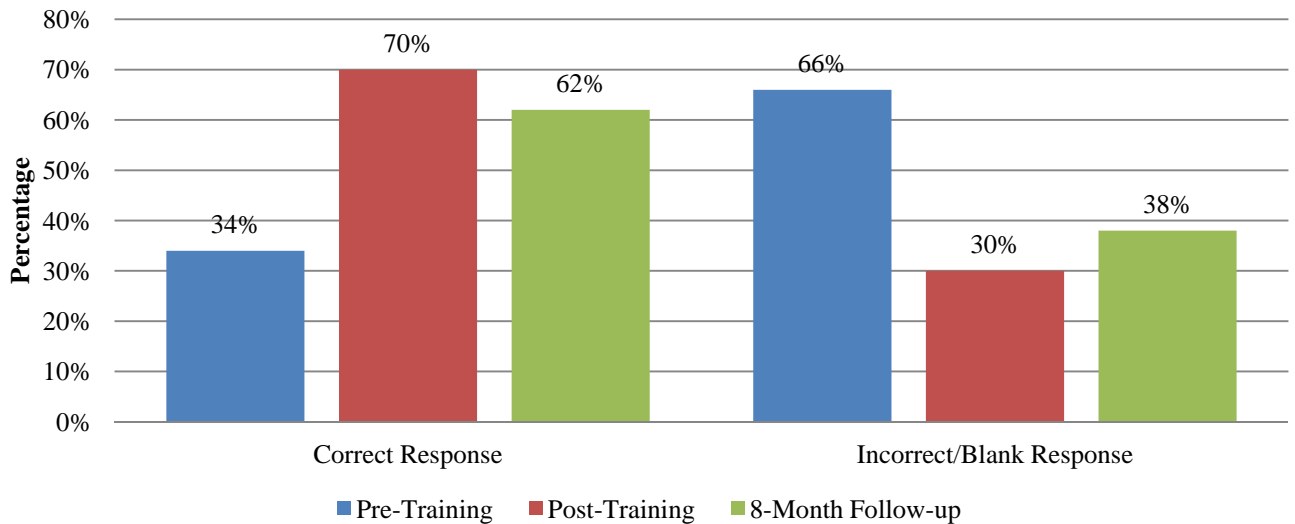


Q.2. What are the five principles of *Creating Choices*?



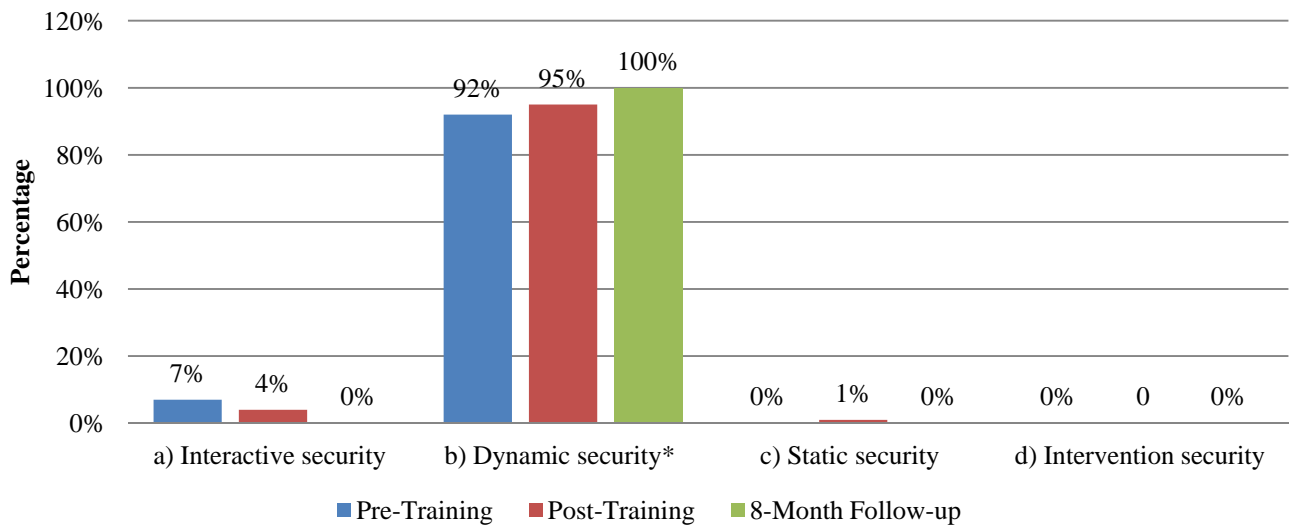
Q.3. Which principle, identified in Creating Choices, best describes the following?

The process through which women gain insight into their situation, identify their strengths, and are supported and challenged to take positive action to gain control of the

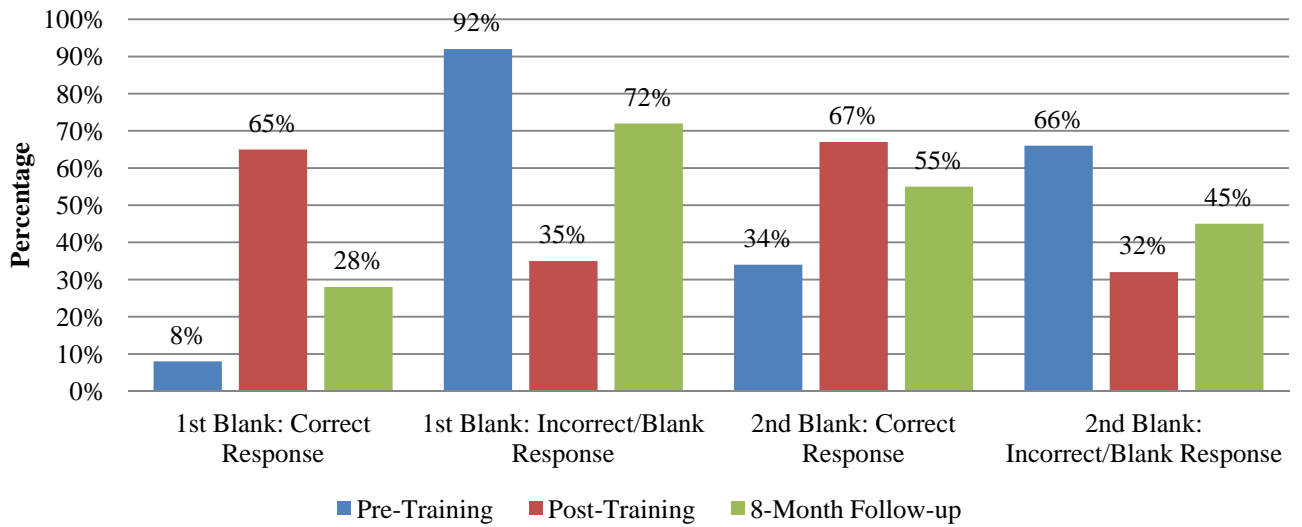


Q.4. Which type of security, identified in policy and legislation, best describes the following?

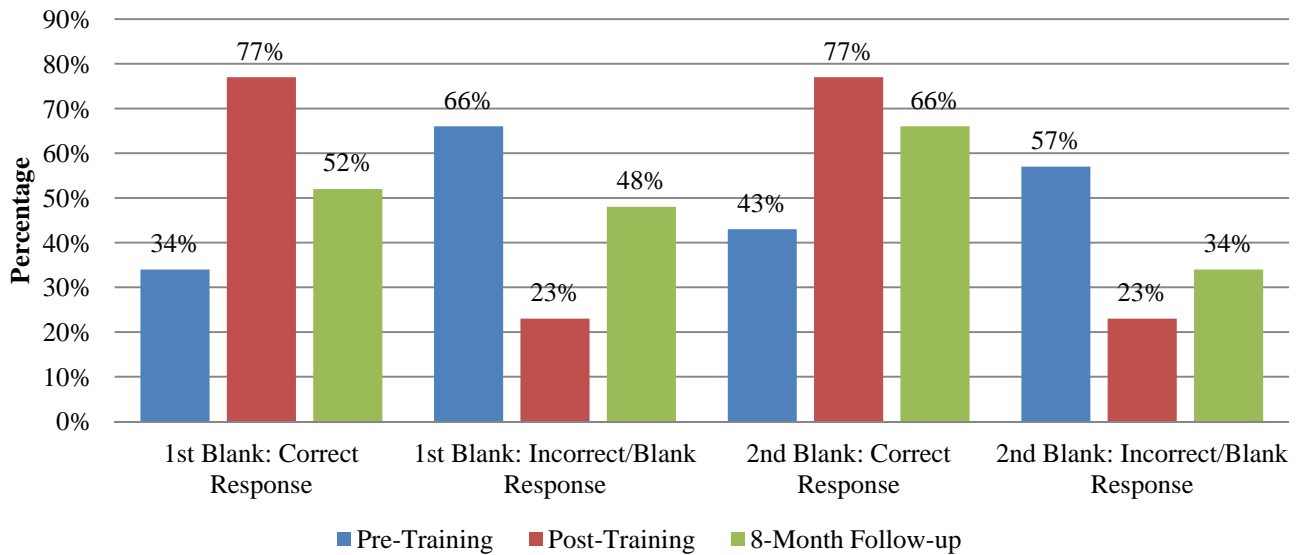
This type of security involves regular and consistent interaction with offenders and timely analysis of information and sharing through observations and comm



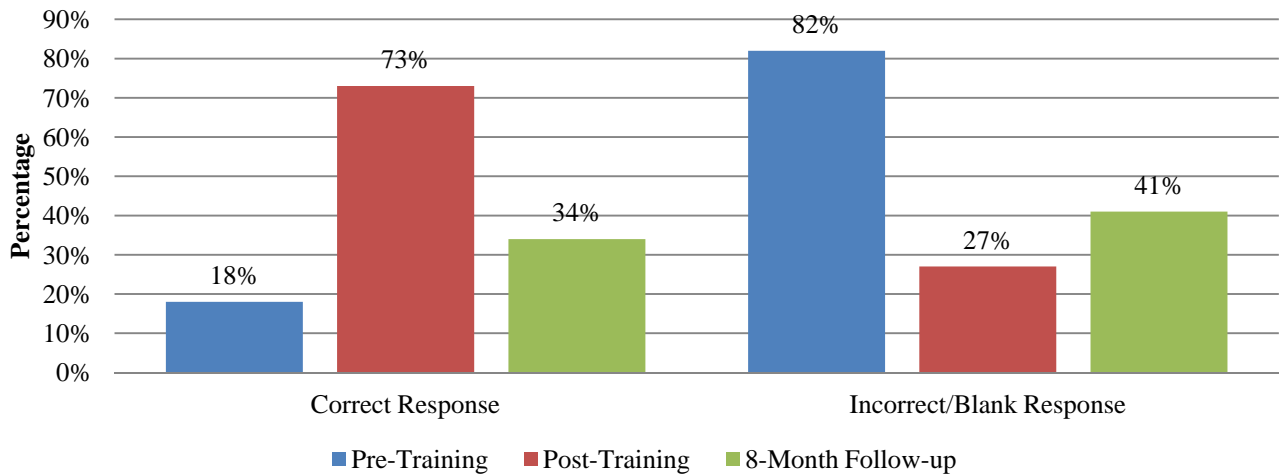
Q.5.1. & Q.5.2. The _____ principle refers to a variety of dynamic factors in an offender's life that are related to her criminal behaviour. These factors are considered ideal targets for correctional intervention. An example of a dynamic factor that is r



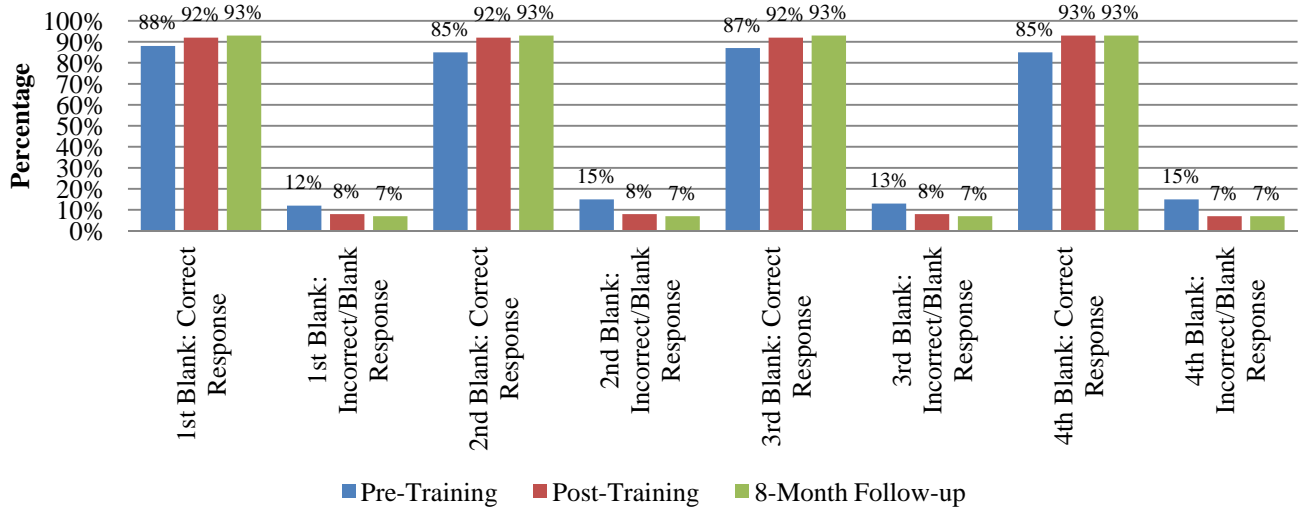
Q.5.3. & Q.5.4. The _____ principle has to do with matching the style and delivery mode of correctional programming to the participant's capabilities, motivation level and _____.



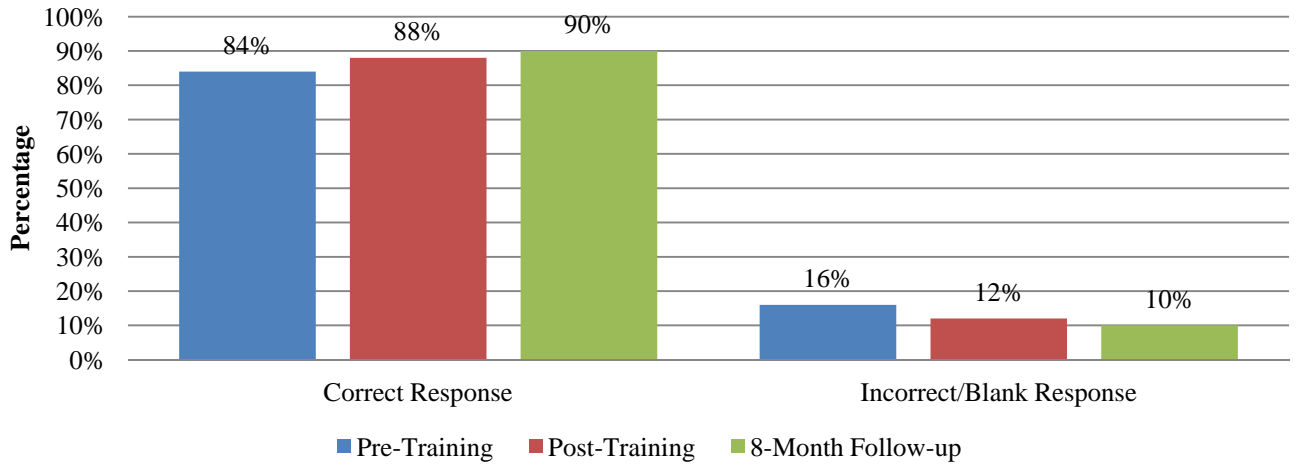
Q.5.5. The ____ principle relates to the assessment of future probability of re-offending if identified treatment needs are not met. This concept also relates to the level of intensity required for an offender's intervention.



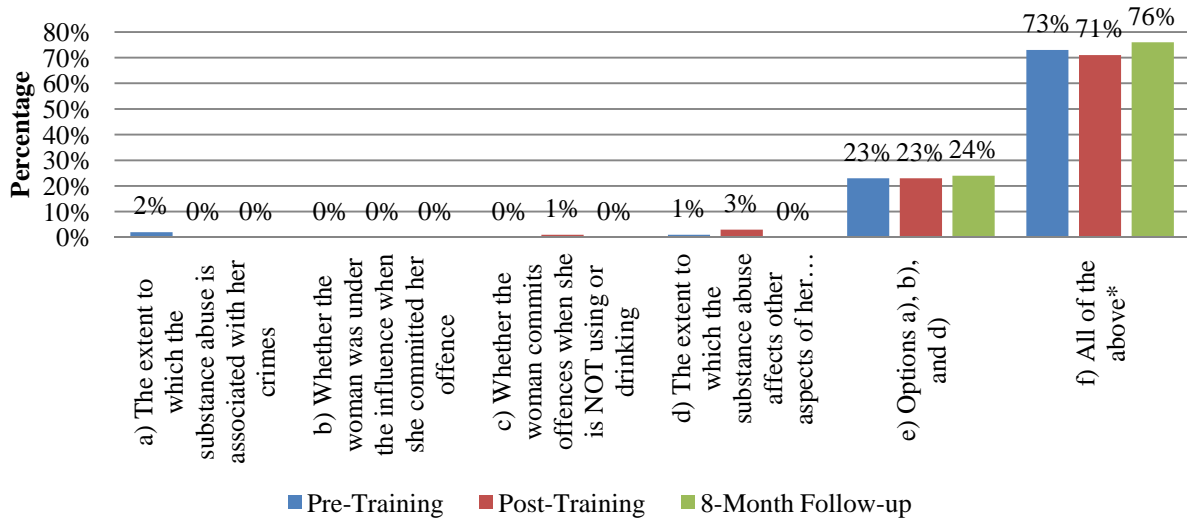
Q.5.6., Q.5.7., Q.5.8., & Q.5.9. An offender designated as ____ should receive ____ intervention, while an offender designated as ____ should receive ____ intervention.



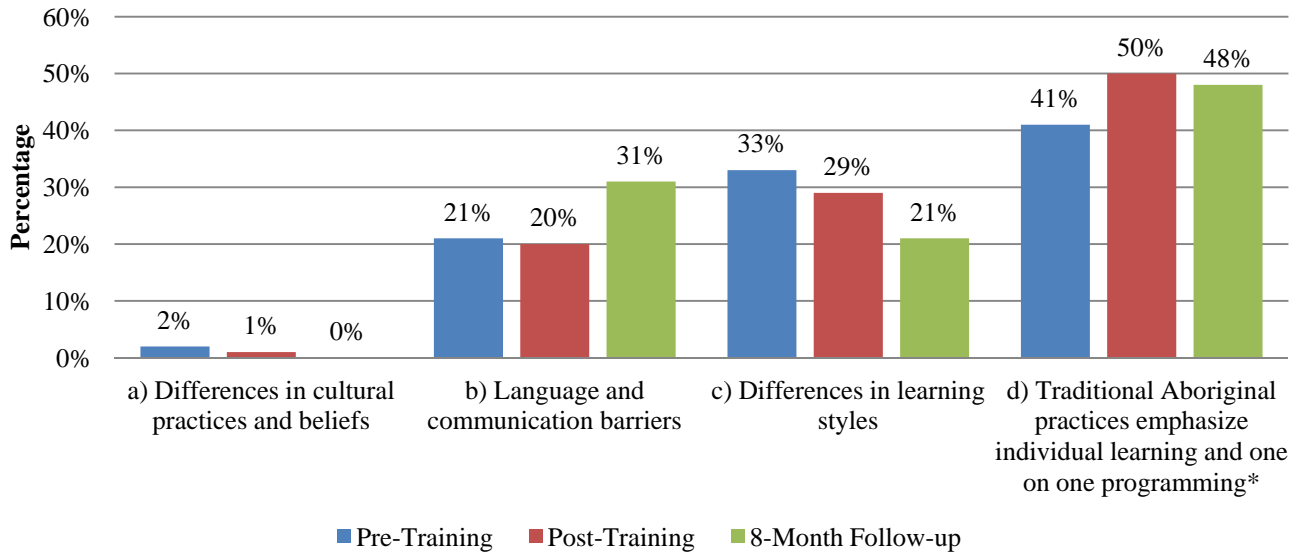
Q.5.10. Effective correctional programming is directly linked to reduction of risk and, therefore, a reduced likelihood of _____.



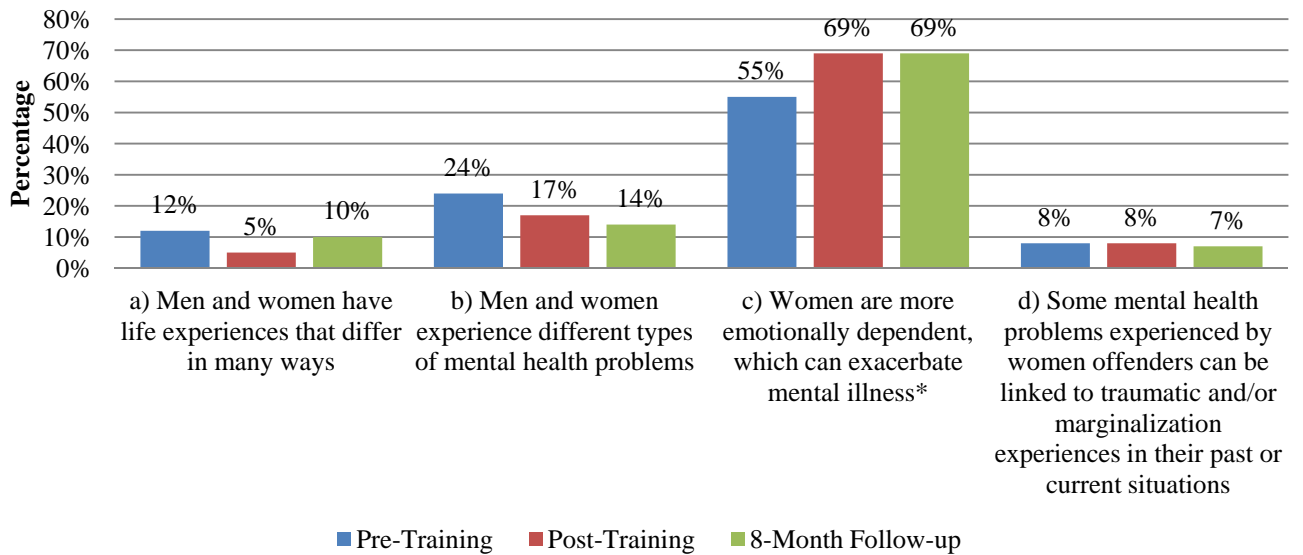
Q.6. What information is needed to effectively assess a woman offender for substance use/abuse?



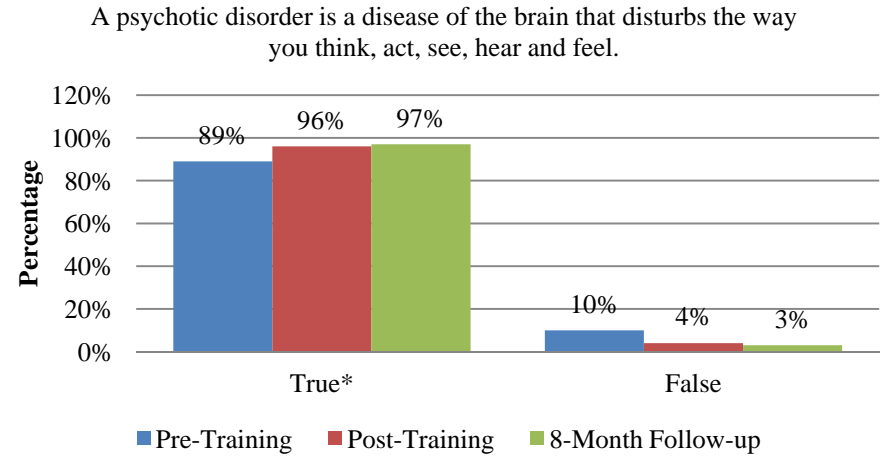
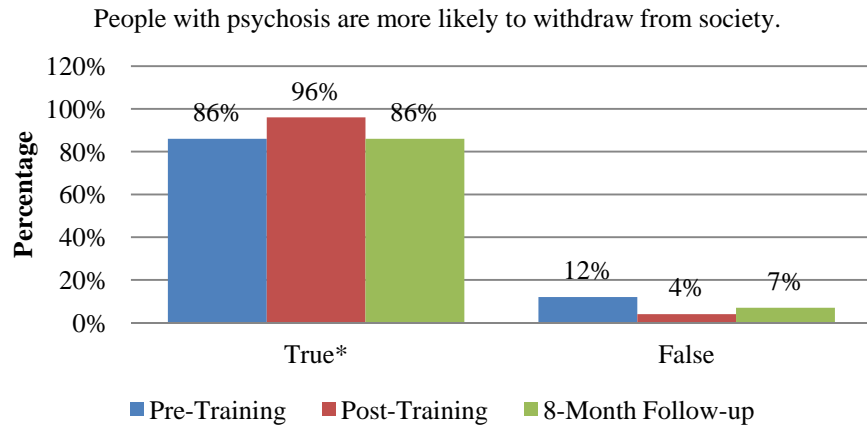
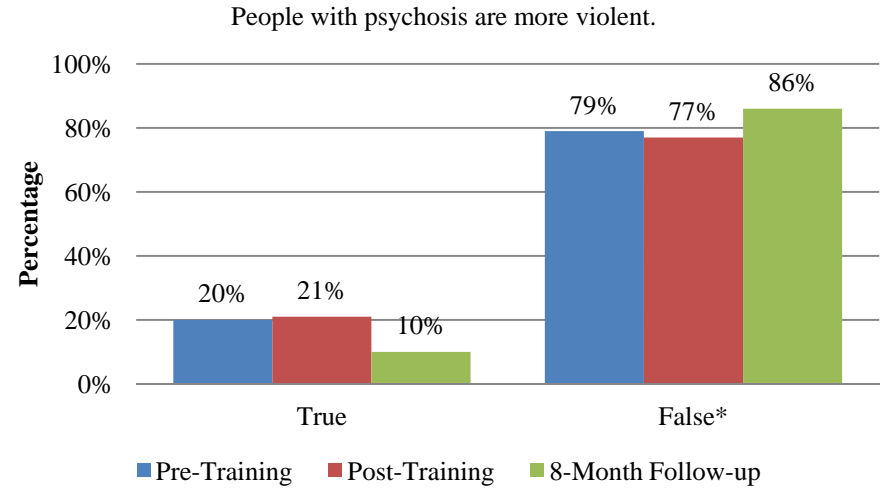
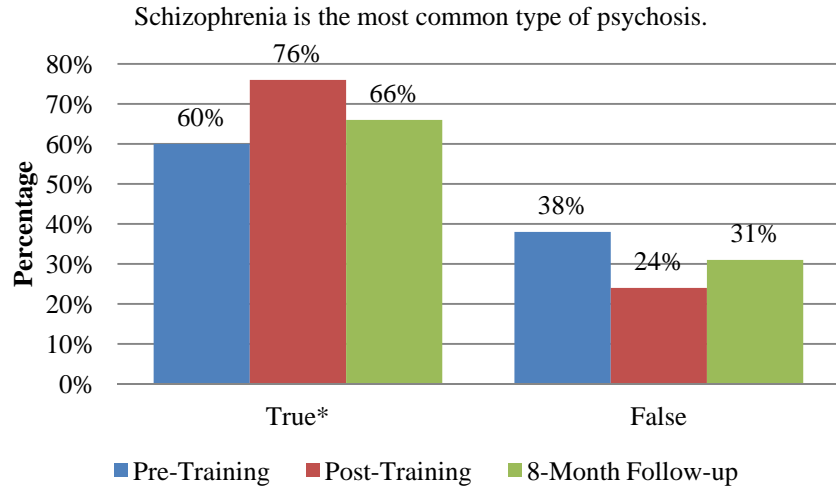
Q.7. Which of the following is NOT one of the reasons why it is important to offer different programming for Aboriginal women offenders?



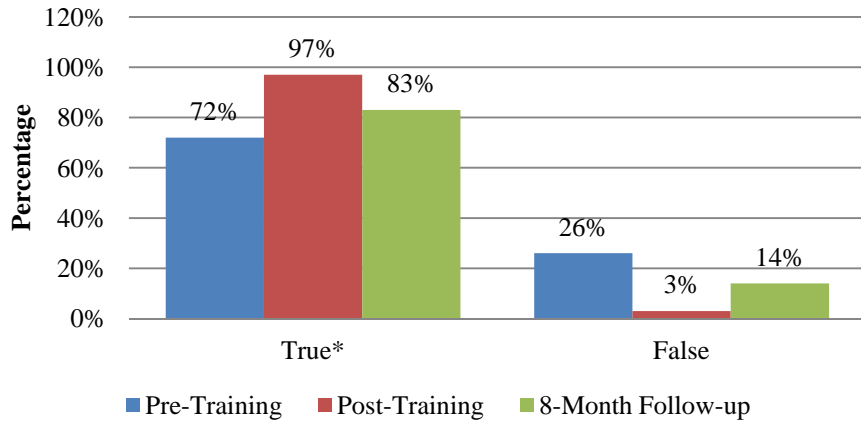
Q.8. Which one of the following statements is NOT a good reason why a mental health strategy should be developed differently for men and women offenders?



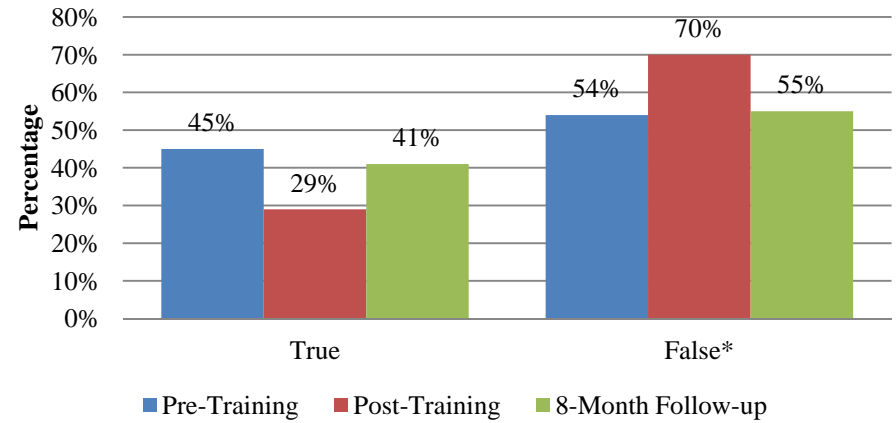
Q.9. Listed below are several statements regarding psychotic disorders. Please indicate if the statement is True or False.



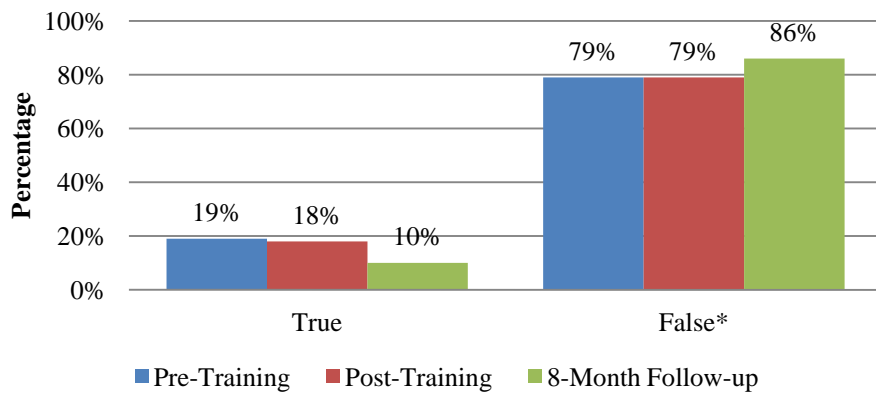
The onset of psychosis is most likely to occur in young adults.



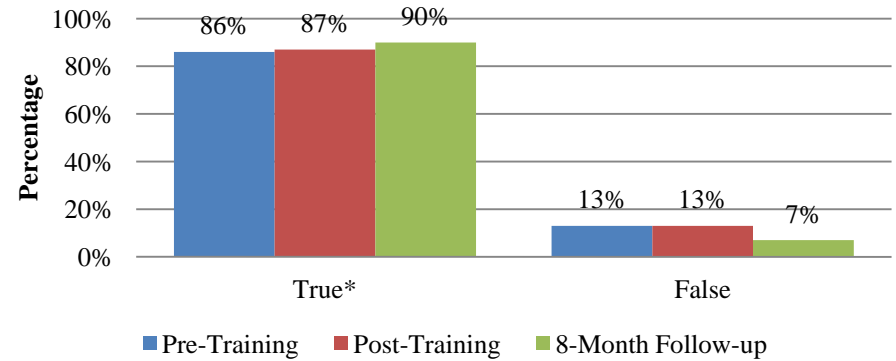
Psychosis cannot be passed on genetically.



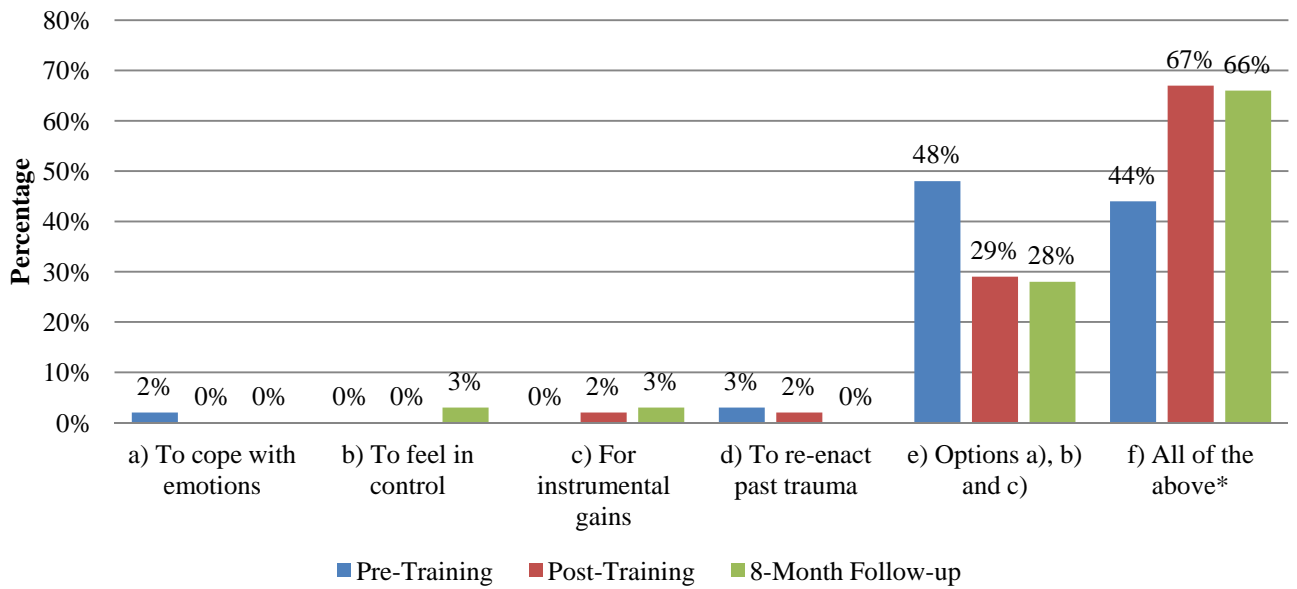
Psychosis cannot be developed from drug use/medical condition.



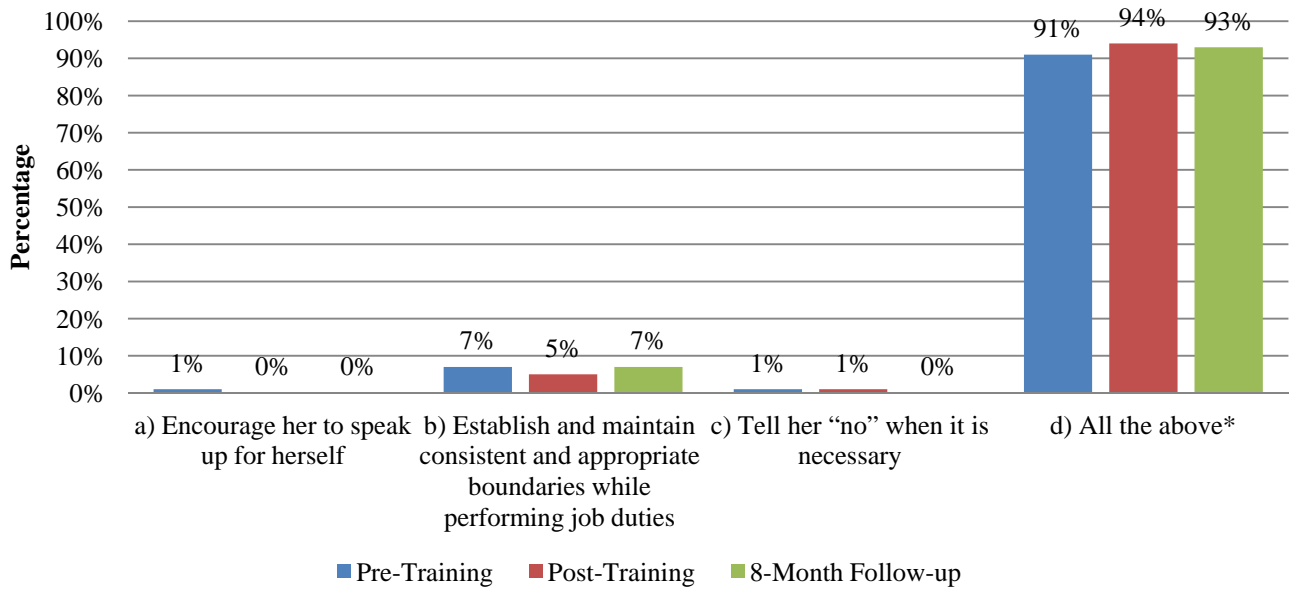
The term psychosis means that a person finds it difficult or impossible to distinguish between what is real and what is not.



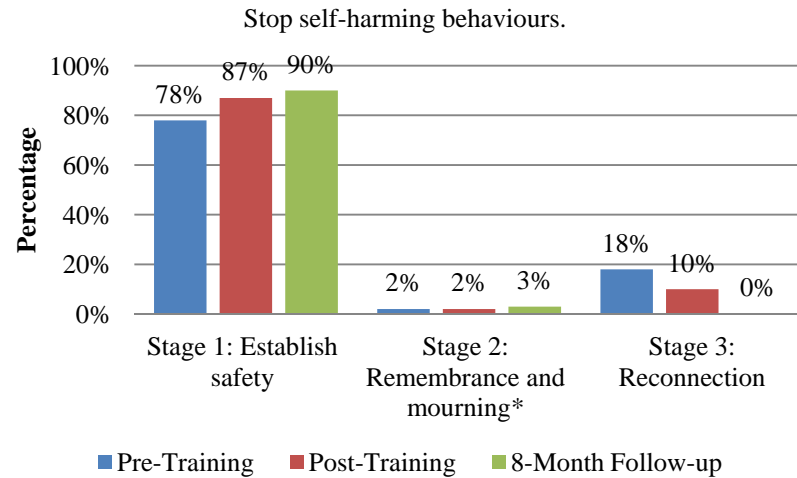
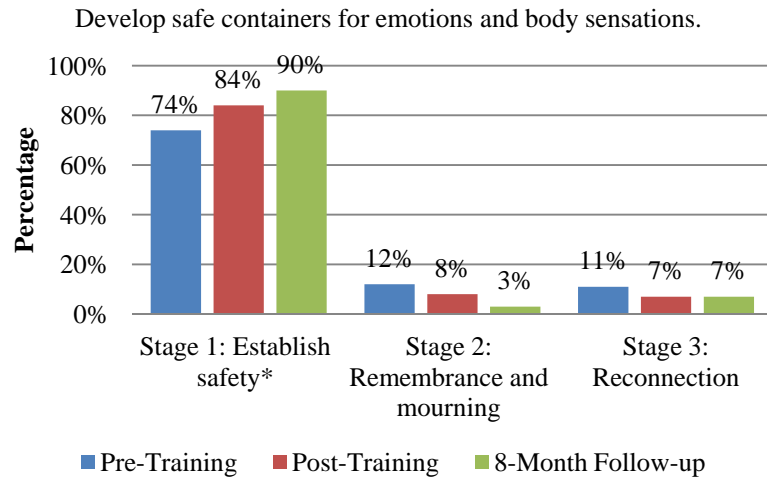
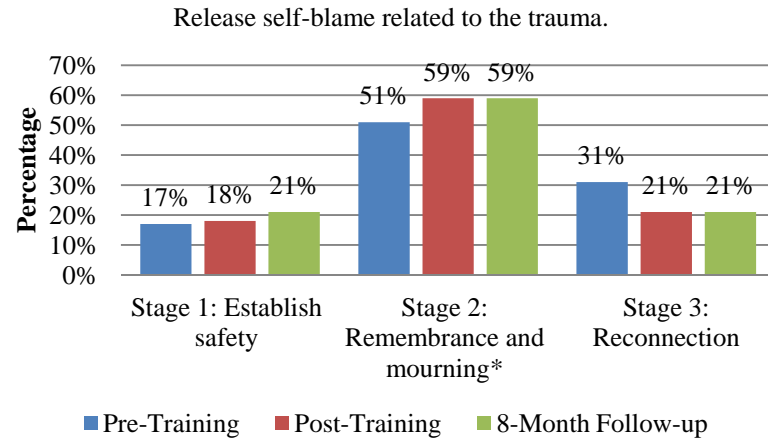
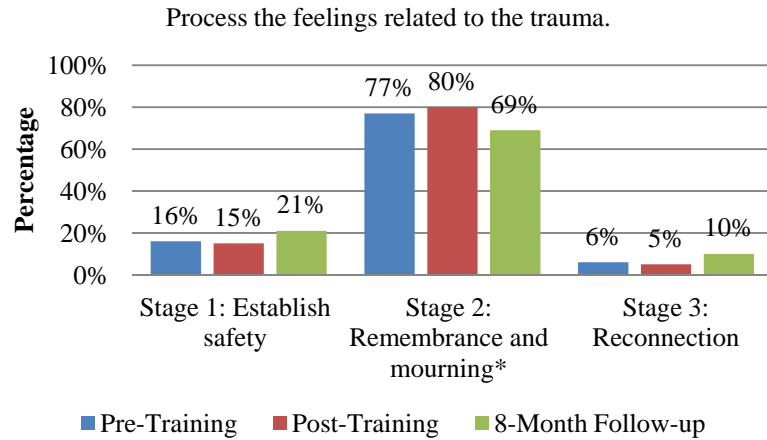
Q.10. Which of the following is a reason for non-suicidal self-injury?

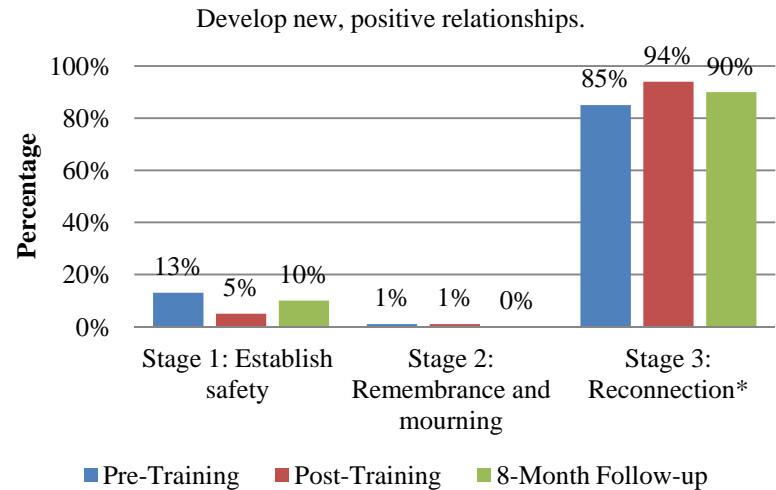
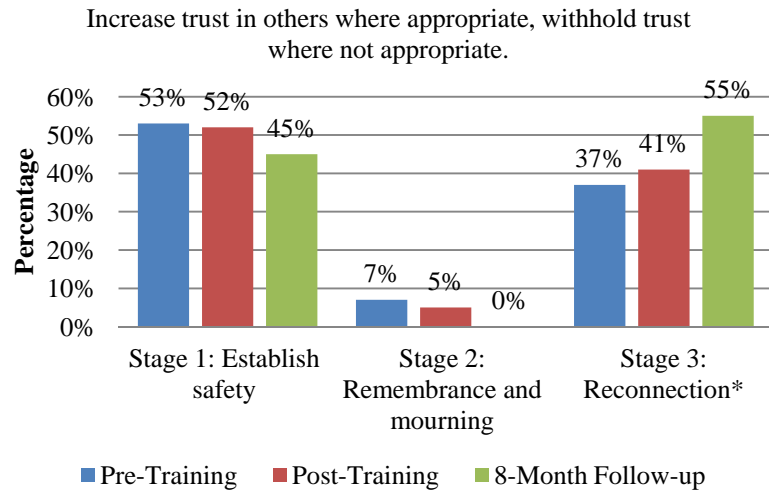
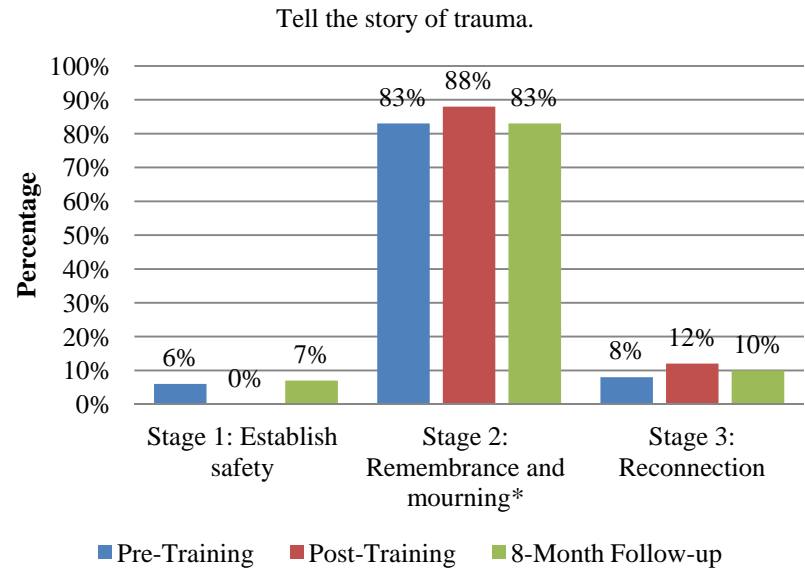
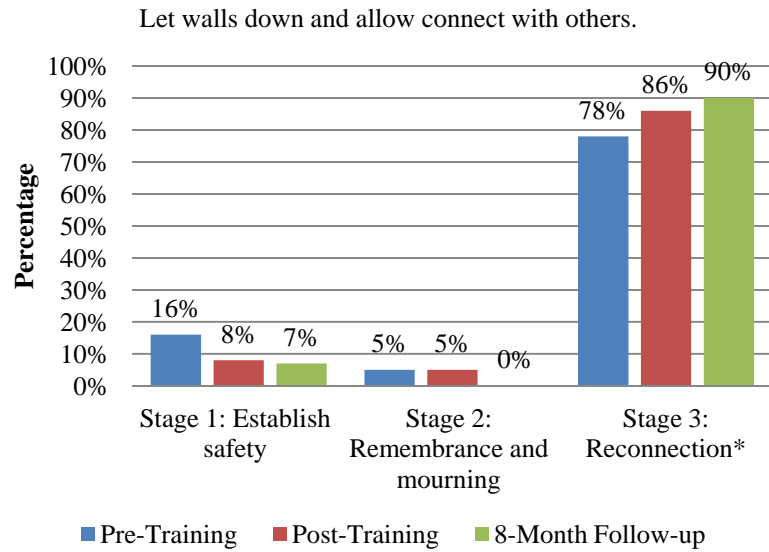


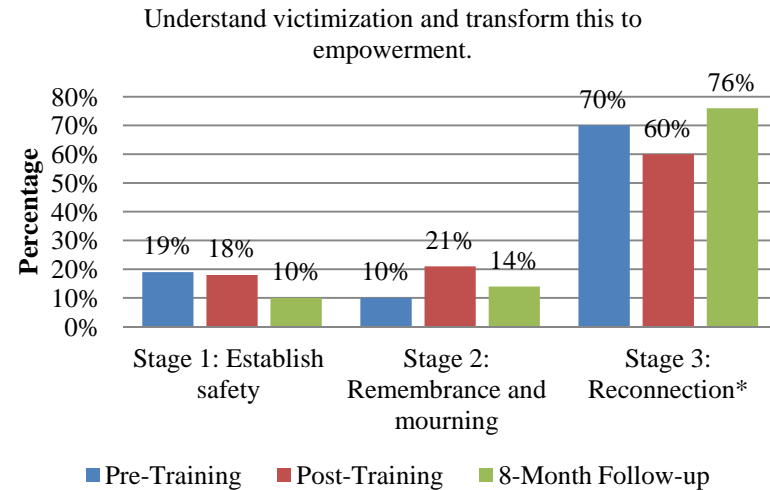
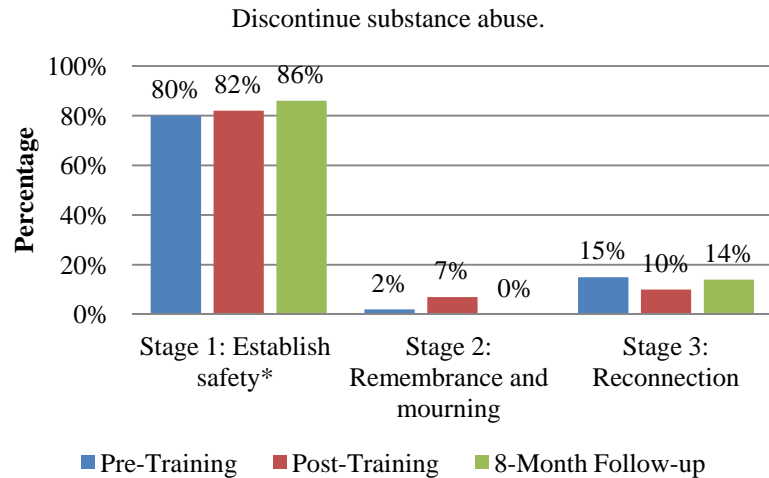
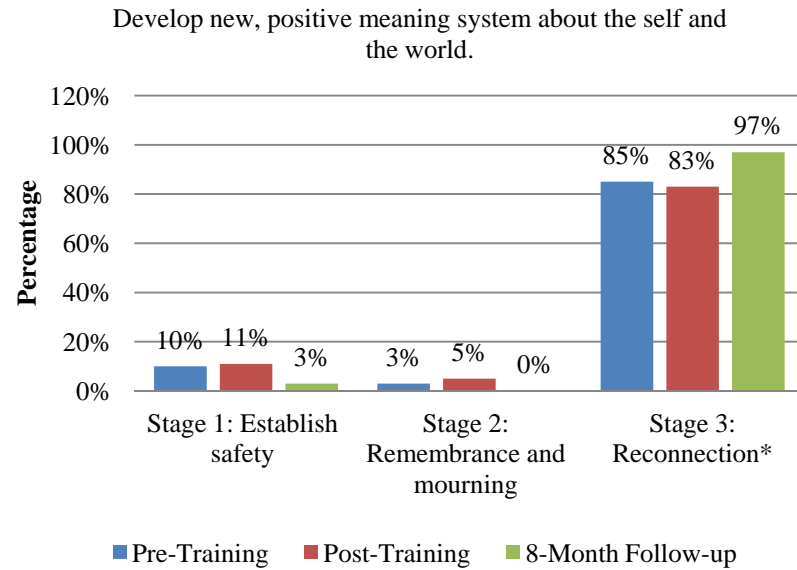
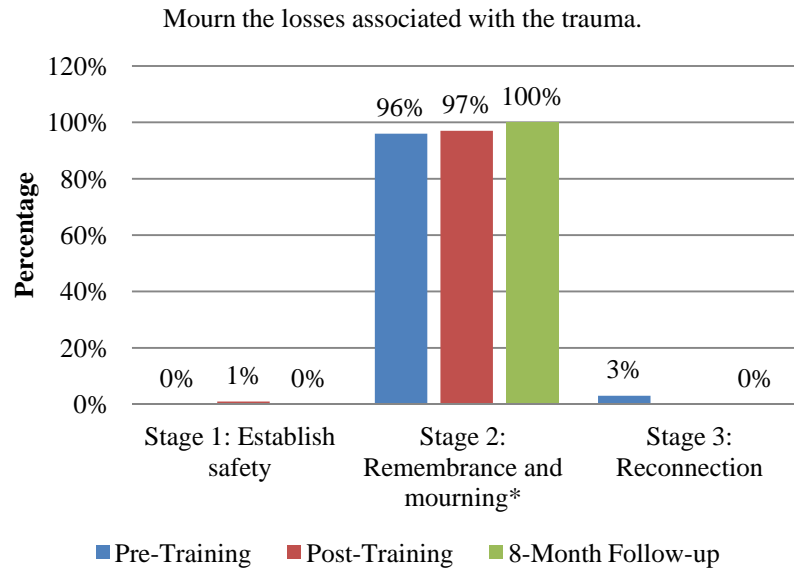
Q.11. How can we help a woman offender learn to set appropriate boundaries for herself?



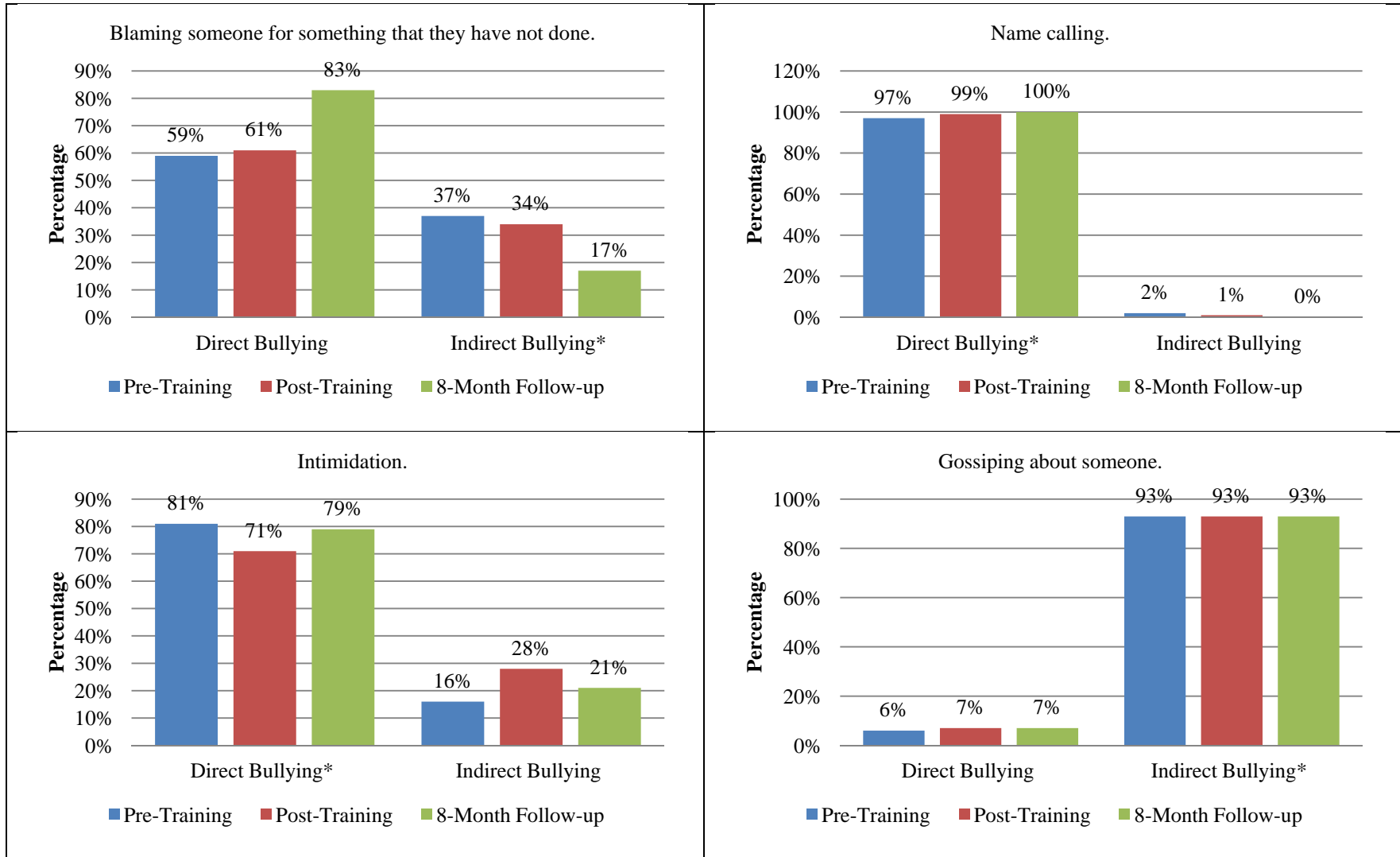
Q.12. There are 3 stages of trauma treatment. To the best of your knowledge, identify which stage of treatment the following statements are referring to.

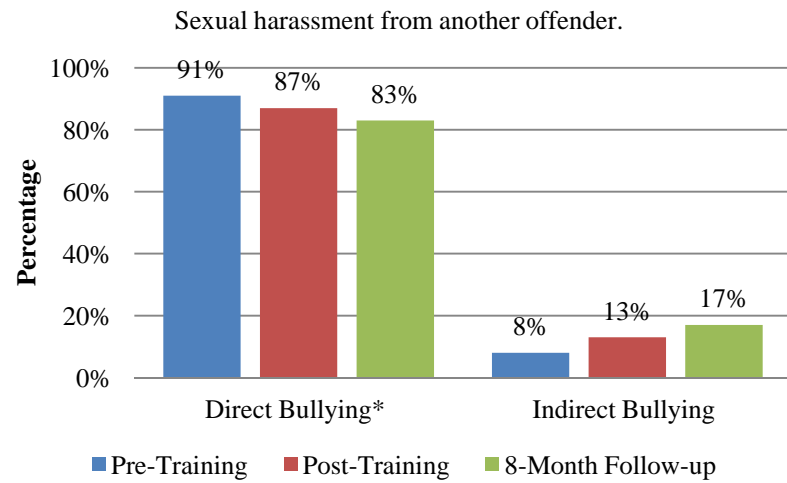
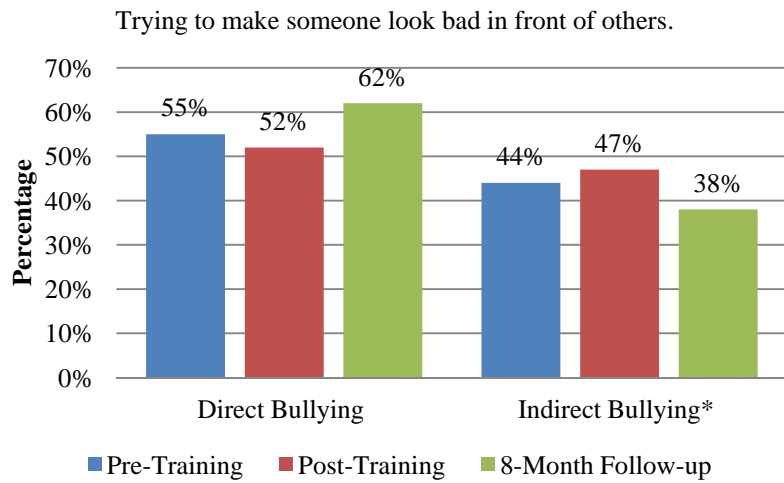
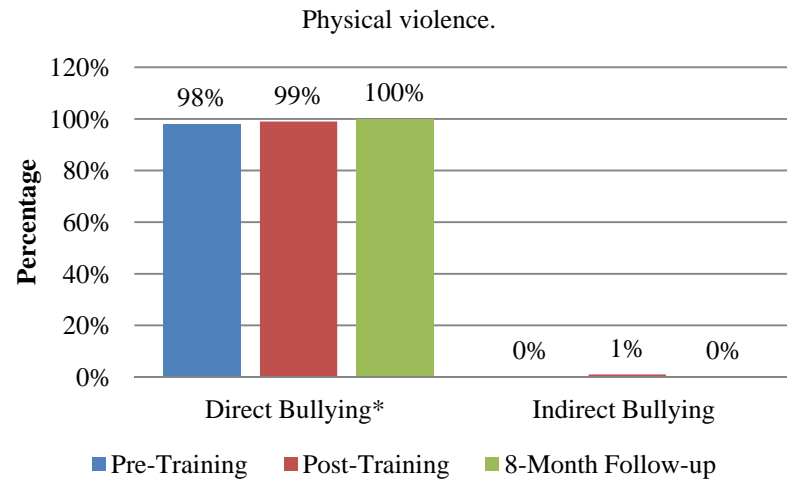
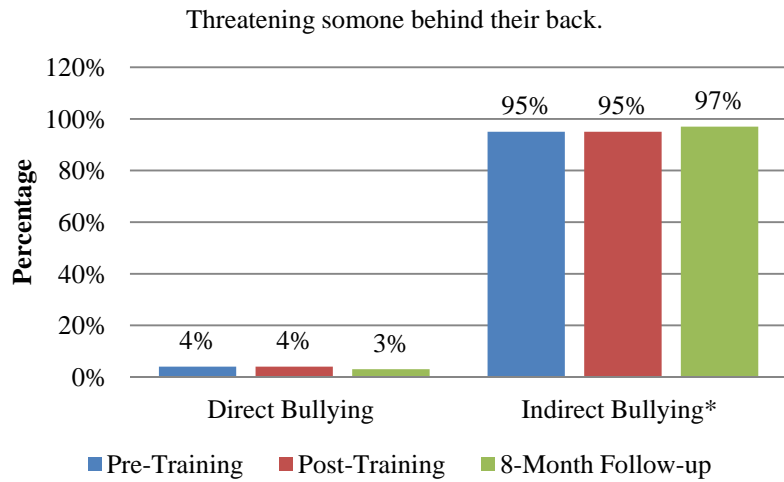






Q.13. To create a safe and supportive environment, it is important to reduce the level of bullying behaviour within the institution. It is therefore essential to be able to identify different types of bullying when it occurs. For the following behaviours, indicate whether the statement is an example of direct bullying or an indirect bullying behaviour.





Appendix C: Post-Training (8-Month) Follow-up Assessment

Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP) Assessment Follow-Up

Section 1: Demographic and Employment Information

Please complete the following demographic and employment information.

- Gender:
 - Male
 - Female

 - Age group:
 - under 20
 - 20-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - 56 or over

 - Approximate date you completed your Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (YYYY/MM/DD):

 - Region in which you currently work:
 - Pacific
 - Prairies
 - Ontario
 - Quebec
 - Atlantic

 - Institution or facility where you currently work (e.g., Edmonton Institution for Women, Ottawa Parole Office): _____

 - Current position (e.g., Primary Worker, Behavioural Counsellor, Parole Officer): _____

 - Were you deployed into your current position from a men's correctional institution?
 - Yes
 - No

 - How long have you been working with women offenders since the completion of your Women-Centred Orientation Program? _____
-

Section II: Knowledge Retention

Same questions provided in the Participant Knowledge Questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Section III: Knowledge Application

Please answer the following questions regarding the application of the knowledge you acquired in your training while working with women offenders since you completed Women-Centred Training Orientation Program

- How helpful has the 10-day training program been for completing your job duties in your current employment working with women offenders? (likert scale response)

➤ (1) **Not helpful at all** (2) **Somewhat helpful** (3) **Moderately helpful** (4) **Very helpful** (5) **Extremely Helpful**

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training sessions on empowerment, meaningful & responsible choices as well as respect and dignity during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session on substance abuse during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session on groups with special needs (e.g., older offenders, pregnant offenders, women serving life and long-term sentences) during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session on Aboriginal cultural awareness during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training sessions on mental health, self-injury and suicide during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training sessions on child abuse, trauma, and surviving family violence during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session on conflict theory and communication skills during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) **Never** (2) **Rarely** (3) **Sometimes** (4) **Very Often** (5) **Always**
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training sessions on supportive environment and shared responsibility during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Very Often (5) Always
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- How often have you applied the knowledge you acquired in the training session on personal and team issues during your employment working with women offenders?

➤ (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Very Often (5) Always
Please provide brief concrete examples of knowledge application

- Was there something that the training did not address that has been an issue in your employment working with women offenders?

- No
- Yes

- Please explain:

- How should this be incorporated into the training program?

- Since the completion of training, have you referred back to your training materials (e.g., readings, participant handbook, participant handouts) to assist you in working with women offenders?

- Yes
- Please provide examples of what materials you have referred to and how they have assisted you.

- No
- What is the primary reason you have not referred to your training materials.
 - Please explain

- Please provide any additional comments regarding the training program in general or regarding the impact the training has had on your subsequent employment