



Community Mental Health Initiative

QUICK FACTS

One of Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) five priorities is to improve the capacity to address the mental health needs of offenders.

Since 1997, there has been an 85 per cent increase in the number of offenders identified with a mental health disorder at intake. To assist these offenders in making a safe return to the community, CSC has implemented the Community Mental Health Initiative (CMHI).

The CMHI is part of CSC's overall Mental Health Strategy, which is aimed at ensuring comprehensive mental health services for the duration of an offender's sentence. The CMHI offers a range of services to avoid gaps in care during the transition from the institution to the community, and while the offender is on conditional release in the community.

KEY ELEMENTS

The key elements of the CMHI are:

- Identifying the individual needs of offenders with mental health disorders and developing a discharge plan;
- Supporting offenders with mental health disorders under community supervision;
- Providing training to staff; and
- Working with local agencies to provide specialized support for offenders with mental health disorders within the community.

STAFFING

Approximately 50 new positions were created across Canada as a part of the CMHI. These include:

- Clinical Social Workers (Discharge Planners) to assist in planning the institutional release of offenders with mental health disorders by determining their specific needs, and building a plan for support in the community.

- Clinical Social Workers and Nurses (Community Mental Health Specialists) to work directly with offenders with mental health disorders at selected parole sites¹ to provide support in the community. These Specialists also participate in multidisciplinary teams, provide training for front-line staff and develop partnerships with local agencies.
- Coordinators to manage the Initiative in each region, to help new staff work with existing services to enhance mental health support for offenders in the community.

PARTNERSHIPS

The CMHI provides funding to local agencies, organizations and specialists, enabling CSC to offer a range of services to offenders with mental health disorders, such as specialized psychiatric assessments and personal support workers. These organizations also address the unique needs of Aboriginal and women offenders diagnosed with mental health disorders.

TRAINING

CMHI staff deliver two-day mental health awareness training to front line staff at selected parole offices and community correctional centres. As of March 31, 2009, more than 1,000 staff have received training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Community Mental Health Initiative, please visit our Web site at www.csc-scc.gc.ca.

¹ The CMHI selected parole sites are: New Westminister, Vancouver, Kelowna, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, Quebec, St-Jerôme, Moncton, St John, Halifax, and St John's.

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