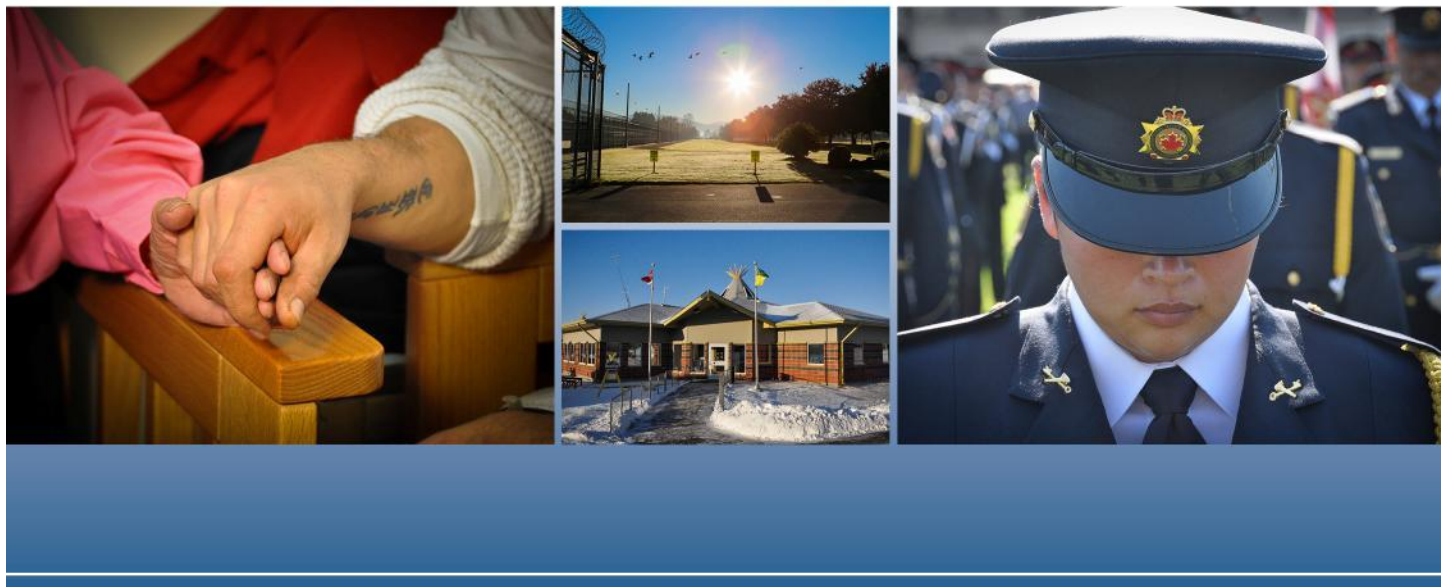


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RESEARCH REPORT

Using Technology to Deliver Community-Based Correctional Programs: A Pilot Study

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Using Technology to Deliver Community-Based Correctional Programs: A Pilot Study

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2022

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Executive Summary

Key words: *alternative program delivery, remote delivery, community maintenance programs*

The incorporation of technology into the realm of human services is a topic of emerging interest among academics and practitioners alike. In the Canadian federal correctional context, virtual communication platforms, including teleconferencing and videoconferencing capabilities, provide an opportunity to deliver interventions to parole clients in remote locations or where services are otherwise not readily available. With the emergence of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the need to consider alternatives to in-person service delivery has only increased. As there remains only limited research on the topic of remote program-delivery in corrections, there is a need to examine the strengths and challenges associated with new program delivery formats.

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is piloting an ongoing initiative to provide community-based programs to offenders in remote locations through the use of tele or videoconference. The current study aimed to provide concrete evidence to the viability of this initiative and to inform the use of these modalities in the future. This was accomplished through a casefile review of information contained within the Offender Management System (OMS), an administrative database containing offender records, and survey feedback received from Correctional Program Officers (CPOs) who facilitated remote delivery.

Men and women offenders were identified as having participated in the alternative program delivery initiative. The final sample included 126 program enrollments for 123 offenders. The majority of offenders were men (89.7%), Indigenous (55.6%), and from the Prairie region (79.4%). Additionally, feedback on the initiative was provided by eight CPOs.

In the majority of files review, programs were delivered through the use of teleconference or phone technology and occurred on a one-on-one basis. In most cases, remote programs were administered due to the offender living in a remote community.

Overall, results suggest that the majority of participants had a positive attitude towards remote programs and a positive working alliance with the CPO. Further, remote delivery was perceived by CPOs to be comparable to in-person delivery across a variety of measures (e.g., ability to express thoughts and feelings, comprehension, and motivation and engagement).

Although remote delivery was generally positive, there were challenges associated with it. For example, CPOs reported that remote delivery made it more difficult to explain program content compared to in-person delivery. Further, both technical and logistical challenges were common. Positively, in the majority of cases these challenges were resolved and were not perceived to affect the quality of the program.

This research suggests that alternative program delivery is a promising option when in-person delivery is not possible. However, limitations of the current study made it difficult to fully capture the experience of administering or participating in remote programs, and to make direct comparisons between remote and in-person delivery. This initiative would benefit from further research to determine the viability and efficacy of remote program delivery.

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Introduction

Advancements in technology have corresponded with innovative approaches in the realm of criminal justice, with policy-makers and practitioners exploring means of incorporating electronic and digital tools to advance operational mandates (Batastini, McDonald, & Morgan, 2012). Within the field of corrections, there has been a proliferation of technology initiatives in various domains, including electronic health records (Delveaux, MacDonald, McConnell, Bradley, Crawford, & Tse, 2017), electronic monitoring (Hanby, Ridha, Sullivan, Smeth, & Farrell MacDonald, 2019), and video prison visitation (Duwe & McNeeley, 2020). Underpinning these distinct initiatives is the use of new technologies to improve the management and rehabilitation of offenders.

The delivery of community-based correctional programs is one area in which technology may be used. There is considerable evidence that offender participation in correctional interventions, particularly those grounded in the Risk-Need-Responsivity model, significantly improves reintegration outcomes (Bonta & Andrews, 2016; Caudy, Tang, Ainsworth, Lerch, & Taxman, 2013; Gobeil, Blanchette, & Stewart, 2016; Mitchell, Wilson, & MacKenzie, 2007). However, for those who are released into remote communities or into locations where necessary community-based programs are not offered, the delivery of those programs can pose a significant challenge to correctional agencies. Further, the challenges in correctional service provision due to the emergence of the Covid-19 global pandemic has highlighted the relevance of exploring the use of alternative modalities of correctional program delivery. Using technology such as tele/videoconferencing can provide a solution for offenders who cannot access community-based programs through conventional means.

While there has been very little research examining the use of technology in the provision of community-based correctional interventions, there has been some research examining the provision of other types of correctional services (Wardrop & Sheahan, 2018). In general, this research suggests that services delivered through technological means such as teleconference or videoconference may be of similar efficacy and quality to in-person delivery (Brantley et al., 2019; Cornet & Van Gelder, 2020; Fuller et al., 2019; McDonald, Morgan, & Metze, 2016). For example, McDonald, Morgan, and Metze (2016) examined the experiences of 21 individuals seeking legal counsel for charges against them who communicated with their attorney through

videoconferencing instead of meeting in person. Their experiences were compared to those of 22 individuals seeking legal counsel for charges against them who communicated with their attorney in person. Results showed there were no significant differences in ratings of attorney-client working alliance, attorney-client trust, attorney fairness, or satisfaction with the legal experience between the two groups. They also found that participants in the videoconferencing group generally gave high approval ratings and found it to be an acceptable method of service delivery to facilitate pre-trial consultations between them and their defence attorney. Some participants even reported the videoconference delivery to be superior to an in-person delivery of the services. These findings mirror results of extant literature from outside of the criminal justice system showing that remote program delivery is just as effective as in-person delivery in the areas of healthcare (Amir, Taboas, & Montero, 2019; Babakhanyan et al., 2019; Hassan & Sharif, 2019; Kiluk et al., 2018; Kip, Bouman, Kelders, & Van Gemert-Pijnen, 2018; Lawson, Stolwyk, Ponsford, McKenzie, Downing, & Wong, 2020; Rietdijk, Power, Attard, Heard, & Togher, 2020; Sanders, Lane, Losinski, Nelson, Asiri, Holloway, & Rogers, 2019; Sztejn, Koransky, Fegan, & Himeloch, 2018) and substance misuse treatment (Glasner et al., 2018; Gryczynski, Carswell, O'Grady, Mitchell, & Schwartz, 2018; Lin, Casteel, Shigekawa, Weyrich, Roby, & McMenamin, 2019; Olmos, Tirado-Muños, Farré, & Torrens, 2018; Smedslund, Nilsen, Wollscheid, Steiro, Fang, & Larun, 2019).

Despite promising findings, there have been a number of concerns related to delivering remote services raised in the scholarly literature. For one, the ability to develop a high-quality therapeutic alliance between the service provider and recipient has, in some research, been more difficult to establish in remote programs compared to in-person programs (Batastini, King, Morgan, & McDaniel, 2016; Batastini & Morgan, 2016; Morland et al., 2010; Lawlor-Savage & Prentice, 2014). Other challenges raised in the literature related to remote service delivery include issues with technology, whether it be malfunctioning or misplaced (Ferrazzi & Krupa, 2018; Fowles, 2009; Levesque, Ciavatta, Castle, Prochaska, & Prochaska, 2012), maintaining client privacy and confidentiality (Batastini et al., 2016; Choi, Hegel, Marti, Marinucci, Sirrianni, & Bruce, 2014; Faragher, Zhang, Low, Folds, & Johnson, 2018), and the inability for service providers to observe relevant behavioural cues (e.g., fidgeting, tearfulness) that may be missed if they occur off-camera or are not apparent over teleconference (Batastini et al., 2016). There are further challenges that may disproportionately affect the offender population when

receiving remote program delivery. At admission to federal custody offenders report high rates of financial insecurity (Stewart, Wardrop, Wilton, Thompson, Derkzen, & Motiuk, 2017) which may create barriers to securing the necessary technology to participate in remote programs on release (e.g., phone access and service, high speed internet). Offenders also have higher rates of learning disabilities, literacy limitations, and cognitive deficits in comparison to the general public (MacPherson, Chudley, & Grant, 2011; Stewart, Sapers, Cousineau, Wilton, & August, 2014; Usher, Stewart, Wilton & Malek, 2010) and it is unclear how these responsivity concerns would affect their ability to benefit from remote programs. While these limitations have not been studied in depth, and particularly not with offender populations, they represent areas for consideration for correctional agencies wanting to explore the viability of technology-based program delivery.

Correctional Programs at CSC

Historically, Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) used a variety of programs to address the specific needs of offenders (e.g., those specific to sexual offending, family violence, substance abuse, etc.). In 2010, CSC transitioned from a multi-program model (i.e., separate programs targeting a specific criminogenic need) to a multi-target program model (i.e., an integrative program targeting multiple criminogenic needs). This multi-target model was designed as a program continuum to target multiple program need areas and domains within the same program.

There are four main program streams for men: The Integrated Correctional Program Model (ICPM), the Indigenous Integrated Correctional Model (IICPM), the Sex Offender Program stream (with both a general and Indigenous version) and the Integrated Inuit Program Model. The Indigenous program streams have a deeper focus on issues that directly affect Indigenous people, such as residential schools and cultural disruption, and are Elder-assisted (CSC, 2014a).

The woman offender main program stream options are: Women Offender Correctional Program (WOCP), Indigenous Women Offender Correctional Program (IWOC), and Women's Sex Offender Program (WSOP). Women's program streams are gender-informed to address issues specific to women.

Upon conditional release from federal custody into the community, offenders can be

referred for additional community-based correctional programs. For men offenders, these community programs are referred to as community maintenance programs; while for women, they are self-management programs (CSC, 2014a; CSC, 2014b). The purpose of the community maintenance and self-management programs is to help maintain the skills offenders have learned in their other programs (e.g., identifying obstacles, goal setting, problem solving) and apply what they have learned to real-life situations. The women's self-management programs have three primary focuses: enhancing strengths, solidifying coping strategies, and increasing self-awareness. As in the case of custodial correctional programs, Indigenous streams of both the maintenance and self-management programs are available and include Elder support (CSC, 2014a; CSC, 2014b).

Current Study

Although there is existing literature exploring the use of remote delivery of many kinds of services, there is limited research in the correctional field, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions. To meet the needs of offenders in remote locations, CSC is piloting an initiative to provide community-based programs through the use of technology (e.g., delivering programs via video or teleconferencing technology). It is hoped that the results of this research will provide concrete evidence to the viability of using technology to deliver correctional programs to offenders in the community and inform the use of this modality in the future. The research questions are as follows:

1. How were alternatively delivered programs implemented?
2. What was the rationale for providing the program through alternative delivery methods?
3. What were the levels of participant engagement and working alliance in alternatively delivered programs?
4. How did correctional program officers' perceive alternatively delivered programs compared to those delivered in-person?
5. Did technical challenges arise in the delivery of alternatively delivered programs? If yes, were they able to be resolved?
6. Did logistical challenges arise in the delivery of alternatively delivered programs? If yes, were they able to be resolved?
7. Did responsiveness concerns impede program participation? If yes, what were they and would they have also affected participation in in-person programs?

8. For Indigenous stream programs, did Elders participate in program delivery?
9. How do program facilitators feel alternatively delivered programs could be improved?

Method

Sample

The Reintegration Programs Division (RPD) provided a list of all regional referral requests for alternatively delivered community-based programs between May 26, 2017 and January 6, 2020. This list was reviewed to determine those offenders who were approved and subsequently participated in alternatively delivered community-based programs. This resulted in a sample of 126 program enrollments for 123 offenders,¹ where programs were delivered by one or more of 18 possible CPOs.² As shown in Table 1, the majority of offenders were men (89.7%), Indigenous (55.6%), and from the Prairie region (79.4%).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics for those included in OMS casefile review

	% (n)
Gender	
Men	89.7 (113)
Women	10.3 (13)
Indigenous	55.6 (70)
Region of supervision	
Atlantic	-
Quebec	-
Ontario	20.6 (26)
Prairie	79.4 (100)
Pacific	-

Nearly half of community-based programs delivered through alternative means belong within the multi-target stream of ICPM (46.8%), followed by around a quarter (24.6%) being the

¹There were 31 referrals that did not result in participation in alternatively delivered community maintenance programs. This occurred for a variety of reasons, including going unlawfully at large (UAL) and/or being suspended before the program could begin, deciding to participate through a traditional format, and the program no longer being deemed necessary. One case could not be coded as the program was ongoing at the time of data collection.

² In a minority of cases the staff member delivering the correctional program changed at some point during the program (e.g., due to a staff member going on leave, etc.).

sex offender stream of ICPM (see Table 2). There were fewer instances of the remaining program types and no instances of the Indigenous stream of the WOCP self-management program. Nearly two-thirds of programs were completed, while approximately one-third of programs were incomplete, a rate similar or better than found in previous research of women's in-person self-management community programs (Derkzen et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2015; comparable rates for men's programs are unavailable).

Table 2

OMS casefile review program type and status

	% (n)
Men's programs	
ICPM community maintenance	46.8 (59)
ICPM community maintenance – Indigenous stream	11.1 (14)
ICPM community maintenance – sex offender stream	24.6 (31)
ICPM community maintenance – Indigenous sex offender stream	7.1 (9)
Women's programs	
WOCP self-management	10.3 (13)
WOCP self-management – Indigenous stream	-
Program status	
Successful completion	56.4 (71)
Attended all sessions	4.8 (6)
Incomplete	32.5 (41)
Warrant expiry date reached	4.8 (6)
Other ^a	†

^a Other includes cases where the program status was missing or “assigned”. In these circumstances, it was clear from a review of the information contained in the Final Program Report that the offender had participated in the program.
†. Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

Procedure/Analytic Approach

The analytical approach involved two main components. The first involved a review of casefile information from the Offender Management System (OMS), an administrative database containing offender records. The second involved an analysis of feedback forms received from

CPOs.

OMS casefile review

OMS final program performance reports and casework records for all program assignments delivered through alternative means were coded ($N = 126$). Documents analyzed included program performance reports and casework records (See Appendix A for the OMS file review coding manual). Program performance reports are documents prepared by program facilitators following program completion (or termination). Such reports describe the offender's participation in the program and outline progress made by the offender in relation to each of their goals as defined at program commencement. In addition to describing substantive gains, such reports may also identify factors that promoted or impeded the quality of program delivery and the offender's ability to benefit from content (e.g., missed sessions, communication issues, levels of engagement and motivation, and other barriers to session completion). Thus, such reports were analyzed with the goal of identifying both substantive considerations (e.g., the efficacy of the sessions and receptivity of the offender) as well as logistical/technical factors that may have impacted program delivery.

Chronological casework records include entries made by an offender's case management team that detail interactions with the offender or otherwise contain information about the offender's current situation and progress. The level of detail provided by program officers in the delivery of remote programs varied considerably. In some cases, entries were made following each interaction or session with the offender; such entries discussed the nature of this interaction and any concerns noted. In regards to program sessions, this could include information regarding the content of the session as well as the offender's level of participation during the session (e.g., if they were engaged, talkative, reserved, distracted, etc.). Further, details pertaining to the delivery format and any issues experienced were also sometimes noted (e.g., inability to get hold of the offender). Casework records therefore provided details regarding both the form and content of program sessions. However, in some cases, there was minimal information entered in the casework record and most information was obtained from the final program performance report.

Correctional program officer feedback forms

The second data source included results of a feedback questionnaire previously administered by RPD. This questionnaire included questions regarding: (1) program delivery

(e.g., start and end dates, number of sessions completed, and the format of sessions); (2) the presence and impacts of any technical, logistical or material issues, (3) how alternative delivery compared to in-person formats; and (4) suggestions for improvement (see Appendix B for the feedback form). Sixty-nine completed feedback forms, completed by eight correctional program officers, were submitted to RPD. While questionnaires provided rich detail on CPOs' experiences of alternative program delivery, it is important to note that the feedback is based on a small number of respondents; in fact, approximately two-thirds of responses (65.2%) were from a single correctional program officer. Nonetheless, the themes and issues noted may bear utility in addressing concerns and identifying opportunities in moving forward.

Analytic approach

The OMS casefile review and CPO feedback provided quantitative and qualitative information for analysis and synthesis. Descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to analyze the quantitative data. Casefile documentation was analyzed using thematic analysis. Given the exploratory nature of the study, an inductive approach was used in data coding that enabled for identification of emergent themes (Charmaz, 2008). Salient themes within and across file reviews were identified and became the focal point of analysis. The results of the CPO feedback were incorporated alongside the information garnered through OMS casefile review. Analysis of information by gender, region, or Indigenous ancestry was not possible due to small numbers. In the presentation of findings, we emphasize general themes and patterns rather than exploring relationships between variables.

Results

How were alternatively delivered programs implemented?

The majority of programs were delivered solely over teleconference (81.7%, $n = 103$), while a minority of programs were delivered solely through videoconference technology (8.7%, $n = 11$). A further 9.5% ($n = 12$) of programs were delivered using teleconference, videoconference, and in-person sessions or two of these three options. Further, the majority of programs were delivered on a one-on-one basis (85.7%, $n = 108$), while 4.0% ($n = 5$) occurred in a small group, and 8.7% ($n = 11$) occurred in a mixture of one-on-one and small group sessions. In a very small number of file reviews there was insufficient information to assess whether the program was delivered individually or in a group setting.

What was the rationale for providing the program through alternative delivery methods?

Unsurprisingly given the impetus of this pilot initiative, over three-quarters of programs were delivered through alternative methods due, in part, of the offender's remote location, often in an Indigenous community (see Table 3). While less common, other reasons for remote program delivery included geographical distance between the program participant and CPO, family obligations, or other constraints (e.g., lack of transportation, ambiguous "location" issues, incompatible work schedules, and emotional issues).

Table 3

Rationale for providing community-based program through alternative methods

	% (n)
Remote community	78.6 (99)
Not a remote community, but a CPO was not available in the offender's community	8.7 (11)
Family commitments	†
Other	6.4 (8)
Insufficient information in OMS casefiles	7.9 (10)

Note. As there could be multiple reasons for providing the program through alternative methods, percentages do not sum to 100. †. Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

What were the levels of participant engagement and working alliance in alternatively

delivered programs?

Participant engagement

Participant engagement was assessed using comments provided by CPOs in program reports and casework records. Engagement was considered by way of comments pertaining to the participant's attendance, attitude, assignment completion, motivation, expressed desire for change, discussion of materials, nature of communication, as well as general statements regarding their level participation and engagement. Using this criteria, participants were assessed as being engaged, somewhat engaged, or disengaged.

As shown in Table 4, the majority of participants (56.4%) were perceived as being engaged in the correctional program. In such cases, engaged participants were motivated, meaning that they had a positive attitude and expressed a desire to change towards a more prosocial orientation. Engaged participants were further characterized by being active participants. They often had good attendance records, completed their program assignments, and were prepared to discuss and share their personal experiences in an open and honest manner. Notably, perceptions of engagement were more commonly reported in cases where the participation consisted of only videoconference (72.7%) compared to only teleconference (54.4%) or a mix of modalities (58.3%).

Just under one-third of file reviews (31.0%), the participant was perceived to be 'somewhat' engaged in the program. CPOs indicated a variety of reasons why the program participants were categorized as 'somewhat' engaged. The most common reason was that the offender was engaged in the program but had some difficulties understanding program skills or concepts. This was followed by those with limited general engagement (e.g., offender lacked motivation to participate or make changes in their lives; participating because they 'had to') and those with variable engagement levels (e.g., engagement increased, decreased, or was inconsistent over time). In a minority of file reviews the alternative program delivery appeared to affect offenders' level of engagement. In these cases the CPO noted that it was difficult to engage with the offender over the teleconference system or the offender was not taking remote programs seriously. Sometimes, external issues affected engagement levels. For example, CPOs reported interpersonal relationships and employment as distractions from offenders' engagement with the program.

In a small proportion of cases (8.7%) offenders were perceived as being disengaged from

the correctional program. In most cases, the participant had no interest or a reluctance to participate in the program. Often offenders would resist talking about their offence, their past or current lifestyle, and provided limited (e.g., often saying “I don’t know”) responses when questioned by the CPO. Notably, similar levels of disengagement have been self-reported by offenders of in-person maintenance/self-management programs (delivered in the institutional-setting) previously (CSC, 2020).

Table 4

Was the offender engaged in the program material?

	% (n)
No	8.7 (11)
Somewhat	31.0 (39)
Yes	56.4 (71)
Insufficient information in OMS casefiles	4.0 (5)

Working alliance

A casefile review was conducted to determine CPOs’ perceptions of the working alliance throughout the alternatively delivered correctional program. The working relationship demonstrated between the CPOs and program participants was assessed using CPO notes in offender casefiles. Informed by the literature (e.g., Lustig et al., 2002), a “working alliance” was understood as involving a rapport and connection between the CPO and offender, mutual engagement, meaningful dialogue, and efficacy in sessions (i.e., sessions were useful in promoting reintegration and goal attainment). Insufficient information was available to determine to the quality of the working alliance in 15.1% of cases; in the vast majority of the remaining cases, working relationships were evaluated as either good or somewhat good.

As seen in Table 5, the majority of CPOs reported (67.5%) having a good working alliance with the participants. This did not differ meaningfully depending on whether the offender participated through only teleconference (68.0%), only videoconference (63.6%), or a mix of delivery modalities (66.7%). Evidence of a good working alliance was characterized by good rapport, meaning that the participant was easy to get along or engage with, had a positive attitude, and was polite and respectful during sessions. A good working alliance was further

characterized by good communication between the participant and the CPO, meaning that the offender was open and honest, willing to share personal information, and was comfortable with the CPO.

In approximately 15% of the file reviews the working alliance between the CPO and the program participant was categorized as ‘somewhat’ positive, indicating both positive and negative interactions between the CPO and the offender. There were a variety of reasons why working alliances could be categorized as ‘somewhat’ positive. The most common reason was that the participant had a variable working alliance with the CPO, meaning that the participant inconsistently shared personal information, had inconsistent engagement in the program, or that the working alliance improved or changed over time. This was followed by those who were perceived as displaying negative emotions (e.g., offender was described as aggressive, negative, challenging, frustrated, rude) or behaviour (e.g., unwilling to discuss personal experiences, difficult to engage with, gave yes/no answers) alongside positive behaviour (e.g., offender was polite or respectful, working alliance was satisfactory). In a minority of files reviews, responsivity issues impeded the working alliance. In these cases, the CPO noted that responsivity issues (e.g., low motivation) hindered communication or that the participant struggled with program content. Sometimes the alternative program delivery appeared to affect the working alliance between the CPO and the participant. In these cases, the CPO noted that it was hard to engage the participant over the telephone.

Table 5

Did the program participant and the correctional program officer have a good working alliance?

	% (n)
No	†
Somewhat	15.1 (19)
Yes	67.5 (85)
Insufficient information in OMS casefiles	15.1 (19)

How did correctional program officers perceive alternatively delivered programs

compared to those delivered in-person?

CPO feedback data also provided some preliminary insights into how CPOs may interpret their experiences using alternative delivery relative to in-person delivery, as one component of the questionnaire asked respondents to identify how the two formats compared. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents rated eight aspects of remote program delivery (compared to in-person delivery) with the following response options: “much worse,” “worse,” “no difference,” “better,” and “much better.”

As illustrated in the table below, no measures were describe as being “much worse” or “much better” in regards to alternative versus in-person delivery. Instead, responses across measures suggest a degree of comparability, or only some degree of difference. Illustratively, the majority of program officers identified ‘no difference’ across formats when it came to:

- Participants’ ability to express their thoughts and feelings (80.9%)
- Participant motivation and engagement in the program (76.1%)
 - Note that 10.4% rated this measure as “better”
- Participants’ comprehension of content (69.1%)
- Participants’ ability to make links between the content and their life (67.6%)
- CPOs’ ability to help the participant deal with daily problems and high risk situations (67.6%)

On some items, there was indication that the measure was sometimes less favourable in the case of alternative delivery. For example, a slight majority (51.5%) expressed that CPO ability to explain program content was “worse”. In regards to the quality of the participants’ self-managements, responses were somewhat split between “no difference” (54.4%) and “worse” (44.1%).

Table 6

Correctional Program Officers Perceptions of APD Outcomes Compared to In-person Delivery

	As compared to your experience with in-person delivery, how do you think the delivery format affected...				
	Much worse	Worse	No difference	Better	Much better
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
The participants' ability to express their thoughts and feelings	†	14.7% (10)	80.9% (55)	†	-
Working alliance	†	32.4% (22)	60.3% (41)	†	-
Your ability to explain the content	-	51.5% (35)	48.5% (33)	-	-
Participants comprehension of content	†	26.5% (18)	69.1% (47)	†	-
Participants ability to make links between the content and their life	-	29.4% (20)	67.6% (46)	†	-
Your ability to help the participant deal with daily problems and high risk situations	†	29.4% (20)	67.6% (46)	†	-
The quality of the participants' self-management (self-monitoring, awareness of personal targets, skill use, etc.)	-	44.1% (30)	54.4% (37)	†	-
Participant's motivation and engagement in the program	†	11.9% (8)	76.1% (51)	10.4% (7)	-

Note. Missing data ranged from 1.4% to 2.9%; † = Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

Did technical challenges arise in the delivery of alternatively delivered programs? If yes, were they able to be resolved?

Technical challenges in the context of alternative program delivery were examined in two ways: (1) through analysis of offender casework record notes and program reports, and (2) through responses provided by CPOs in the feedback questionnaire. Results from both data sources revealed similarities in the technical issues that were experienced in the course of

program delivery.

In analyzing technical issues noted in casefile documents, technical challenges were classified as major and minor; the former included issues that prevented session delivery, while minor issues were those that did not prevent session delivery. Challenges were also classified as being resolved, partially resolved, or not resolved. Of note, while some CPOs specifically identified experiencing technical issues, the absence of information in offender casefiles does not necessarily indicate that issues were not experienced; this absence may also reflect lack of recording of such issues. It is therefore possible that the presence of technical issues is understated in the review of casefiles; nonetheless, identified themes shed light on the possible issues that CPOs may encounter when delivering programs remotely.

Technical challenges associated with alternative program delivery occurred in less than half of all files reviewed (42.1%; see Table 7). Most cases of technical issues were classified as ‘minor’ technical challenges, followed by ‘major’. In approximately one-fifth of cases, both minor and major technical challenges occurred. CPO questionnaire responses presented similar findings; respondents noted that technical issues were not apparent in 58% of cases.

Table 7

Prevalence of technical challenges and solutions

	% (n)
No challenges	57.9 (73)
Challenges present	42.1 (53)
Only minor challenges	56.6 (30)
Only major challenges	22.6 (12)
Both minor and major challenges	20.8 (11)
Challenges not resolved	13.2 (7)
Challenges somewhat resolved	†
Challenges resolved	79.3 (42)

Note. Minor challenges were those that did not prevent the program session from progressing, while major challenges were those that prevented the program session from progressing. †. Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

In order to identify the types technical challenges experienced during remote delivery, challenges were divided into two distinct groups: (1) technical challenges that were able or ‘somewhat’ able to be resolved; and (2) technical challenges that were unable to be resolved. Technical challenges and the associated solutions are presented for resolved and ‘somewhat’ resolved cases first and are presented below.

Resolved or ‘somewhat’ resolved technical challenges

As outlined in Table 8, seven common technical challenges arose during alternative program delivery. The most prominent challenge was a lack of consistent phone access. This included situations in which the offender did not have access to a cell phone or telephone to call into the program, or had limited or inconsistent access to a phone (e.g., relied on a family member for phone access, lost cell phone while enrolled in the program). Another prominent technical challenge encountered was difficulty with the tele or videoconferencing system. For example, this included situations in which the offender had issues calling into the teleconference system, had difficulty entering conference call codes, had difficulty dialing telephone numbers, or the offender forgot or lost the conference call codes.

Other technical challenges experienced during alternatively delivered programs included issues with the equipment not working, connection issues, and difficulty reaching the offender due to technical issues. In some file reviews, the offender would have access to a cell phone but had a limited cell phone plan (e.g., a lack of ‘minutes’) and in other file reviews, unspecified technical issues arose, however, these challenges occurred less frequently. Questionnaire data pointed to similar themes, with identified technical issues related to proper phone access (18.8%), connection issues (10.4%) and phone reception issues (5.8%).

Table 8

Technical challenges themes and examples

Theme	Examples
No or Limited Phone Access	No access to telephone, limited or inconsistent access, relied on external sources for phone access, lost phone
Difficulty with Tele or Videoconference System	Issues calling into teleconference system, issues with conference call codes, difficulty dialing numbers, forgetting or losing conference call codes
Equipment not Working	Videoconference equipment not working, conference line down/not working, telephone or cellphone not working or broken
Connection Issues	Poor reception, poor call quality, lags in call or video-call, call was dropped
CPO Unable to Reach Offender due to Technical Issues	Phone out of service
Access to Cell Phone but Limited Minutes	Unable to use cell phone due to 'pay as you go' payment plan, lacked minutes on cell phone
Unspecified Technical Issues	Unspecified issues with telephone, unspecified technical difficulties

Note. Themes are listed from most to least prevalent.

Technical challenges were able to be somewhat or fully resolved in the majority (86.8%) of file reviews. Nine main themes emerged when examining solutions to technical problems (see Table 9).

Technical challenges were often resolved when the participant or the CPO made alternative arrangements to participate in the program. For example, offenders often had to secure a telephone when one was not available to them, either by borrowing a family member's phone, securing phone access outside of the home (e.g., band office), or purchasing a cell phone

and/or cell phone plan to accommodate the program. In a related theme, participants often solved technical challenges by reaching out to the CPO in advance of program sessions when problems arose. For example, participants would reach out to the CPO in advance of the program session (often through their Parole Officer) when they lost phone access (e.g., phone was not in service) or they had issues with the teleconference line (e.g., line was not working, forgot conference call codes).

Another solution involved the use of alternative technology to facilitate participation. For example, in some file reviews the CPO and offender completed program sessions over the telephone instead of the teleconference or videoconference system. This solution was often employed when the participant had difficulty with the teleconference line, conference call codes, or the tele/video system was not working. Further, in many cases the CPO and offender completed missed sessions due to technical challenges at the end of the program.

It is important to acknowledge that, often, multiple solutions were necessary to resolve a technical challenge and the noted themes are not mutually exclusive. A frequent example of this would be when technical issues prevent an offender from calling into the program session. This would often result in the CPO persistently following up with the participant while the participant seeks to regain functioning phone access. Once the CPO and offender were able to connect, they would often reschedule the program session to continue the program.

Table 9

Solutions that were able or 'somewhat' able to resolve technical challenges

Solution	Examples
Alternative arrangements made by CPO and/or participant	Offender found an alternative phone to use; offender secured more 'minutes' on cellphone plan or altered cell phone plan; offender purchased a cell phone; CPO made changes in schedule; offender would call the CPO to participate in program sessions
Missed sessions completed	Missed sessions were completed at end of program, sessions rescheduled
Participant reached out to CPO to solve issue	Offender called ahead of time when conference codes lost or forgotten; contacted CPO when phone was not in service
Miscellaneous	No resolution possible/necessary; connection issues were resolved without action
Use of Alternative Technology	Using telephone to proceed with session when there were difficulties with teleconference line, conference codes; Use of telephone when videoconference is not working or challenges to VC access
Correctional Program Officer persistence	Leaving voicemails, calling offender frequently to start/continue program, calls to remind offender to call into program sessions
Explanation of technology resolved issue	CPO explained conference call system
Offender received assistance from others	Offender received external help (e.g., spouse) when technological difficulties arose

Note. Themes are listed from most to least prevalent.

Unresolved technical challenges

Of those who experienced technical challenges, a small proportion were unable to be

resolved (13.2%). Having no or limited phone access was the most common technical challenge unable to be resolved. This included situations in which the participant did not have access to a phone, had limited or inconsistent access (e.g., relied on a family member or employer for access), or the participant had lost their phone. This was followed by connection issues, such that there was poor reception, poor call quality, or dropped calls during program sessions. Other unresolved challenges that occurred less frequently included the CPO being unable to reach the offender due to service issues, difficulty using the teleconference or videoconference system, and the teleconference or videoconference system not working.

Effect of technical challenges on the quality of program delivery

The effect of technical challenges on the quality of program delivery was examined. CPOs reported that technical challenges did not affect the quality of program delivery in the majority of file reviews (71.7%). Table 10 breaks down of the impact of technical challenges on the quality of alternative program delivery. CPO questionnaire findings shed further light on how technical challenges may impact program quality. Specifically, according to respondents, when technical challenges were noted to have been present, they were typically not seen as affecting program delivery (78.3%). In cases where technical challenges were perceived to affect program delivery, the degree of impact was categorized by survey respondents as ‘somewhat affected’ (8.7%), ‘minimally affected’ (7.2%), and ‘inconvenienced’ (4.3%). CPOs also provided feedback on the technical support they received when administering programs remotely. Approximately one-quarter (26.1%) of CPOs did not receive any technical support. Lack of technical support was often attributed to the CPO not requiring any support, although in a small number of cases, details regarding technical need were not provided. Finally, survey respondents who did receive technical support were asked to rate the quality of this support on a scale ranging from 1 to 10. On average, the technical support was rated an 8.5/10 by the CPOs who did receive it, with the majority of CPOs (65.2%) giving the support a score of 9/10.

Table 10

If there were technical challenges, did they affect the quality of program delivery?

	% (n)
No	71.7 (38)
Somewhat	9.4 (5)
Yes	13.2 (7)
Insufficient information in OMS casefiles	†

†. Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

Did logistical challenges arise in the delivery of alternatively delivered programs? If yes, were they able to be resolved?

Logistical challenges associated with alternative program delivery were also examined through analysis of casefile documents and CPO questionnaire responses. Using available information on casefiles, logistical issues in cases were classified as being either minor or major; minor challenges were those that do not prevent sessions from proceeding, while major challenges did prevent sessions from proceeding. As in the case of technical issues, the casefile analysis is limited to information that was specified within reports; therefore findings may possibly understate the scope of issues and/or not fully identify of all possible issues.

Logistical challenges associated with alternative program delivery occurred in the majority of files reviewed (65.1%). As can be seen in Table 11, most cases of logistical issues were classified as ‘major’ logistical challenges followed by ‘minor’. In less than one-fifth of cases both minor and major logistical challenges occurred.

In order to identify the types of logistical challenges experienced during remote delivery, challenges were separated into three distinct groups: (1) logistical challenges that were able to be resolved; (2) those that were ‘somewhat’ able to be resolved; and (3) those that were unable to be resolved. Logistical challenges that were able to be resolved, along with types of solutions to these challenges are presented first, followed by ‘somewhat’ and ‘no resolution’.

Table 11

Prevalence of logistical challenges and solutions

	% (n)
No challenges	34.9 (44)
Challenges present	65.1 (82)
Only minor challenges	21.4 (27)
Only major challenges	25.4 (32)
Both minor and major challenges	18.3 (23)
Challenges not resolved	11.0 (9)
Challenges somewhat resolved	24.4 (20)
Challenges resolved	63.4 (52)

Note. Minor challenges were those that do not prevent the program session from progressing, while major challenges were those that did prevent the program session from progressing. In one case there was insufficient information to determine if the logistical challenge was resolved.

Resolved logistical challenges

As outlined in Table 12, the most prominent logistical challenge that arose during alternative program delivery was missed, late, or rescheduled session(s) due to participant reasons. This included situations in which the participant forgot about the program session, the participant did not call in for a scheduled session, or the offender slept through the session. Similarly, the participant having missed, late, or rescheduled session(s) due to external commitments or issues was another challenge that frequently arose during alternative program delivery. In these cases the participant may have missed a session due to medical appointments, family care, death in the family, employment, or other urgent tasks (e.g., broken water heater).

Other prominent themes focused on difficulties faced by the CPO when trying to make contact with the offender, either to begin the program or difficulty reaching the participant once the program had started. For example, in these cases, the CPO may have had incorrect contact information, the participant could not be located, or the participant did not answer calls from the CPO. In many cases, multiple logistical challenges occurred or issues persisted across program sessions.

Table 12

Logistical challenges and examples in cases where issues were able to be resolved

Theme	Examples
Missed, late, or rescheduled sessions due to offender reasons	Offender forgot about the session; offender did not call in for the session; offender slept through the session
Missed, late and/or rescheduled sessions due to external commitments/issues	Medical appointments, family care, death in family, employment, sickness, miscellaneous urgent tasks
CPO had difficulty reaching offender to set up start of program	CPO did not have correct contact information; offender did not answer calls or text messages
CPO could not reach or had difficulty reaching participant during program	Offender did not answer phone; offender was not home; offender could not be located; CPO did not have correct contact information; Offender did not return calls or text messages; Phone line was busy
Offender was distracted during sessions and/or distraction lead to missed sessions	No privacy to participate in session; children present; participating while at work; loud noises in the background
Missed or late sessions due to miscommunication	CPO forgot about the session; CPO was late for the session; offender did not know to call in for the session
Offender late for session due to travel	Transportation issues; public transportation delays
Program delayed or cancelled due to external factors	Family illness; Participation in alternative treatment; employment
Missed or late sessions for unspecified reasons	-
Issues getting homework/worksheets from parole officer	Homework was not received on time for the session

Note. Themes are listed from most to least prevalent.

Logistical challenges were able to be resolved in the majority of files reviewed (63.4%). As can be seen in Table 13, the most common solution to logistical challenges was the completion of missed sessions (e.g., completing missed sessions at the end of the program session, completing the program session at another time, or rescheduling program sessions). For example, missed sessions were completed if the participant had missed a session due to external

or participant reasons, or if the CPO had difficulty reaching the participant for a program session. Persistence and accommodations on behalf of the CPO were prevalent solutions to many logistical challenges. In these cases, the CPO may have left voicemails or messages for the participant, reminded the participant to call into sessions, or was flexible with program scheduling. This solution was common across a variety of logistical challenges (e.g., missed sessions due to participant reasons, difficulties reaching offender to start or continue the program). Other solutions were useful for only one challenge. For example, when there were issues getting homework/worksheets to the offender, the CPO and the participant discussed their responses verbally and the CPO would transcribe this information.

Table 13

Solutions to logistical challenges that were able to be resolved

Solution	Examples
Missed sessions were completed	Missed sessions were completed at end of program; sessions were completed at another time; sessions rescheduled
CPO persistence and/or accommodation	CPO left voicemail reminders; calls to remind participant to call into sessions; flexibility in scheduling program sessions; CPO would call participant for the program
Participant followed-up with CPO or provided solutions	Participant called CPO when available for the program; participant reached out to solve issues
CPO reprimanded participant	CPO warned participant to take program seriously; CPO had a talk with the participant
Unspecified solution	Solution not mentioned; session was able to continue despite challenge
Participant found suitable environment to participate in the program	-
Homework was completed verbally with CPO or CPO transcribed homework	-
Participation in program was deemed to be satisfied	-

Note. Themes are listed from most to least prevalent.

‘Somewhat’ resolved logistical issues

As outlined in Table 14, nine main challenges emerged when examining the types of

logistical challenges that were ‘somewhat’ able to be resolved. Missed, late, or rescheduled sessions due to offender reasons, or due to external reasons, were the most common logistical challenges noted in casefile review. For example, these challenges refer to situations in which the participant may have forgotten to call in for the program session, or the participant missed sessions as they conflicted with the his employment.

Distraction during program sessions was another logistical challenge that occurred during alternative program delivery. For example, in some cases the participant would participate in the program while at work or on their lunch break, leading to rushed sessions and ultimately a lack of engagement in the session. Similar to resolved logistical challenges, difficulty reaching the participant, either for the initial program set-up or for program sessions, was a common challenge. Often, a number of challenges occurred in each case. For example, an participant may have had a missed session due to participant reasons (e.g., forgot about session), was late for a session due to external commitments (e.g., offender was at work), and was distracted during a session in which the participant participated during working hours.

Logistical challenges were able to be ‘somewhat’ resolved in approximately one-quarter of cases (24.4%). Often, logistical issues were coded as ‘somewhat’ able to be resolved when multiple issues were present and only some of the challenges were able to be resolved. In these cases, solutions to the challenges were comparable to the solutions for resolved logistical challenges described above. Rescheduling or completing missed sessions, CPO persistence, CPO reprimanding the participant, and the participant following up with the CPO were common solutions. However, in these cases some logistical challenges were also unable to be adequately resolved. For example, this included cases where it was not possible to reschedule missed sessions, or the participant continued to be distracted during program sessions. In some cases, logistical issues lead to program delays, transition to a different program stream, or program cancellations.

Table 14

Logistical challenges and examples in cases where issues were somewhat able to be resolved

Theme	Examples
Missed, late, or rescheduled sessions due to offender reasons	Offender forgot about session; offender did not call in for session; offender mixed days up
Missed, late, or rescheduled sessions due to external commitments and/or offender not prioritizing program	Employment; childcare/ babysitting; schedule conflicts; other miscellaneous tasks
Offender distracted during sessions and/or distraction leading to missed sessions	Offender participated while at work or on lunch break, running errands or completing unrelated tasks
CPO could not reach or had difficulty reaching the offender during program	Offender did not answer calls or text messages; phone line busy; CPO did not have correct contact information
CPO had difficulty reaching offender to set up start of program	CPO did not have correct contact information; offender did not answer calls or text messages
Offender was not prepared for session and/or had issues with program components	Offender did not have worksheets; offender forgot worksheets; difficulty organizing worksheets
Participation delayed and/or cancelled due to the offender's external or personal factors	Employment; suspension; offender had issues in personal life
Offender was not prepared for session and/or had issues with program components	Offender did not have worksheets; offender forgot worksheets; difficulty organizing worksheets
Responsivity issues impacted participation	Worksheets were too difficult for the offender to complete

Note. Themes are listed in order of prevalence, from most to least prevalent.

Unresolved logistical challenges

A small proportion of logistical challenges were unable to be resolved (11.0%). Missed

sessions due to external issues or commitments was a common challenge that was unable to be resolved. This included situations in which the participant had alternative commitments (e.g., family matters, lack of childcare, medical treatments) that affected their ability to participate. Another logistical challenge that was unable to be resolved was missed sessions due to participant reasons. This included situations in which the offender forgot about the program, did not call in for the program, or was not home to participate in the program session. Other issues that were unable to be resolved included delays in program due to external circumstances, missed sessions due to unauthorized absences or unknown reasons, and the offender being unlawfully at large.

Effect of logistical challenges on quality of program delivery

The study authors rated impact of logistical challenges on the quality of program delivery was examined. In the majority of cases (58.5%), CPOs reported that logistical challenges did not affect the quality of program delivery. See Table 15 for a breakdown of the impact of logistical challenges on the quality of alternative program delivery.

Table 15

If there were logistical challenges, did they affect the quality of program delivery?

	% (n)
No	58.5 (48)
Somewhat	17.1 (14)
Yes	19.5 (16)
Insufficient Information in OMS casefiles	†

†. Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

CPO feedback regarding logistical challenges

CPOs were asked to provide feedback regarding the support they received with logistical tasks and program materials. Specifically, this referred to assistance provided by local parole officers who had face-to-face meetings with the offender. In general, most CPOs (62.3%) noted they felt supported by the parole officers, such that the parole officers were helpful and available when needed. Further, just under one-third (31.9%) of CPOs noted that the parole officer facilitated the delivery of program handouts and materials between the participant and the CPO.

Did responsivity concerns impede program participation? If yes, what were they and would they have also affected participation in in-person program participation?

As can be seen in Table 16, responsivity concerns that impeded participation in correctional programs occurred in 9.5% of cases reviewed. A similar proportion of cases were classified as ‘somewhat’ impeding participation in alternative delivery programs. The majority of cases reviewed indicated no responsivity concerns.

Table 16

Did responsivity concerns impede participation in program?

	% (n)
No	76.2 (96)
Somewhat	9.5 (12)
Yes	9.5 (12)
Insufficient Information in OMS casefiles	4.8 (6)

Cognitive or intellectual difficulties were the most commonly identified responsivity factor identified by CPOs that impeded or somewhat impeded participation in correctional programs. This refers to issues with memory, attention, concentration, or comprehension that affected program participation. This was followed by unspecified responsivity concerns, meaning that program modifications or extra support was required for the offender to participate in the program, however, the reason for this extra support was not specified. The presence of a mental health issue, learning disability, and/or neurodevelopmental disorder (e.g., Bipolar disorder, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder) also emerged as a responsivity concern that impeded or somewhat impeded program participation. In many of these cases where responsivity issues arose, modifications or adaptations to the program was necessary by the CPO.

The authors also considered whether responsivity concerns may have affected offender participation in traditional in-personal delivery of correctional programs (e.g., reading and writing difficulties that likely would have affected their ability to complete program assignments regardless of program modality). Responsivity concerns would have also impeded in-person delivery of programs in just under three-quarters of cases (70.8%) and would have ‘somewhat’ impeded participation in traditional in-person programs in just under one-third of cases (29.2%)

where a responsiveness concern was noted.

For Indigenous stream programs, did Elders participate in program delivery?

Just under one-fifth (18.3%) of alternatively delivered program cases had an enrollment in an Indigenous program stream. As can be seen in Table 17, in the majority of APD cases there was no Elder participation in program sessions. However, other CSC Indigenous supports (e.g., Indigenous Liaison Officer) and other non-CSC Indigenous supports (e.g., ceremonies, drumming) were available in a large portion of file reviews.

Table 17

Elder participation in Indigenous program streams

	% (n)
Elder Participation	0 (0)
No Elder participation, and no other Indigenous supports	34.8 (8)
No Elder participation, but there were other CSC Indigenous supports	†
No Elder participation, but there were other non-CSC Indigenous supports	43.5 (10)

Note. As there could be multiple supports indicated per case, percentages do not sum to 100. Cases where there was insufficient information to determine Elder support were removed from analyses (n = 3). † = Numbers suppressed due to frequency < 5.

How do Correctional Program Officers feel alternatively delivered programs could be improved?

CPO questionnaire data was also analyzed to consider feedback regarding improvements and suggestions in moving forward. The questionnaire asked respondents: “What would have helped to improve the quality of tele/video program delivery?” In total, 31.9% of respondents provided a response to this question. Suggestions for improvement included:

- Improving telephone access for offenders
- Using videoconference instead of teleconference
- Providing additional resources to offenders to assist in worksheets
- Redesigning programs to render them more suited to remote delivery

CPOs were also asked to provide any additional comments regarding their experiences with alternative program delivery. Most respondents provided additional comments (91.3%). The

most frequent comment provided was that teleconferencing may not be the best form of program delivery, but is a good alternative when in-person programming is not feasible (65.2%).

Discussion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the viability of an ongoing pilot initiative delivering community-based programs via teleconference and videoconference technology. Results showed that, although not without challenges, delivering community-based programs through teleconference or videoconference seems to be a promising approach when in-person delivery is not an option. That said, more research is needed to determine the conditions for supporting remote or virtual program delivery on a broader scale and how practices can be strengthened to contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders and improved public safety outcomes.

Feedback provided by facilitators suggested that CPOs perceived remote delivery to be comparable to in-person delivery in terms of participants' ability to make links between the program content and their life, to express their thoughts and feelings, and in their motivation and engagement in the program. Further, in the majority of cases, CPOs noted developing a comparable working alliance with program participants compared to their experience with in-person program delivery. This feedback was further supported by the information from OMS case file reviews. Participants held positive attitudes towards the programs and shared a good rapport with the CPO in the majority of cases. These findings align with that of scholarly research in the adjacent areas of telehealth, substance misuse, and legal services where services delivered through technological means such as teleconference or videoconference can be of similar quality to in-person delivery (Brantley et al., 2019; Cornet & Van Gelder, 2020; Fuller et al., 2019; Glasner et al., 2018; Lawson et al., 2020; McDonald et al., 2016).

There were a number of other identified benefits of delivering community-based programs through remote modalities. This delivery method provided a high degree of flexibility to both the CPO and the program participant in scheduling program sessions around various external commitments (e.g., participants' education and employment schedules). Further, in a number of cases it was mentioned that the offender appreciated the format of the program. They noted their appreciation of the one-on-one nature of the program as they received more attention from the CPO and did not have to worry about how other participants' perceived them. While this was a bi-product of the remote delivery, as the majority of sessions were completed on a one-on-one basis, this was beneficial nonetheless.

That said, alternatively delivered programs were not wholly positive in all respects. CPOs reported that the delivery format made it more difficult to explain program content. Notably, when differences between the two formats were reported by CPOs, they were more likely to rate the alternative delivery format as worse. Casefile review also found technical and logistical challenges were common. Although, these challenges were usually resolved, and many of these challenges may have also presented themselves in an in-person delivery format. High rates of responsivity concerns, low motivation and engagement is common in offender populations (Brown et al., 2018; Mathias & Wormith, 2017; Stewart, Gamwell, & Wilton, 2018; Sturges, Woodhams, & Tonkin, 2015; Usher, Stewart, Wilton, & Malek, 2010). It is difficult to discern from the current data how motivation and engagement were shaped by the alternative format versus other factors, like participants' attitudes. It also seems reasonable that participants' prioritizing other commitments, like employment and social engagements, would occur regardless of the delivery format. More research is needed to adequately parse the extent to which these challenges can be directly attributed to the alternative delivery format.

It appears, however, that a minority of offenders placed less importance on the program due to the remote nature of delivery. Some participants would try to call in for the program sessions when in a distracting environment, including when driving in a car with others and/or on the job site. In some cases the CPO would immediately end the program session and reschedule to a more appropriate time and setting, while other CPOs would continue with the program session and try to make the best of it. This seems problematic as it is highly likely that the participant would be distracted by what is happening around them and would not have the privacy needed to openly discuss program content.

In some cases, the solution used to solve one challenge led to other challenges down the road. An example of this was offenders who did not have access to their own phone and relied on a family member's phone. They would sometimes miss program sessions when their family member was not around, sometimes at work or running errands, during the scheduled program session. In other cases when the participant travelled to a family member's house to use their phone, the environment was not conducive to program participation, such as disruptive children and/or a lack of privacy. These types of situations required the CPO to be very understanding of the offender's personal circumstances and flexible in rescheduling program sessions to a later time when they could regain phone access. It is also notable to mention that, in many cases, the

participant's motivation to participate in the program was a deciding factor in whether or not challenges affected program delivery. Proactive action on behalf of the participant would often resolve the issue before it caused them to miss a program session (e.g., an offender who loses phone access may seek out alternative phones or may reach out to their parole officer or CPO in advance of the session).

Best Practices and Innovative Solutions

A key ingredient of successful remote delivery was a CPO that was both persistent and flexible. CPOs had to be willing to make repeated attempts to reach the offender to both arrange for the program and to deliver individual program sessions. This could involve calling and leaving messages with the offender until a regular date and time can be set for program delivery, calling the participant in advance of the program session to serve as a reminder to attend the session, and reaching out to the participant if they miss a program session. Many CPOs also demonstrated flexibility such that they were willing to schedule and/or reschedule program sessions around the participants' existing employment and familial obligations. It was clear from the casefile review that CPOs put in a lot of effort to make program delivery a success.

Program delivery was also more likely to be successful when the CPO had strong communication and coordination with the participants' parole officer. The parole officer was often able to facilitate the initial contact between the two parties to arrange for the program and they could provide program materials at their frequency of contact meetings and then return completed work sheets to the CPO. The parole officer also proved to be a good resource for the CPO when issues arose in the delivery of the program. If the CPO was unable to reach the offender, they would sometimes reach out the parole officer to ask whether there was anything going on in the participants' life that was affecting their ability to participate in the program (e.g., finding out the offender was out of town for a funeral, finding out their new phone number, etc.). Similarly, if the participant was not appropriately prioritizing program participation, the parole officer could be another voice reinforcing the importance of program participation as a component of their correctional plan.

While the majority of participants did not have phone access issues, when this challenge was present there was often a considerable disruption to program participation (e.g., repeatedly losing access, missing multiple program sessions, etc.). A perhaps novel solution to this challenge, used in some cases, was the participant or correctional staff (whether it the CPO or the

parole officer) approaching a local organization, such as a band office or health centre, to make an informal agreement for the participant to use their phone to participate in the program. This was not necessarily a foolproof solution, as there were sometimes technical difficulties or scheduling conflicts and it may be difficult to ensure the necessary privacy for the program participant. That said, this might be a useful resolution to phone access issues when the offender is unable to find stable use of a phone – either their own or through their social ties.

Areas for Further Consideration

A clear take-away from this pilot initiative is that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to ensure remote program delivery works for every participant. Correctional staff must consider the participants' unique circumstances when determining suitability for remote programs and resolving issues when they arise. Moving forward, there are a number of aspects of remote program delivery to be considered before expanding this pilot initiative further:

- **Phone/Video access:** Securing and maintaining phone access was a substantial issue for a minority of participants. Due to high prevalence rates of financial instability and limited prosocial ties upon admission to federal custody (Stewart et al., 2017), it may be difficult for the offender to purchase their own phone/phone plan and/or borrow a phone from family while on supervised release in the community. While the responsibility of securing phone access generally rested with the participant, in a minority of cases correctional staff came up with creative solutions, like forming agreements with local organizations to allow the participant to use their phone. Few participants used a videoconference connection to participate in community maintenance programs and this is likely due to similar challenges affording and/or accessing a sufficient internet connection. Additional consideration in how to improve access to technology would be beneficial, particularly for videoconference as this may be the preferred modality in the future.
- **Technological literacy support:** Accessing the teleconference line also appeared to be challenging for a minority of offenders. It was not always clear why that was the case; however, offenders may be less technologically inclined than the general public, particularly if they have served an extended period of incarceration. Additional consideration in briefing participants on how to use the teleconferencing or videoconferencing system may be beneficial.

- **Delivery of program materials:** In some cases, the delivery of program materials to the participant and the return of completed program assignments to the CPO was problematic. For many cases, the participant's parole officer was the primary method in which program materials were disseminated. Perhaps formalizing this process would reduce these challenges in the future.
- **Consideration of offenders' release conditions:** In a minority of cases, offenders had a technology-related release condition which prevented them from using mobile devices and, therefore, they had to rely on a landline telephone to participate in the correctional program. Consideration of offenders' specific release conditions is important when determining the most appropriate method of program delivery.
- **Guidelines for appropriate participation settings:** CPOs should be provided with clear guidelines for the latitude given to program participants. Alternative arrangements must be made to avoid distracting environments and, during the session, the participant's attention must be focused on program participation rather than other activities such as driving and work.
- **Effect of participant motivation and engagement:** As current results found that challenges were sometimes able to be averted through proactive action on behalf of the program participant, it would be judicious to consider characteristics which may promote this level of engagement when referring offenders to remote program delivery. While program referrals are driven based on offender risk, being aware of the participants' motivation level would enable CPOs to develop and implement strategies as early as possible with offenders to increase or maintain motivation and engagement levels. In turn, this may increase the likelihood of offenders' effectively working through challenges with remote delivery that arise.
- **Indigenous services and programming:** While Indigenous supports (CSC-based and/or community-based supports) were widely available to those participants in an Indigenous-stream program, it was notable that Elders were not routinely directly involved in program sessions. Looking for ways to directly involve Elders, when resources allow, may be an area for future consideration.
- **Individual versus group delivery formats:** It is unclear whether delivering community-based programs via technology would work in a larger group-based setting. The majority

of participants participated in the program on a one-on-one basis with the CPO and this likely had a positive effect on encouraging offender engagement and the development of a strong working alliance between the participant the CPO. These facets may be harder to establish and maintain with a group of participants. Further, many of the technological and logistical challenges were resolved, in part, by rescheduling the program session or simply resuming the program at the next scheduled session. This may not be feasible in a group setting. Therefore, it may not be advisable to expand the use of remote program delivery to groups at this time.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any research study, there are limitations that restrict conclusions and point to where further research is needed. In particular, this research is limited by the sources of data used. With the exception of the CPO feedback forms, the majority of the analysis was based on information written by correctional staff in records found within OMS. While these administrative records provided a wealth of information, it is important to acknowledge that correctional staff did not record this information with research in mind. Instead, they recorded this information for operational purposes and the analysis is the researchers' perceptions of this information. There is the risk that this information was taken out of context and does not fully capture the true experience delivering community-based programs via technological modalities. The strong alignment between the casefile review results and CPO feedback forms mitigate this limitation. It should be noted, though, that one particularly dedicated CPO submitted approximately two-thirds of the feedback forms; therefore, those results represent few distinct perspectives. Nevertheless, the congruity between casefile documents and CPO feedback forms does suggest some degree of utility in the casefile review information. Future research should prioritize semi-structured qualitative interviews with both CPOs and program participants involved in alternatively delivered programs. This would allow the opportunity for correctional staff to provide more in-depth information regarding their perceptions of alternative program delivery, with researchers being able to ask follow-up questions to solicit more information. It would be of interest to know whether they preferred remote program delivery compared to in-person program delivery and the reasons for this preference. Interviews with program participants would have the added benefit of exploring alternative program delivery from the participants' point of view, something noticeably lacking in the current research. It may also be

beneficial to solicit the perspectives of participants' parole officers regarding remote program delivery to gauge their concerns about this initiative. Altogether, these interviews would add to our knowledge of what works well, what does not work, and how alternative program delivery can be improved to better contribute to offender rehabilitation.

Further, while there were a small number of questions in the feedback form asking CPOs to compare their experiences with remote program delivery to that of in-person program delivery, we are limited in our ability to compare the effects of these two modalities. For example, we can conclude that the majority of program participants were engaged with program material, but we cannot speak to whether they are more or less engaged than participants of in-person programs. To answer these types of research questions we would need to directly compare samples of program participants who participated remotely versus in-person. Areas to examine include: (a) pre-/post-program assessment battery examining change in relevant constructs (e.g., antisocial attitudes, problem-solving, etc.), (b) CPO-participant working alliance as assessed using a standardized assessment, (c) program completion rates, (d) time to program completion, and (e) recidivism rates. It would also be beneficial to assess whether greater quantity and severity of challenges experienced during remote program delivery was associated with greater rates of revocations and revocations with an offence. At this time, an insufficient number of offenders have participated in alternatively delivered programs to allow for this type of analysis. Future research may provide more confident conclusions regarding the viability and efficacy of delivering community-based programs via technology to offenders on supervised release.

While it is premature to conclude that delivering community-based programs through teleconference or videoconference technology would currently be viable on a larger scale, the present findings do show promise. In part, this appears to be due to the dedication of the correctional staff involved in this initiative and the motivation of participating offenders to work through the challenges associated with remote program delivery. It is possible that the results are as positive as they are because of this dedication and that lower levels of dedication across CPOs may lead to program drift and undermine the outcomes. It should also be considered whether this level of dedication on behalf of CPOs is realistic, particularly if this initiative were expanded more widely to group program delivery. A common solution to both technical and logistical challenges was to complete a make-up session or simply continue with the program at the next

scheduled session time. This may not be a feasible solution if the program is being delivered to a larger group.

It is clear from the current results that remote program delivery is promising when in-person delivery is not possible. That said, given the reservations regarding the feasibility of resolving technical and logistical challenges on a larger scale, as well as the perception that the high levels of participant engagement and working alliance may be at least partly due to the one-on-one nature of the pilot initiative, it is not recommended that remote delivery replace in-person delivery and caution should be exercised when expanding this initiative beyond one-on-one program delivery given current technological and accessibility limitations. Improvements in technology and its accessibility in offenders' lives would permit more consistent and meaningful contact with program facilitators and may mitigate many of the challenges seen throughout this pilot initiative. At present, the research only supports the use of remote program delivery on a one-on-one basis when traditional delivery methods are not viable.

Conclusions

The results of this research exploring a pilot initiative to deliver community-based programs to offenders in remote communities provides preliminary evidence that this is a promising option when in-person intervention is not possible. CPOs generally found the experience of delivering remote programs to be comparable to in-person. That said, some participants experienced logistical and technical challenges and creative solutions were usually found. This initiative would benefit from further research to both directly solicit the perspectives of CPOs and program participants and to more comprehensively compare alternative delivery methods to traditional delivery. At this time, the current research supports the use of remote program delivery on a one-on-one basis only in cases where traditional delivery methods are not possible given the limitations of technological solutions and offender accessibility issues.

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Appendix A: OMS Coding Manual

Coder name:	
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Offender information

FPS:	
Current Status:	[Supervised, Incarcerated, Suspended – TD, Suspended – UAL, Sentence completed, Remand terminated]
Offender gender:	[M, F]
Indigenous status:	[Indigenous, Non-Indigenous]
Sentence commencement date	[YYYY-MM-DD]
Warrant expiry date	[YYYY-MM-DD]
Parole Office:	

Program information

CPO site:	
CPO/ACPO:	
Program	
Program status	[Successful completion, Attended all sessions, Incomplete, Warrant expiry date reached]
Program start date	[YYYY-MM-DD]
Program end date	[YYYY-MM-DD]
Total number of sessions completed:	
Total number of sessions in program:	

Q1. Program delivered through: <i>(check all that apply)</i>	
_____	Teleconference/phone
_____	Videoconference
_____	In-person
Q2. Program delivered in: <i>(check all that apply)</i>	
_____	Insufficient information
_____	One-on-one
_____	Small group

Q3. Reason for program delivered through alternative delivery methods: <i>(check all that apply)</i>	
☐	Insufficient information
☐	Remote community
☐	Not a remote community, but CPO is unavailable in the offender's community
☐	Family commitments (e.g., parenting responsibilities)
☐	Other, please specify: _____

Q4. If the program was an Indigenous-stream, was there Elder involvement in the program sessions? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	
☐	N/A
☐	Insufficient information
☐	Yes, an Elder participated in program sessions
☐	No and there were no other Indigenous supports
☐	No, but there were other CSC Indigenous supports (e.g., Aboriginal/Indigenous Liaison Officer, etc.)
☐	No, but there were other non-CSC Indigenous supports (e.g., Elders in their community, participation in ceremonies, drumming, etc.)

Technical and logistical challenges

Q5. Were there any noted technical challenges (e.g., phone access, poor phone/video quality) associated with delivering the program through APD? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	
☐	No
☐	Minor technical challenges (i.e., those that <i>do not</i> prevent the program from progressing)
☐	Major technical challenges (i.e., those that <i>do</i> prevent the program from progressing)
Q5a. If minor or major technical challenges, please specify:	
Q5b. If minor or major technical challenges, were they able to be resolved?	
☐	Insufficient information

_____	No
_____	Somewhat
_____	Yes
Q5c. If minor or major technical challenges were able to be resolved, please specify:	
Q5d. If minor or major technical challenges, did they affect the quality of program delivery?	
_____	Insufficient information
_____	No
_____	Somewhat
_____	Yes

Q6. Were there any noted logistical challenges (e.g., accessing program materials, room scheduling in the parole office, participant not phoning in or not picking up the phone, etc.) associated with delivering the program through APD? (<i>check all that apply</i>)	
_____	No
_____	Minor logistical challenges (i.e., those that <i>do not</i> prevent the program from progressing)
_____	Major logistical challenges (i.e., those that <i>do</i> prevent the program from progressing)
Q6a. If minor or major logistical challenges, please specify:	
Q6b. If minor or major logistical challenges, were they able to be resolved?	
_____	Insufficient information
_____	No
_____	Somewhat
_____	Yes
Q6c. If minor or major logistical challenges were able to be resolved, please specify:	
Q6d. If minor or major logistical challenges, did they affect the quality of program delivery?	
_____	Insufficient information

_____	No
_____	Somewhat
_____	Yes

Responsivity concerns

Q7. Did the offender have any noted responsivity concerns that may have impeded their ability to fully participate in the program?	
_____	Insufficient information
_____	No
_____	Somewhat (concerns were minor and/or were able to be addressed through modifications of the program)
_____	Yes (concerns were significant and/or modifications to the program were insufficient)
Q7a. If yes or somewhat, please specify	
Q7b. Would these responsivity concerns have impeded in-person program delivery?	
_____	No
_____	Possibly/Somewhat
_____	Yes
_____	I don't know

Program performance

Q8. Total number of identified personal targets:	
Q8a. Number of personal targets that were assessed to improve:	
Q8b. Number of personal targets that were assessed to stay the same:	
Q8c. Number of personal targets that were assessed to worsen:	

Program engagement and working alliance

Q9. Was the offender engaged in the program material?	
_____	Insufficient information

_____	No (participant did not complete program assignments, did not contribute to discussion of program topics, etc.)
_____	Somewhat (participant sometimes completed program assignments, limited insight into program topics, etc.)
_____	Yes (participant completed program assignments, fully participated in and had insight in program topics, etc.)
Q9a. Any relevant comments on offender engagement in the program material:	

Q10. Did the program participant and the correctional program officer have a good working alliance?	
_____	Insufficient information
_____	No (participant and correctional program officer had poor interactions)
_____	Somewhat (participant and correctional program officer sometimes had poor interactions, but sometimes had positive interactions or there were demonstrated improvements in interactions)
_____	Yes (participant and correctional program officer consistently had positive interactions with each other)
Q10a. Any relevant comments on working alliance:	

Other comments

Q11. Is there any other information in the OMS files that would be relevant to this study?

Appendix B: Correctional Program Officer Feedback Form

Region:	District:
Parole Office:	ACPO/CPO:
Name of Participant:	
FPS#:	DOB:

Program:

Start Date: End Date: # of Sessions:

of sessions delivered in person: # of tele sessions: # of video sessions:

Reason for choosing tele/video delivery:

1. Technical, logistic and materials issues:
 - a) What (if any) technical challenges did you encounter?
 - b) To what extent do you think any technical challenges affected program delivery?
 - c) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the technical support you received?
 - d) What kind of support did you get with logistics and materials at the participant's end?
2. As compared to your experience with in-person delivery how do you think the delivery format affected:

	Much worse	Worse	No difference	Better	Much better
a. The participants' ability to express his thoughts and feelings					
b. Working alliance:					
c. Your ability to explain the content					
d. Participants comprehension of content					
e. Participants ability to make links between the content and his life					

f. Your ability to help the participant deal with daily problems and high risk situations					
g. The quality of the participants' self-management (self-monitoring, awareness of personal targets, skill use etc)					
h. Participant's motivation and engagement in the program.					

3. What would have helped to improve the quality of tele/video program delivery:
4. Further comments or feedback:

Thank you for giving us feedback on this important program delivery pilot project.