

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.



RESEARCH REPORT

Correctional Officer Onboarding Program: Impacts on Staff, Training, and Workplace Culture

2023 N° R-460

Cat. No.: PS83-3/460E-PDF

ISBN: 978-0-660-49437-1

Ce rapport est également disponible en français. Pour en obtenir un exemplaire, veuillez vous adresser à la Direction de la recherche, Service correctionnel du Canada, 340, avenue Laurier Ouest, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P9.

This report is also available in French. Should additional copies be required, they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

Correctional Officer Onboarding Program:
Impacts on Staff, Training, and Workplace Culture

Rebecca Sullivan

&

Laura Hanby

Correctional Service of Canada

2023

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our colleagues of Management of Learning Services of the Learning and Development Branch, in particular Sylvain Mongrain and Mali Lapointe, for their support of this project.

Thank you to the staff members of Kent Institution who took the time to participate in this research. In particular, we would like to thank Marie Cossette, Craig Roberston, and Chad Freeman for their efforts in helping to coordinate the data collection for this project.

Thank you to Research Branch staff Tara Beauchamp and Thana Ridha for their insights on the methodology of this project, Rissa Reist for peer reviewing the final report, and Dena Derkzen for her guidance throughout this project.

Executive Summary

Key words: *Correctional Officers, onboarding, Onboarding Program, training, mentors, workplace culture*

The Correctional Officer Onboarding Program was implemented as a pilot program at Kent Institution, a maximum-security men's facility in the Pacific Region, in September 2019. The objective of the program is to support new Correctional Officers (COs) in their transition from the Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) Training Academy to the realities of working at the institution. The goals of the program include reinforcing fundamental competencies, supporting the application of skills to the correctional environment, creating a strong work relationship between the COs and a team of mentors, developing strong ethics, and establishing a review board to evaluate the performance of new COs. The purpose of this research was to examine the impacts of the program on COs and on the broader correctional environment.

Data was collected through online questionnaires between September 13 and October 8, 2021. Participants of the Onboarding Program ($n = 54$) and other staff working at Kent Institution ($n = 21$) provided feedback on the impacts of the program. Overall, findings showed that both Onboarding participants and non-Onboarding participants (e.g., other Correctional Officers, Correctional Managers) reported on the positive impacts of the program in assisting participants with their transition to the realities of the correctional environment. While most Onboarding participants reported positive experiences with the training provided through the program, other staff identified some issues with the implementation of the program's training, due to perceived overwhelming numbers of Onboarding participants and a shortage of experienced staff working at the institution. This may have been related to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on institutional operations.

The impacts of the Onboarding Program on staff relationships appeared to be mixed. Relationships amongst new COs were conveyed as largely positive, while ongoing concerns with relationships between new COs and senior staff and management were noted. Specifically, there appeared to be somewhat of a disconnect between staff and management. Relationships between Onboarding participants and the program's team of mentors were viewed as positive, however many participants were unable to establish mentor relationships due to a decline in available mentors as the program progressed. Onboarding participants reported positive impacts of the program on their job performance and integration of CSC values and ethics, however other staff viewed no impacts or more negative impacts of the program on these areas of the workplace culture. Both groups suggested unfavourable views of organizational commitment with respect to the Onboarding Program and ongoing concerns with staff turnover.

Overall, findings showed that the Onboarding Program is having a direct positive impact on participants, however these positive impacts have not yet extended to the broader workplace culture, as measured in the current study. Issues with the implementation of the program and resource limitations due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic could have influenced these results. However, findings demonstrate the potential benefits of a structured Correctional Officer Onboarding Program and highlight the important role that mentors hold in the program.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Executive Summary	iii
List of Tables	v
Introduction.....	1
Correctional Officer Challenges	2
Onboarding	5
Mentoring for Correctional Officers.....	7
Current Study	8
Method	10
Overview of the Onboarding Program.....	10
Procedure	11
Participants.....	11
Measures	12
Analyses	13
Results.....	14
Role of Onboarding Program in Training and Transition of new COs.....	14
Impact of Onboarding Program on Staff Relationships.....	19
Workplace Culture	23
Discussion	36
Conclusions.....	38
Limitations & Future Directions.....	40
References.....	41

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Role of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program in Training/Transition (N = 74)</i>	15
Table 2 <i>Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Staff Relationships (N = 74) .</i>	21
Table 3 <i>Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Staff Performance (N = 74) ..</i>	26
Table 4 <i>Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Other Staff (N = 20)</i>	27
Table 5 <i>Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Values and Ethics (N= 74) ...</i>	29
Table 6 <i>Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Organizational Commitment (N= 74)</i>	33

Introduction

Given the responsibilities and work environment of Correctional Officers (COs), new COs are exposed to a variety of challenges related to working front-line in a correctional environment., most notably the realities of dealing with federal offenders on a daily basis. In order to support the overall cultures of institutions, it is paramount that the Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) values and ethics be supported in all interactions with offenders and colleagues, which includes demonstrating respect, fairness, professionalism, inclusiveness, and accountability (CSC, 2018). Furthermore, creating strong work relationships between a team of mentors and new COs can be valuable for the transition of COs from the training academy to the realities of the correctional environment. Thus, in order to address concerns surrounding institutional culture, a Correctional Officer Onboarding Program was developed as a structured training and mentorship program during the first year of employment.

The Correctional Officer Onboarding Program was implemented as a pilot program at Kent Institution, a maximum-security men's facility in the Pacific Region, in September 2019. In a report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI; 2011), Kent Institution was identified as facing particular difficulties with its organizational culture. The OCI noted that the institution reportedly engaged in violations of legal and policy provisions surrounding use of force interventions. The report suggested that this represented an abuse of power, a lack of management oversight and accountability, and a deterioration in dynamic security practices. Additionally, Kent Institution was identified as having higher turnover rates relative to other institutions, resulting in staff with fewer years of experience. The OCI report concluded that failing to address COs who engaged in unacceptable conduct led to a negative and disruptive living and working environment for offenders and staff. In 2014, the OCI went on to recommend that Kent Institution should implement a mandatory mentoring and coaching program for all new front-line recruits to be delivered by experienced and respected personnel (OCI; 2014). Thus, Kent Institution faced the challenge of transforming a problematic culture into one that endorses the values and ethics of CSC. The implementation of a structured Onboarding Program focusing on values and ethics was therefore a fundamental step to prevent continuing issues in the organization..

Emerging research conducted by CSC after COs had been participating in the program

for six weeks suggested that the Onboarding Pilot Program at Kent Institution had positive impacts on the experiences of new COs participating in the program (Sullivan & Hanby, 2021). Specifically, the COs commonly indicated that their mentors were instrumental in providing consistency to their training and creating an inviting atmosphere. Feedback on the culture of Kent institution was mixed, as the Onboarding participants reported a clear divide between the welcoming and helpful staff, and the staff who were more distrusting and dismissive towards the new COs. Given that the program has now been in operation for approximately two years, it was possible to undertake a more fulsome investigation in order to gain a wider range of perspectives from Kent staff to enhance the understanding of the impacts of the program on the broader institutional culture.

Correctional Officer Challenges

Due to the particular occupational stressors and setting in which COs work in, they are especially vulnerable to negative psychological outcomes. COs are responsible for the security and safety of the offenders in custody at correctional institutions, and therefore they are dealing with a unique population who are not willfully living at the institution. Moreover, COs are often required to accept the reality that exposures to workplace violence are an inherent part of their jobs (Ricciardelli et al., 2018). Given the nature of this work, the organizational culture for COs can be unpredictable, uncertain, and full of perceived risk. Research has revealed that COs experience high prevalence of a variety of negative outcomes, such as depression, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), Panic Disorder (PD), adverse physical health outcomes, burnout, and work-related stress (Carleton et al., 2018; Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Fusco et al., 2021; Jaegers et al., 2021; Johnston et al., 2021; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007).

For example, Fusco and colleagues (2021) examined self-reported symptoms of PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), PD, GAD, SAD, and risky alcohol use of correctional institution employees. Through self-report questionnaires, the research found that correctional workers (e.g., correctional, parole, and security intelligence officers; $n = 359$) reported significantly higher levels of symptoms for all adverse mental health conditions examined than wellness workers (e.g., nurses, psychologists, behavioural counselors, social workers, and occupational therapists; $n = 68$). Correctional workers were also significantly more likely than wellness workers to encounter potentially psychologically traumatic events at work. These

findings are consistent with the results of previous research. For instance, in a study investigating the prevalence of mental disorder symptoms among public safety personnel in Canada, results showed that correctional workers were more likely to experience symptoms of mental disorders (e.g., PTSD, depression, anxiety, SAD, PD) than were municipal or provincial police and firefighters (Carleton et al., 2018). Correctional workers who had more years of experience were more likely to experience symptoms of a mental disorder, suggesting that correctional workers with more time on the job are at higher risk. Similarly, higher levels of stress have been observed amongst COs relative to police officers and other prison staff, as well as burnout compared to prison staff (Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007).¹ Thus, it is evident that COs are uniquely susceptible to undesirable psychological outcomes, beyond that of employees occupying other institutional positions.

Research has been conducted to gain a better understanding of the stress and burnout experienced by COs. In a one-year longitudinal study using self-report questionnaires ($N = 144$), Jaegers and colleagues (2020) found that officer burnout significantly increased during the first year of employment, and both work-family conflict and depressive symptoms were significant predictors of burnout. Similarly, Griffin and colleagues (2010) examined associations between self-reported job stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and burnout among correctional staff at a maximum-security prison in the United States. Three dimensions of job burnout were identified: depersonalization (e.g., treating others at work impersonally), emotional exhaustion, and a feeling of reduced sense of accomplishment. Findings revealed that employees who experienced high levels of job stress reported higher levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, employees with high job satisfaction had reduced feelings of a loss of accomplishment and lower levels of emotional exhaustion, and employees who reported high job involvement had higher levels of emotional exhaustion. The study also found job stress, job satisfaction, and job involvement to be more predictive of burnout than any personal characteristics, (i.e., age, gender, race, education, tenure, and position). Moreover, custody personnel (e.g., COs and Correctional Supervisors) reported higher levels of depersonalization than did employees of other positions.

Research has also investigated the organizational predictors of job stress and burnout in

¹ This research was based on self-report questionnaires and interviews from prison personnel and police officers in Israel.

correctional institutions. For example, Armstrong and Griffin (2006) found that a number of self-reported environmental factors predicted job stress for COs ($N = 3,091$) at ten adult prisons in the United States. Analyses showed that role problems (i.e., a lack of clarity about one's role, job objectives, and responsibilities) significantly predicted increases in job stress, and that organizational support, co-worker support, intrinsic rewards (i.e., the opportunity for personal growth), and environmental safety were all significant predictors of lower levels of job stress. Lambert and colleagues (2012) found that job feedback and job autonomy had significant negative effects on the emotional exhaustion dimension of job burnout for Correctional staff at a United States prison. These findings provide additional context, as job feedback can help provide clarity surrounding job objectives and responsibilities, thus allowing employees to feel more competent, increase positive affect, and experience less job burnout and stress (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Lambert et al., 2012). In addition, when employees have more job autonomy and control in their positions, it can help allow them to feel valued and respected by the organization (Lambert et al., 2012). Previous findings also suggest that supervisory support is significantly negatively associated with job stress, as lower quality of support is associated with increases in stress (Castle, 2008; Griffin, 2006; Moon & Maxwell, 2004).

Therefore, it is evident that causes of job stress, burnout and other mental health challenges for COs are more closely related to characteristics of the organization than to personal characteristics (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Finney et al., 2013; Griffin et al., 2010; Ricciardelli et al., 2018; Savicki et al., 2003). In a review of the literature, Finney and colleagues (2013) concluded that factors intrinsic to the job, rewards, roles in the organization, supervisory relationships, and the organizational climate were the strongest predictors of job stress. Consequences of job burnout and stress were observed both in the individual and in the organization as a whole. For example, research using self-report questionnaires completed by 160 COs working at a prison in the United States indicated that dimensions of job burnout have negative consequences for both the individual and the institution (Lambert et al., 2010). Depersonalization and emotional exhaustion were related to increases in absenteeism and turnover intentions, while emotional exhaustion was also associated with decreases in life satisfaction. These findings present negative impacts to the organization as increases in frequency of sick leave usage and staff turnover both put a strain on the organization, as more resources will be required of the organization to either replace absent staff or have existing

colleagues assume the responsibilities of those absent staff. Moreover, high turnover in institutions requires resources to be devoted to the hiring, training, and integration of new employees, and thus reduces the capacity for resources to be dedicated to the primary goals of the institution.

Onboarding

Onboarding programs have been introduced across a variety of disciplines as a means of providing more thorough training and integration of new employees. The onboarding process involves learning to become an effective organizational member, acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to succeed in new organizations (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). The process includes introducing new employees to their jobs, familiarizing employees with the organization's goals, values, rules and policies, and successfully socializing them into the organizational culture (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). When the onboarding process is effective, new employees will gain the information and tools necessary to perform their responsibilities more efficiently and quickly (Snell, 2006).

Research examining the onboarding of new employees suggest certain strategies to help improve the process. Staunton (2017) found that relationships with others at technology organizations was a central theme uncovered in interviews with new employees participating in onboarding programs. Results showed that positive employee-manager relationships were based on reciprocal trust, loyalty, and commitment, while negative relationships led to dissatisfaction with the organization as a whole. Mutual trust and support in peer relationships was found to increase the likelihood that employees would remain at the organization. More specifically, employees who were provided with a specific mentor during their onboarding process were more likely to have successful integration, and those without mentors expressed a desire for one. Staunton (2017) also found that employees who attended unstructured onboarding programs felt that there was uncertainty and unease surrounding when integration into their roles would occur, and they struggled with confidence in their abilities to fulfill their roles. This research revealed that when employees felt that organizations were unwilling to invest in an onboarding program that would effectively integrate them, their commitment to the organization decreased. Moreover, Malicevic Balic (2017) examined the effectiveness of an onboarding program² on

² The type of organization examined in this research was not identified by the author. The organization was referred to as "Firm A" throughout the thesis.

employee engagement and retention using questionnaires and interviews with program participants ($N = 6$). Results of this study showed significant relationships between the onboarding program and engagement, performance and retention of employees. The most important characteristics of the program contributing to its success included providing information to new employees, socializing new employees, mentor support, and allowing new employees to knowledge share.

The unique organizational environment to which COs are required to be integrated causes the onboarding process to be both especially important and challenging. COs are often victims of physical and verbal assault, and thus acquiring the necessary information and skills for their jobs in a timely manner is essential to maintaining their own personal safety, as well as that of their colleagues and offenders (Ricciardelli et al., 2018). The organizational socialization of COs is equally as important, as developing their occupational identity and determining their fit with their colleagues and the institution is fundamental to their training and transition to the institution (Ricciardelli, 2021).

A CSC study of COs in their first year of employment highlights the particular importance of implementing an onboarding program for COs at CSC (Bensimon, 2005). Although the study found that attitudes in certain areas remained consistent over the first year working as a CO, such as counselling or helping relationships, desire to learn, and empathy, there were other areas in which decreases in positive attitudes were displayed. Bensimon (2005) found that positive attitudes surrounding role conflict (i.e., not being sufficiently challenged by the work) and role ambiguity (i.e., autonomy in decision-making and underutilization of skills) tended to decrease over the first year of employment. Positive attitudes in areas of organizational commitment and job stress also decreased over time. Therefore, after one year working at the institution, COs felt less desire to remain employed at the institution, and felt more stress associated with their job than they did after just three months of working. Results also revealed a lack of supervisory support for new COs, although there was also a decrease in supervisory support from three months to one year of employment. Given that supervisory support has been linked to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, social cohesiveness and reduced role conflict and stress (Bensimon, 2005; Brough & Williams, 2007; Lambert, 2004), it is of particular concern that COs at CSC experienced decreases in supervisory support during their first year, as the impact of this can be detrimental to both the individual COs and the institution.

Mentoring for Correctional Officers

Given the importance that organizational socialization and staff relationships hold for new COs during the onboarding process, it is crucial to have a designated experienced CO help guide the transition of new COs, by teaching the specifics of the role and responsibilities, and helping to integrate new COs into the institutional culture (Wittenberg, 1998). Mentoring is defined as an intense interpersonal exchange between an experienced senior colleague (e.g., mentor) and a new employee (e.g., mentee), in which the mentor provides support and feedback on the mentee's career (Kram & Hall, 1989).

Research has shown that mentoring is associated with increases in the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of mentees across diverse disciplines (Allen et al., 2004; Scandura, 1997). In a study of 117 correctional police officers who had been working at Italian prisons for less than six months, Farnese and colleagues (2016) examined the impacts of formal mentoring on organizational commitment and turnover intention through self-report questionnaires. Results showed that supportive mentoring was associated with both higher organizational commitment and lower turnover intentions for the new recruits. Furthermore, they revealed that supportive mentoring had a protective role when organizational socialization was less effective. In particular, both organizational socialization and mentoring lead to decreases in turnover intention, however, when organizational socialization did not work, supportive mentoring was still found to be negatively associated with the intention to quit for new officers. Therefore, the support offered by mentors was shown to be helpful when other traditional strategies intended to integrate the new recruits failed. These findings are particularly valuable as COs have been found to have lower levels of organizational commitment than other CSC staff, and the commitment of COs at CSC is associated with higher job performance, job satisfaction, job involvement, and more positive views towards the mission of CSC³ (Robinson et al., 1992). Thus, gaining an understanding of the antecedents of organizational commitment for COs is critical for improvements in both COs and the broader institutions.

More broadly, Kotejshyer and colleagues (2021) observed the impacts of a one-year peer health mentoring program for new COs ($N = 269$) randomly assigned to either mentoring or

³ CSC's mission statement as outlined in Commissioner's Directive 001: The Correctional Service of Canada, as part of the criminal justice system and respecting the rule of law, contributes to public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control (CSC, 2018).

control groups. The results showed that mentoring significantly reduced exhaustion-burnout from when they first started at the training academy to the one-year mark of employment when the mentoring program concluded, although no significant long-term reductions were found (i.e., 5 years after the mentoring program concluded). Impacts on physical health outcomes were also identified, as the control group had significantly greater increases in Body Mass Index (BMI) than the mentoring group, and hypertension was lower in the mentoring group than the control group at the follow-up time points. Thus, these results suggest that mentoring was associated with positive outcomes for both physical health and exhaustion-burnout in new COs.

Beyond the positive impacts of mentoring on the mental and physical health of COs, research also highlights the importance that mentoring holds for acquiring and applying skills from training to the job. Specifically, Doherty and White (2014) conducted a study where 32 COs from CSC medium security institutions were interviewed regarding dynamic security practices.⁴ Through qualitative analysis, the researchers revealed that although formal training was fundamental to developing the necessary dynamic security skills for working at an institution, COs commonly indicated that on the job mentoring was essential to learning to effectively apply those skills within the correctional setting.

Current Study

In order to assess the effectiveness of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program at Kent Institution, this research examines the possible impacts of the program on COs and on the broader correctional environment. More specifically, the goal of this study is to address whether the Onboarding Program enhances the integration of CSC organizational values, as well as the transfer of skills from the Training Academy to the realities of the correctional environment. The present study explores the experiences of staff at Kent Institution during the onset of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program Pilot and the impact the program has on staff relationships. The following research questions were addressed through self-report questionnaires completed by Onboarding Program participants and broader Kent Institution staff:

1. Does the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program improve the training of new Correctional Officers and assist with their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the correctional environment?

⁴ Dynamic security involves developing relationships with offenders in order to enhance the safety and security of correctional institutions (Doherty & White, 2004).

2. Does the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program affect the relationships between staff at the institution?
3. Does the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program contribute to improved elements of workplace culture?
 - a) Does the program affect staff performance at the institution?
 - b) Does the program influence the values and ethics of staff?
 - c) Does the program influence the commitment of staff to work at the institution?

Method

Overview of the Onboarding Program

Beyond providing an orientation to the work site, one of the main objectives of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program is to support the transition from the CSC Training Academy to the institution by reinforcing the fundamental competences and filling any gaps in knowledge or skills. In turn, this also supports the transfer of the application of skills from the Academy environment to the realities of the correctional environment. While traditional On the Job Training (OJT) occurs during the first two weeks of employment, Onboarding participants receive structured shadowing during weeks 3 and 4, before being integrated into the roster with mentor support during weeks 5 and 8. During structured shadowing, the new officer continues to learn how to run the posts of the institution (e.g., mobile patrol, control post) while under supervision of a mentor or site staff member. Based on mentor feedback, a decision is made by the Correctional Manager in charge of Onboarding to either integrate the new officer onto the roster or extend structured shadowing if the officer is experiencing difficulties in learning the posts.

Each officer is provided a learning journal to use throughout the first four weeks that includes guided questions for meeting with various staff, a list of tasks and reflections for structured shadowing, and questions surrounding values and ethical conduct. To further support the development of a strong work ethic during the first year of probation and the early stages of their career, new COs also participate in a full day in-class values and ethics session. The program aims to create a strong working relationship between a team of selected mentors from the institution and new COs.⁵ Structured mentor discussions occur weekly between weeks 5 and 8 and monthly between months 3 and 12 of employment. Lastly, the program established a review board to evaluate the performance of new COs during probation and formalize a decision if probation is met. One review board is scheduled between weeks 8 and 10 of employment, and another review board is scheduled between months 8 and 9. The review boards include ethical dilemma scenarios, review of the learning journal, 360 degree evaluations (by the mentor, Correctional Manager and self) and review of Performance Management Plan areas.⁶

⁵ Mentors are selected for their motivation, skills, and experience. They must be supported by the management team, receive training and certification to be mentors.

⁶ Within the Government of Canada, Performance Management Plans are an ongoing process that involves planning,

Procedure

While the first phase of this study involved assessing the effects of the Onboarding Program directly on the Correctional Officers participating in the program (see Sullivan & Hanby, 2021), this phase examined the effectiveness and the efficiency of the Onboarding Program. This broader objective was achieved through questionnaires distributed to staff who may have had both direct and indirect experience with the program. This data collection occurred approximately two years after the Onboarding Program was implemented, in order to gather the perspectives of staff once the program was established.⁷

The questionnaire was administered using SNAP software and was hosted online through CSC networks between September 13, 2021 and October 8, 2021. Invitations were sent broadly to all security staff and senior management⁸ at Kent institution. The questionnaire was sent to approximately 274 staff at Kent Institution, though not all staff would have knowledge of the program and be eligible to participate. In order to participate in the study, respondents had to be aware of the existence of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program. If respondents indicated that they were not aware of the program, the questionnaire concluded and participants were thanked for their interest in the research.

Participants

A total of 74 employees at Kent Institution participated in the staff questionnaire portion of the study. This represents a 27% response rate, however this is likely an underestimate given the broad recruitment strategy as some staff who were invited to participate in the questionnaire may not have knowledge of the Onboarding Program and thus were ineligible to complete the questionnaire. The majority of respondents were Correctional Officers (87.9%, $n = 65$), while the remainder were Correctional Managers (6.4%, $n = 5$) or other positions in the institution (5.9%, $n = 4$). Other positions ranged from senior management, management services, and interventions. Around three-quarters of the sample were participants in the Onboarding Program (73.0%, $n = 54$), and most of these had completed the program (85.2%, $n = 46$). Past and current Onboarding participants responded to the same questions, however the phrasing of questions differed in tense

developing, coaching, providing feedback, and evaluating employee performance.

⁷ Of note, the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect operations of CSC institutions in March 2020, and as a result, may have had an impact on the delivery of the Onboarding Program as to how it was intended and designed.

⁸ Senior management positions include Warden, Deputy Warden, and Assistant Wardens of Interventions, Operations, and Management Services.

based on whether they were current (i.e., *the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program helps me to develop critical thinking skills towards the resolution of ethical dilemmas*) or past participants (i.e., *the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program helped me to develop critical thinking skills towards the resolution of ethical dilemmas*). For those who were currently participating in the program, 6 (11.1% of the sample of Onboarding participants) had not yet reached roster integration. A small proportion of the sample were mentors in the Onboarding Program ($n < 5$).⁹

On average, respondents had worked for CSC for 6.4 years ($SD = 6.8$), though the years of employment ranged from 1 to 27 years.¹⁰ The mean length of employment at Kent Institution was 5.1 years ($SD = 5.6$, range 1-21), and in their current position was 4.2 years ($SD = 5.2$, range 1-21). The sample consisted of 59.5% ($n = 44$) men and 24.3% ($n = 18$) women (12 respondents did not report gender).

Measures

Three versions of the questionnaire were created for 1) Onboarding participants (either currently or previously participating in the program), 2) Onboarding mentors,¹¹ and 3) all other staff. The questionnaire consisted of both Likert scale questions (rated on a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) and open-ended questions. All versions included the following sub-sections: (a) Background, (b) Role of the Onboarding Program in training/transition, (c) Relationships/impacts on staff, and (d) Impacts on workplace culture. Elements of workplace culture were examined in terms of staff performance, values and ethics, and organizational commitment. Questions were designed to overlap across versions wherever possible, but wording was sometimes modified by version. For instance, Onboarding participants received the question “The Onboarding Program is effectively supporting me with my transition from the CSC Training Academy to the Institution” while all other staff received the question “The Onboarding Program effectively supports new Correctional Officers with their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the Institution.” In some cases, questions were targeted based on the respondent type as Onboarding participants would not have insight into the

⁹ Number and percentage not reported to avoid potential identification of respondents.

¹⁰ Years of experience were based on 44 to 52 responses, as the remainder of the respondents chose not to answer these questions.

¹¹ The sample size for the mentor version of the questionnaire is too low for reporting purposes, so their responses are combined into the ‘all other staff’ responses.

workplace culture prior to their start date and all other staff would not be able to speak to the personal impacts of participating in the program. In addition to the Background questions, the number of Likert scale questions ranged from 47 to 64 and open-ended questions from 6 to 7, depending on the respondent group.

Staff provided informed consent by agreeing to a statement prior to filling out the questionnaire. Respondents were advised that their participation in the research was on a voluntary basis and they could withdraw at any point without aversive consequence. Further, none of the questions were mandatory, meaning that respondents could skip any question. To further protect the information provided, the encrypted questionnaire responses were sent directly to, and stored on, a secure CSC server, and were not shared with anyone outside the research team.

Analyses

In order to examine the perceived impacts of the Onboarding Program, separate analyses were conducted on responses from Onboarding participants ($n = 54$) and other staff ($n = 21$). Descriptive analyses were performed on Likert scale questions, while thematic analyses were conducted on open-ended responses.

Results

Role of Onboarding Program in Training and Transition of new COs

A central objective of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program is to provide an orientation for new COs to the work environment, and to support their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the institution.

Onboarding Participant Perspectives

Onboarding participants were asked to share their perspectives surrounding the extent to which they believed that the Onboarding Program was supporting their transition from the Training Academy to the institutional environment. The majority of participants reported positive experiences regarding the impacts of the program on their transition (see Table 1). Specifically, the majority of program participants either agreed or strongly agreed (71.7%) that the Onboarding Program was effective in supporting them in applying their skills to the realities of the correctional environment. Likewise, the majority of Onboarding participants agreed or strongly agreed (67.9%) that the Onboarding Program was helping them to successfully orient to the work site, and that it was effectively supporting their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the institution (68.0%).

The questionnaire also provided Onboarding participants an opportunity to share their views on the effectiveness of the program in enhancing their CO training, with the majority of participants reporting that the program enhanced their overall training (75.0%). Similarly, the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the program successfully filled gaps in their knowledge and essential skills (66.0%) and encouraged their desire to learn (64.1%). Moreover, 79.2% of Onboarding participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Onboarding Program permitted them to receive help if they had any questions.

Table 1

Role of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program in Training/Transition (N = 74)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents					
	Strongly disagree / Disagree		Undecided / Don't know		Agree / Strongly agree	
	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)
Efficiently implemented at Kent institution ^a	- -	40.0 (8)	- -	30.0 (6)	- -	30.0 (6)
Effectively supports new COs with their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the Institution	26.4 (14)	38.1 (8)	† (†)	† (†)	68.0 (36)	47.6 (10)
Effectively supports the application of skills to the realities of the correctional environment	18.9 (10)	33.3 (7)	† (†)	† (†)	71.7 (38)	42.9 (9)
Successfully fills the gaps in knowledge and essential skills of new COs	15.1 (8)	42.8 (9)	18.9 (10)	† (†)	66.0 (35)	38.1 (8)
Helps to mitigate challenges traditionally experienced by new COs		38.1 (8)		† (†)		47.6 (10)
Improves the overall training of new COs	† (†)	38.1 (8)	15.4 (8)	† (†)	75.0 (39)	47.6 (10)
Successfully orients new COs to the work site	16.0 (9)	28.5 (6)	15.1 (8)	† (†)	67.9 (36)	57.1 (12)
Prepares new COs to effectively deal with a diverse offender population	20.7 (11)	47.7 (10)	24.5 (13)	† (†)	54.7 (29)	38.0 (8)
Improves the desire to learn amongst new COs	16.9 (9)	33.3 (7)	18.9 (10)	† (†)	64.1 (34)	52.3 (11)
Permits me to receive help if I have any questions ^b	15.0 (8)	- -	† (†)	- -	79.2 (42)	- -

Note. CO = Correctional Officer. Phrasing of questions differed slightly between respondent groups.

^a Onboarding participants were not asked this question, as they would not have insight into the implementation of the program.

^b Only Onboarding participants were asked this question as other staff would not be able to speak to the experience of participants in having their questions answered.

† Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category

Thus, the feedback from Onboarding participants based on Likert responses regarding the role of the Onboarding Program in the transition and training of new COs was largely positive. However, of note, when current and past Onboarding participants were observed separately, positive views were more pronounced for past participants. For instance, while 42.9% of current participants agreed that the program was effectively supporting their transition from the CSC Training Academy to the institution, a larger proportion of past participants either agreed or strongly agreed (71.7%) to the same question. Over half of current participants agreed that the program permitted them to receive help if they have any questions (57.1%), however past participants were even more likely to agree or strongly agree to this question (82.6%). Moreover, while the majority of current participants agreed to all questions, none of the current participants strongly agreed with the statements. Many past participants strongly agreed to all questions surrounding positive experiences with training and transition, suggesting higher levels of satisfaction with the training for this group. Therefore, the positive impacts of the program on the training and transition of COs were more prominent in the perspectives of previous than current Onboarding participants.

The questionnaire also provided participants an opportunity to identify aspects of the program that they found most useful in preparing them for the realities of the correctional environment. The most prominent theme that emerged from responses was related to the effectiveness of the Onboarding training that took place in the institutional environment. In particular, Onboarding participants commonly indicated that having the additional time provided by the program to train on a variety of posts with other COs was helpful in preparing them for the realities of the correctional environment. In identifying the most useful aspects of the program, one Onboarding participant shared:

Familiarization of institutional practices, security risks, and resources. It assisted in exposing myself to a variety of posts and seeing how the posts work within the institution. I am not sure I would feel as confident in my abilities or duties without the Onboarding Program.

Participants also commented that the traditional Correctional Training Program (CTP) did not prepare them for working the control posts, and therefore the Onboarding Program was fundamental to helping them acquire those essential skills.

While the majority of Onboarding participants reported positive experiences with the program's ability to assist them in their training and transfer to the institution, they also made recommendations regarding areas that could help improve the program's effectiveness. When asked if there was anything that could be changed about the program in order to better prepare them for their role as COs, a major theme that emerged from responses was more comprehensive and consistent training. Specifically, participants spoke to the need for an enhanced emphasis on communication skills. Some participants reported that they would benefit from more specific training on how to communicate with offenders and respond to offender questions. This was reiterated by 20.7% of participants that disagreed that the program prepared them to effectively deal with a diverse offender population (and a further 24.5% who were undecided). Furthermore, it was commonly indicated that additional training on all control posts beyond that provided could be of benefit,¹² and that having less Onboarding participants training at once, as well as more experienced staff training them on posts could improve the overall effectiveness of the training. Lastly, recommendations for the length of the program to be extended were made, as some staff felt that too much information was covered too quickly, and therefore a longer program could help improve training, and in turn, enhance the abilities of COs.

Other Staff Perspectives

Kent institution staff who were not participants in the Onboarding Program were also provided the opportunity to offer their perspectives of the effectiveness of the program (see Table 1). A large proportion of other staff (47.6%) reported positive views surrounding the effectiveness of the program in supporting the transition of new COs from the Training Academy to the institution. Moreover, a greater proportion of other staff either agreed or strongly agreed (42.9%) than disagreed or strongly disagreed (33.3%) that the program effectively supported new COs in their application of skills to the realities of the correctional environment, and the majority of other staff (57.1%) reported that the program helped to orient new COs to the work site. However, a large proportion of other staff either strongly disagreed or disagreed (40%) that the Onboarding Program was efficiently implemented at Kent institution, while 30% agreed or strongly agreed, and 30% responded that they were undecided. A common theme from the open-

¹² Operational posts covered by the training of the Onboarding Program include the principle entrance, vehicle entrance, principal entrance control post, mobile patrol, tower, sector control post, living unit control post, inmate movement control and supervision, living unit post, catwalk/gallery and observation posts, and dry cell, high, and modified watch.

ended responses of other staff surrounded poor implementation of the program. Staff indicated that there were an overwhelming number of new recruits enrolling in the Onboarding Program, and that there were insufficient resources to effectively train new COs and deliver all of the objectives of the program. One staff member explained the inability of the program to follow up with Onboarding participants:

Due to the maximum security nature of this jail, and the staffing crisis prior and during the onboarding program at Kent, the Program itself has failed to effectively follow up with its recruits after they are signed off on OJT. The one keeper assigned to the Onboarding program cannot realistically keep up with the workload. Once they are signed off on OJT, the new recruits are more or less abandoned unless they actively seek out additional help or knowledge from other staff member's [sic].

Conversely, when asked to comment on the benefits associated with the Onboarding Program, prominent themes that emerged from the responses of other staff were training and the transfer from CTP to the institution. Respondents commonly identified that the program helped new COs with their transition to the correctional environment by having designated officers that they could speak to regarding questions and concerns, and that it provided learning and development opportunities beyond CTP.

Other staff working at Kent institution also had mixed perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the Onboarding Program in training new COs. For instance, 47.6% of other staff agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved the overall training of new COs and 38.1% agreed or strongly agreed that it successfully filled the gaps in their knowledge and essential skills. Similarly, the majority of other staff reported positive impacts on the new COs' desire to learn (52.3%). However, a greater proportion of other staff either strongly disagreed or disagreed (47.7%) than agreed (38.0%) that the Onboarding Program prepared new COs to effectively deal with a diverse offender population. When asked to comment on the challenges associated with the program, a major theme revealed was the lack of senior staff working at Kent institution. It was commonly indicated that the outcome of this challenge is new staff training even newer staff, which resulted in knowledge gaps in new staff because they are not receiving the necessary comprehensive training from senior COs. As one staff at Kent institution explained, "New Officers just off OJT, instructing OJT Officers. When you have a large number of new officers and a great number of experienced officers transferring out, the knowledge lost is substantial. This should be considered when approving transfers."

Impact of Onboarding Program on Staff Relationships

A key element of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program at Kent institution is to help improve the relationships that COs have with other correctional staff, including other COs, management, and their mentors.

Onboarding Participant Perspectives

As part of the questionnaire, Onboarding participants were asked to respond to questions regarding staff relationships. Most participants reported positive relationships with other staff (see Table 2). Specifically, the majority of Onboarding participants agreed or strongly agreed (79.2%) that they have positive working relationships with other COs, and that they exhibit strong collaborations and teamwork with other COs (90.6%). Just over half (57.7%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that other COs at the institution show them a great level of respect. However, when asked whether they believe that each individual is accepted as an equal part of the team, a greater proportion either strongly disagreed or disagreed (49.1%) than agreed or strongly agreed (20.8%), while 30.2% were undecided. When participants were given the opportunity to describe their relationships with other staff at Kent institution, the most common theme that emerged was positive relationships, though negative relationships was also a major theme revealed. In particular, many respondents indicated a “cliquey” culture amongst COs, where they feel ignored by certain staff. As one Onboarding participant explained:

Relationships with staff is a fluid thing. There are a number of closed groups and it is often difficult to manage a good relationship with others because of this. I understand that it is a nature of any job, and the ability to keep yourself true to you is key. I have a number of ‘work mates’ but do not feel that I will find many true friends here.

When Onboarding participants were asked about their relationships with management, the majority either agreed or strongly agreed (60.4%) that they have positive working relationships with management. However, 52.8% of Onboarding participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed that they believe essential information flows effectively from Senior Management, while 28.3% responded that they were undecided about this question. Thus, responses to Likert questions regarding relationships with management were mixed, and the results from the thematic analysis provided additional context. When participants were provided the opportunity to describe their relationships with other staff at the institution, a common sub-theme that emerged within the negative overarching theme was relationships with senior staff and management. It was commonly indicated that negative experiences with other staff at the

institution were primarily with management or senior staff, while relationships between new COs were described as largely positive. One Onboarding participant summarized:

Overall I believe my relationship with other staff is great. During CTP I was told to treat everyone the same no matter if they were COs, management, kitchen staff etc. I do find the hardest people to deal with can be upper management as they sometimes don't listen or put staff in jeopardy by overlooking things.

Relationships with Mentors. Over half of Onboarding participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had strong working relationships with the team of mentors (56.6%), and a prominent theme that emerged through open-ended responses of participants surrounded positive experiences with the mentors of the Onboarding Program. More specifically, many participants described mentors as helping them with their transition to the institution, representing one person to reach if they had any questions, and assisted them with critical training tasks, such as administrative paperwork and reviewing various institutional scenarios. Many respondents also highlighted strong mentors as one of the major benefits of the Onboarding Program, and those that did have mentors felt well supported. When asked which parts of the program were most useful in preparing them for the correctional environment, one participant shared, “the knowledge my mentors had about the job. I had many questions regarding the job and they were able to give me a response every time.”

Onboarding participants were provided the opportunity to provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the program in preparing them for their role as a CO. The value of the mentor relationship was emphasized in these recommendations, as participants commonly indicated that more available mentors are needed for the program, and that consistent meetings with their mentors would be beneficial. As one respondent suggested, “Regular meetings monthly with mentor(s) where they can make suggestions on how to do better, along with encouragement in areas we're doing well in. Constructive criticism, and encouragement.” Although the program intended for monthly meetings to occur between Onboarding participants and mentors, responses from participants suggest that these meetings were not consistent. Approximately one third of participants indicated that they did not continue to have mentor meetings past the six month mark following their roster integration (29.2%), while 45.8% of participants indicated that they did not know or could not remember how long they continued to have meetings with their mentors. Half of Onboarding participants (53.2%) felt that there was a need for mentor meetings to occur for a longer period of time following roster integration.

Table 2

Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Staff Relationships (N = 74)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents					
	Strongly disagree/ Disagree		Undecided / Don't know		Agree / Strongly agree	
	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)
The working relationships between the team of mentors and the Onboarding participants?	26.4 (14)	† (†)	17.0 (9)	47.6 (10)	56.6 (30)	47.6 (10)
The working relationships amongst COs?	† (†)	† (†)	11.3 (6)	47.6 (10)	79.2 (42)	38.1 (8)
The collaboration and teamwork exhibited by COs?	† (†)	† (†)	† (†)	52.3 (11)	90.6 (48)	38.1 (8)
The working relationships between existing COs and Onboarding participants? ^a	- -	† (†)	- -	35.0 (7)	- -	40.0 (8)
The respect that COs show one another?	21.2 (11)	† (†)	21.2 (11)	52.4 (11)	57.7 (30)	33.3 (7)
The working relationships between COs and Management?	13.2 (7)	† (†)	26.4 (14)	61.9 (13)	60.4 (32)	28.6 (6)
The ability for essential information to flow effectively from Senior Management?	52.8 (28)	† (†)	28.3 (15)	55.0 (11)	18.9 (10)	30.0 (6)
The ability of every individual to be accepted as an equal member of the team?	49.1 (26)	† (†)	30.2 (16)	52.4 (11)	20.8 (11)	33.3 (7)

Note. CO = Correctional Officer. Phrasing of questions differed slightly between respondent groups.

^a Onboarding participants were not asked this question as only non-Onboarding staff perspectives were of interest.

† Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category.

Other Staff Perspectives

Beyond Onboarding participants' perceptions, responses of other staff to the questionnaire provided additional perspectives on the staff relationships at Kent institution. Notably, while the majority of Onboarding participants reported positive relationships with other staff at the institution, responses to Likert scale questions from other staff were more varied. In comparison with the 79.2% of Onboarding participants who reported positive working relationships with other COs, a smaller proportion of other staff reported that the Onboarding Program had a positive or very positive impact on the working relationships amongst COs (38.1%). Although results should be interpreted with caution due to sample size concerns, other staff most commonly responded that there was no impact or that they were undecided when asked of the Onboarding Program's impacts on the collaboration and teamwork exhibited by COs (52.3%), and the respect that COs show one another (52.4%). Similarly, the majority of other staff responded that the program had no impact or that they were undecided of the impact of the program on the working relationships between COs and management (61.9%), and the ability for essential information to flow effectively from Senior Management (55.0%).

In contrast to the responses from Onboarding participants, one of the most prominent themes that emerged from the open-ended responses of other staff was negative staff relationships. More specifically, when provided the opportunity to describe the relationships amongst staff at Kent Institution, 75.0% of other staff identified negative qualities of staff relationships. It was commonly indicated that there was a divide between senior and new staff at Kent Institution, and that there was a "cliqey" culture amongst staff. A staff member at Kent Institution spoke to this divide when asked to describe staff relationships at the institution:

Poor. New staff are making mistakes and senior staff are unwilling to point out the errors or advise the junior staff/OJT out of fear of harassment allegations and demonstrated conflicts from previous interactions. This creates the situation of having experienced staff shaking their heads and walking away and the situation not being addressed correctly.

Thus, respondents highlighted the issues associated with the divided nature of staff relationships, as the separation between new and existing staff had harmful impacts on the effectiveness of the new COs' training.

Workplace Culture

Staff Performance

Another outcome of interest was the impact that the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program had on the job performance of new COs. Both Onboarding participants and other staff were given the opportunity to respond to Likert scale and open-ended questions regarding staff performance.

Onboarding Participant Perspectives. Table 3 presents the results of descriptive statistics for Onboarding participant and other staff responses for staff performance characteristics. Onboarding participants' responses to Likert questions regarding various aspects of their job performance and competencies reflected largely positive experiences. The majority of respondents reported that the Onboarding Program had a positive or very positive impact on their ability to perform their tasks effectively (86.8%) and on their ability to perform their job well (83.0%). More specifically, 86.8% of participants reported that the program had a positive or very positive impact on their ability to run the posts of the institution, while 71.7% felt the program had positive impacts on the quality of dynamic security aspects of the institutional environment.

The majority of Onboarding participants also reported beneficial impacts of the program on the quality of their interactions with offenders (62.3%) and their capability to defuse situations involving offenders (60.4%). However, a common theme that emerged from open-ended responses of Onboarding participants was communication skills, as many respondents felt that the program should include more thorough training on communicating with offenders. It was commonly indicated by participants that they did not feel they had all of the tools necessary to effectively deal with offenders and respond to all of their questions. For example, when asked if there was anything they would change about the Onboarding Program that would have better prepared them for their role as a CO, one participant identified, "build good rapport with inmates and use communication skills." Onboarding participants did report mostly positive impacts of the program on their engagement (69.8%) and motivation (62.3%). Moreover, 69.8% of respondents reported that the program had a positive or very positive impact on their ability to develop a strong work ethic during the first year of their probation. According to the perspectives of participants, the Onboarding Program appears to have had a positive impact on overall job performance and work ethic.

Interestingly, there were notable differences between the responses of current and past Onboarding participants regarding their job performance. The majority of participants had positive views in this area, however larger proportions of past participants responded positively than current participants. For instance, while 57.1% of current participants reported that the Onboarding Program had a positive impact on their ability to perform their tasks effectively. Meanwhile, 91.3% of past participants responded that the program had positive impacts on this area. Another prominent difference was observed in responses to whether the program helped participants to perform their job well. Over half of current participants reported positive impacts of the program on their ability to perform their job well (57.1%). However, 86.9% of past Onboarding participants agreed that the program had positive or very positive impacts on this characteristic. Similarly, more past participants (89.1%) than current participants (71.4%) reported positive impacts of the program on their capabilities to run the posts of the institution and on their ability to develop a strong work ethic during the first year of their probation (71.7% versus 57.1%). This pattern of more positive responses from past than current participants was observed for all questions in this area, with the exception of the program's impact on their engagement, as similar proportions of past participants (69.5%) and current participants (71.4%) reported positive or very positive impacts.

Other Staff Perspectives. Other staff perceptions provided additional insights into the impacts of the Onboarding Program on new COs' job performance. In comparison with Onboarding participant responses, other staff responses to Likert questions were less consistent (see Table 3). Approximately one half of other staff responded that the Onboarding Program had a positive or very positive impact on the ability of new COs to perform their tasks effectively (52.4%), on the overall job performance of new COs (47.6%), and on the capability of new COs to run the posts of the institution (52.4%). Conversely, approximately one quarter of other staff believed that the program had negative or very negative impacts on these job performance characteristics. These results vary greatly from those of Onboarding participant responses to the same questions, as approximately 85.0% of participants believed the program had positive impacts on these areas of their performance. This pattern was consistent for all questions on job performance, as other staff consistently reported less positive impacts than Onboarding participants did. While sample size concerns prevent conclusive results, overall other staff were fairly split between viewing the Onboarding Program as having had a positive impact versus no

impact on various areas of staff performance.

A common theme that emerged from the open-ended responses of other staff regarding any changes seen in new COs since the implementation of the Onboarding Program was the perception of poor job performance of new officers. It was commonly indicated that the new COs were not fully developing the necessary skills to fulfill their responsibilities. One staff at Kent institution explained:

New staff is just not getting it. It seems as if new staff do not fully grasp the dangers of working at a MAXIMUM security prison. New officers are not taking time to learn routine. There needs to [be] institutional based testing during the OJT process to ensure adequate knowledge of what goes on here in regards to movement, populations, proper radio calls, post orders, etc....

A prominent theme that emerged across staff responses when asked if there was anything else they would like to share about their experience with the Onboarding Program was recommendations to improve the program. In this regard, some respondents highlighted the need for higher expectations of the new staff. A staff at Kent Institution explained:

New staff should not feel comfortable with their jobs as soon as they get to the institution. There needs to be more of an emphasis on learning 566-3¹³, post orders, radio calls, populations, house cleaning, officer etiquette etc. New staff also need to know that probation period is a real thing. There is no safety net, if you cannot learn the job in an adequate amount of time, your future career at CSC might be at risk.

Similarly, other staff emphasized that some new COs are integrated into the roster when they are not yet ready for the position, and were accommodated when they were incapable of running certain posts, rather than being trained effectively on each post prior to assuming their positions. A further theme that emerged from other staff responses regarding the challenges with the Onboarding Program was a lack of senior staff working at the institution. Of note, many staff specified that the lack of senior staff and high turnover seen at Kent Institution resulted in less experienced staff assuming training responsibilities. Staff highlighted that this leads to a lower quality of training for new COs.

¹³ 566-3 is in reference to Commissioner's Directive 566-3, which outlines responsibilities and procedures surrounding inmate movement.

Table 3

Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Staff Performance (N = 74)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents					
	Very negative impact / Negative impact		No impact / Don't know		Positive impact / Very positive impact	
	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)
The ability of new COs to perform their tasks effectively?	† (†)	† (†)	11.3 (6)	† (†)	86.8 (46)	52.4 (11)
The capability of new COs to run the posts of the institution?	† (†)	28.6 (6)	11.3 (6)	† (†)	86.8 (46)	52.4 (11)
The overall job performance of new COs?	† (†)	† (†)	13.2 (7)	28.6 (6)	83.0 (44)	47.6 (10)
The quality of support offered to new COs within the institution?	† (†)	† (†)	24.5 (13)	33.3 (7)	66.0 (35)	57.1 (12)
The motivation of new COs?	† (†)	† (†)	28.3 (15)	33.3 (7)	62.3 (33)	47.6 (10)
The engagement of new COs?	† (†)	† (†)	22.6 (12)	38.1 (8)	69.8 (37)	47.6 (10)
The ability of new COs to develop a strong work ethic during the first year of their probation?	† (†)	† (†)	24.5 (13)	38.1 (8)	69.8 (37)	42.9 (9)
The quality of dynamic security aspects of the institutional environment?	† (†)	† (†)	22.6 (12)	38.1 (8)	71.7 (38)	42.9 (9)
The quality of interactions between new COs and offenders?	† (†)	† (†)	32.1 (17)	47.6 (10)	62.3 (33)	28.6 (6)
The capability of new COs to defuse situations involving offenders?	† (†)	† (†)	30.2 (16)	47.6 (10)	60.4 (32)	28.6 (6)
The frequency of leave usage amongst all staff? ^a	- -	† (†)	- -	66.7 (14)	- -	† (†)

Note. CO = Correctional Officer; phrasing of questions differed slightly between groups.

^a Onboarding participants were not asked this question as they would not have insight into the frequency of leave usage prior to working at the institution.

† Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category.

Impacts on Other Staff. The non-Onboarding participants were also provided the opportunity to respond to questions regarding the specific impacts that the program had on their own experiences. As demonstrated in Table 4, the responses of other staff were fairly evenly divided in the various areas, though these results should be interpreted with caution given the smaller sample size. Responses to open-ended questions provided additional context regarding the perceptions of the impacts on other staff. Emerging themes included the perception of inabilities and negative attitudes of new COs from open-ended responses of staff. One Kent Institution staff described:

There seems to be no standards. We have had new officers not able to run a control post and require more training, and after more training when they still can't run a control post, they just get put on posts that don't require them to work certain posts, this puts extra work on the other officers that are capable and negatively impacts them.

Thus, other staff highlighted the detrimental impacts that the perceived lack of abilities of new COs had on their own experiences.

Table 4

Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Other Staff (N = 20)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents		
	Strongly disagree / Disagree	Undecided / Don't know	Agree / Strongly agree
Increase your confidence in the abilities of new COs?	45.0 (9)	35.0 (7)	† (†)
Make it easier for existing COs to perform their duties?	40.0 (8)	30.0 (6)	30.0 (6)
Increase the workload of existing COs?	30.0 (6)	35.0 (7)	35.0 (7)
Increase the workload of Management?	† (†)	35.0 (7)	35.0 (7)
Result in staff shortages?	† (†)	30.0 (6)	† (†)
Improve the capacity to remove staff that do not demonstrate acceptable performance?	65.0 (13)	† (†)	† (†)
Effectively evaluate the performance of new COs?	50.0 (10)	† (†)	30.0 (6)
Lead to more efficient decision-making as to whether new COs have met their probation?	55.0 (11)	† (†)	† (†)

Note. CO = Correctional Officer.

†Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category.

Most other staff had negative views regarding the capacity of the Onboarding Program to evaluate new COs. More specifically, the majority of other staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program improved the capacity to remove staff that do not demonstrate acceptable performance (65.0%). Approximately one-half of other staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program effectively evaluated the performance of new COs (50.0%), and that the program led to more efficient decision-making as to whether new COs have met their probation (55.0%). Therefore, perceptions of other staff suggest that the Onboarding Program was not effectively evaluating new COs prior to integrating them into their institutional roles, and this was supported through qualitative responses. As one staff at Kent Institution suggested:

There are many officers that are being passed through OJT that in my opinion shouldn't have been which pose many dangers and risks. There are officers that have been passed through OJT that are now accommodated to not have to work certain posts (for example, exempt from working control posts). This is not fair.

This quote illustrates a common theme that emerged in the responses of other staff pertaining to exceptions made for the perceived incompetence of new staff. Many other staff highlighted that new COs were not appropriately assessed, and were instead accommodated for not having the necessary skills for their positions.

Beyond the feedback of other staff, responses from Onboarding participants provided additional perspectives of the evaluation of new COs. Onboarding participants had the opportunity to respond to questions surrounding their experiences with the review boards, which were implemented as part of the Onboarding Program to provide a formal evaluation of the performance of participants. The first of the two review boards is outlined to take place just after roster integration. Of note, of the 48 participants who had reached roster integration, only 20.8% reported being part of a review board. For those who did have experience with review boards, all participants responded that they were either part of one review board or that they could not remember how many they participated in. Therefore, results suggest that many Onboarding participants were not involved in these formal assessments and those that did experience a review board did not have the two review boards that were outlined by the Onboarding Program.

Table 5

Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Values and Ethics (N= 74)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents					
	Strongly disagree / Disagree		Undecided		Agree / Strongly agree	
	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)
Addresses values and ethics.	15.1 (8)	14.3 (3)	22.6 (12)	42.9 (9)	62.3 (33)	42.9 (9)
Helps to support CSC's mission.	15.1 (8)	15.0 (3)	22.6 (12)	45.0 (9)	62.3 (33)	40.0 (8)
Encourages new COs to develop a strong work ethic during the first year of probation.	18.9 (10)	42.9 (9)	17.0 (9)	19.0 (4)	64.2 (34)	38.1 (8)
Encourages new COs to be compliant to institutional standards of behaviour.	13.2 (7)	28.6 (6)	13.2 (7)	42.9 (9)	73.6 (39)	28.6 (6)
Reduces concerns about the behaviour of new COs. ^a	- -	50.0 (10)	- -	40.0 (8)	- -	10.0 (2)
Improves the ability of new COs to identify ethical dilemmas.	24.5 (13)	19.0 (4)	17.0 (9)	61.9 (13)	58.5 (31)	19.0 (4)
Helps new COs develop critical thinking skills towards the resolution of ethical dilemmas.	20.8 (11)	38.1 (8)	18.9 (10)	38.1 (8)	60.4 (32)	23.8 (5)
Encourages a respectful workplace.	15.1 (8)	23.8 (5)	23.1 (12)	38.1 (8)	60.4 (32)	38.1 (8)
Encourages new COs to stand up to do the right thing if needed.	13.2 (7)	19.0 (4)	17.0 (9)	57.1 (12)	69.8 (37)	23.8 (5)
Encourages existing staff to be respectful and supportive of new COs.	24.5 (13)	19.0 (4)	22.6 (12)	52.4 (11)	52.8 (28)	28.6 (6)
Helps staff become more comfortable to speak up when they feel their values are not supported.	22.6 (12)	19.0 (4)	24.5 (13)	52.4 (11)	52.8 (28)	28.6 (6)

Note. CO = Correctional Officer. Phrasing of questions differed slightly between respondent groups.

^a Onboarding participants were not asked this question as they would not have insight into the concerns of other staff with their behaviour.

†Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category.

Values and Ethics

A critical goal of the Onboarding Program pilot is to reinforce CSC values and ethics in the institutional culture. Table 5 presents the responses of Onboarding participants and other staff to Likert scale questions regarding values and ethics. Onboarding participants reported largely positive views concerning the impact of the program on areas of values and ethics. The majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Onboarding Program encouraged them to develop a strong work ethic during their first year of probation (64.2%). Moreover, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program addressed values and ethics (62.3%) and that it helped to support CSC's mission (62.3%). Approximately three-quarters of respondents indicated that the program encouraged them to be compliant to institutional standards of behaviour (73.6%). Responses to other areas of values and ethics were more mixed. While 58.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved their ability to identify ethical dilemmas, 24.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, the majority of participants reported that the program helped them to develop critical thinking skills towards the resolution of ethical dilemmas (60.4%), while the remainder disagreed or were undecided. Most participants also indicated that they were encouraged to stand up to do the right thing if needed (69.8%).

Interestingly, in comparison to the rest of the questions regarding values and ethics, less participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program encouraged existing staff to be respectful and supportive of new COs (52.8%) or that it encouraged them to be more comfortable to speak up when they feel their values are not supported (52.8%). Consistent with these results, when asked to describe the culture of COs in regards to welcoming and integrating new employees to the institution, a prominent theme that emerged from the responses of participants was the divide between senior and new officers. Notably, two sub-themes were revealed in open-ended responses regarding the institutional culture: the positive, welcoming culture of new staff, and the negative, divided culture with senior staff. As one participant shares, "I would say it was 50/50. I found more senior officers were not as welcoming as newer officers." This perspective was shared among Onboarding participants and other staff. It was commonly indicated that a negative culture exists, and that COs are commonly congregated in exclusive "cliqey" groups, which hindered new COs from feeling welcomed and supported. Thus, these characteristics of the institutional culture provide insight into some of the difficulties that Onboarding participants

experienced regarding their integration of CSC values and ethics. Another respondent described some of the issues associated with Kent's culture, "Most staff would rather bully than help new officers. There is an old Kent culture of this and it still occurs. Senior staff avoid leadership roles and opt for easy positions then complain that new officers know nothing." Therefore, there may have been a barrier with participants acquiring important skills due to this unwillingness of some staff to help, in addition to the poor example of values and ethics that seem to be displayed.

Other themes identified in open-ended responses may provide insight into the reluctance of some staff to train new COs, as well as the negative attitudes that were reported concerning some staff. For instance, a major theme that emerged through the open-ended responses of both Onboarding participants and other staff was the high turnover amongst staff at Kent Institution. Some respondents spoke to the impact that this turnover has on the culture of the institution. For example, one respondent shared regarding the relationships between staff, "Strained and stressed with few senior experienced officers remaining, and an influx of new officers with minimal to zero experience. Unhealthy and dangerous environment." Thus, the high turnover experienced by the institution may have been negatively affecting the well-being of other staff because they were burdened with additional responsibilities. Similarly, a prominent theme that emerged from the responses of Onboarding participants and other staff was burnout. More specifically, many Onboarding participants and other staff indicated that COs were consistently strained due to the quantity of training and additional duties required of them, and thus were not satisfied in their positions and more likely to leave the institution. An Onboarding participant explained:

The training officers are willing to help new staff learn, however they are clearly burnt out by the constant stream of new recruits that need to be trained. As a result of the number of new staff starting, the quality of training goes down and more inexperienced staff are being pushed into leadership roles, and the other officers are burnt out.

Some participants also mentioned that the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on institutional operations might have intensified the burnout experienced by both staff and management. One Kent Institution staff shared, "There is a belief that management will for the most part not make effective decisions that will keep officers safe. Officers are tired from the lack of support, constant training, and over time hours. These feelings have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic." Moreover, a common theme that emerged from all staff responses was the excessive training for which staff are responsible. It was commonly indicated that too many Onboarding participants were being brought into the institution at the same time, that the amount

of training responsibilities put on some COs was leading to lower quality training, and that there was an excess of new staff and lack of senior staff, which resulted in new inexperienced staff covering training responsibilities. Thus, high staff turnover had numerous critical impacts on the institutional environment, and these effects appeared to be influencing a lower quality of CSC values and ethics amongst COs, conflicting with the goals of the Onboarding Program.

The findings of other staff responses to Likert scale questions surrounding the impacts of the Onboarding Program on values and ethics were split (see Table 5). The majority of respondents were undecided (42.9%), or agreed or strongly agreed (42.9%) that the Onboarding Program addressed values and ethics, and that it helped to support CSC's mission (45.0% versus 40.0%, respectively). Half of other staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program helped reduce concerns about COs. Many other staff were undecided of the impacts of the program on other characteristics of values and ethics, however sample size concerns prevent conclusive results in this area.

Organizational Commitment

A critical concern with the workplace culture at Kent Institution involved the high turnover rates of staff. A fundamental goal of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program is to help improve the organizational commitment of COs to the institution. In order to examine the influence of the program on organizational commitment, perceptions of Onboarding participants and other staff were examined.

Onboarding Staff Perspectives. Onboarding staff reported mixed views of the impacts of the Onboarding Program on organizational commitment (see Table 6). Approximately half of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of pride working for the institution (52.8%), and that their values aligned with those of the institution (50.9%). However, other areas of the results reflect more negative perceptions of organizational commitment. Most Onboarding participants were either undecided or disagreed that they had strong loyalty to the institution (32.1% and 37.7%, respectively), that they had high job satisfaction (28.3% and 47.2%, respectively), and that they had a strong desire to keep working at this institution (32.1% and 45.3%, respectively). The majority of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had little desire for leaving the institution to work for another one (62.3%) and that they would recommend Kent Institution as a great place to work (62.3%).

Table 6

Impact of Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on Organizational Commitment (N= 74)

Characteristics	Percentage (n) of respondents					
	Very negative impact / Negative impact		No impact / Undecided		Positive impact / Very positive impact	
	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)	Onboarding participants (n = 53)	Other staff (n = 21)
The level of effort new COs are willing to put in to help the success of this institution.	18.9 (10)	† (†)	† (†)	45.0 (9)	71.7 (38)	40.0 (8)
The pride that new COs feel working for this institution.	28.3 (15)	† (†)	18.9 (10)	45.0 (9)	52.8 (28)	30.0 (6)
Turnover rates at this institution.	† (†)	45.0 (9)	- -	40.0 (8)	98.1 (52)	† (†)
The loyalty of new COs to this institution.	37.7 (20)	35.0 (7)	32.1 (17)	50.0 (10)	30.2 (16)	† (†)
The job satisfaction of new COs.	47.2 (25)	† (†)	28.3 (15)	52.6 (10)	24.5 (13)	† (†)
The desire of new COs to keep working at this institution.	45.3 (24)	30.0 (6)	32.1 (17)	50.0 (10)	22.6 (12)	† (†)
The views that new COs hold about this institution.	47.2 (25)	30.0 (6)	28.3 (15)	40.0 (8)	24.5 (13)	30.0 (6)
The alignment of values between the institution and the new COs.	26.4 (14)	† (†)	22.6 (12)	45.0 (9)	50.9 (27)	30.0 (6)
The desire of new COs to leave this institution to work for another one.	62.3 (33)	† (†)	24.5 (13)	50.0 (10)	13.2 (7)	40.0 (8)
The motivation of new COs to move up within this institution ^a .	- -	† (†)	- -	55.0 (11)	- -	† (†)
I would recommend Kent Institution as a great place to work.	62.3 (33)	- -	26.4 (14)	- -	11.3 (6)	- -
I believe I have opportunities for advancement within this institution, given my education, skills, and experience.	26.4 (14)	- -	18.9 (10)	- -	54.7 (29)	- -

Note. CO = Correctional Officer. Phrasing of questions differed slightly between groups.

^a Onboarding participants were not asked this question as only non-Onboarding staff perspectives were of interest.

† Information suppressed due to frequencies fewer than 5 in one category.

Thus, responses to Likert scale questions suggested that Onboarding participants may not feel a strong sense of commitment to working at Kent institution, and 47.2% of participants also disagreed or strongly disagreed that they held positive views about the institution. These views were parallel with open-ended responses. A major theme that emerged was intentions to leave the institution. Many participants mentioned that the culture at Kent institution was influencing their desire to leave. When asked to describe the workplace environment/culture within Kent Institution, an Onboarding participant shared:

A lack of leadership and direction. People want to work and do well but are just left to burn out. The culture I feel is just keep burning out the staff and put in new staff. How about fixing the problem... Train, educate us lead us make us want to stay...

This view seems to be shared by many Onboarding participants, as 71.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to put in a high level of effort to help the success of the institution. Many participants appeared to have a desire to put in the work to succeed in their positions and contribute to the institution, yet the workplace culture presented a barrier to their efforts. Beyond the intentions to leave expressed by Onboarding participants, they also commonly referenced the turnover within the institution more generally. As one participant described the institutional culture, "It is terrible. There is little to no staff moral [*sic*] or cohesion. Most officers are getting 2 years in and trying to transfer out or get on to an easy 12 hour line where you do not have to engage inmates or staff." Therefore, from the perspectives of Onboarding participants, there appeared to be a culture of staff turnover at the institution and a shortage of experienced staff as many were seeking to transfer out.

Other Staff Perspectives. The perceptions of other staff surrounding organizational commitment varied. Consistent with the responses of Onboarding participants, a proportion of other staff reported a positive or very positive impact (40.0%) of the Onboarding Program on the level of effort new COs were willing to put in to help the success of the institution, however 45.0% reported no impact of the program on this characteristic. Many respondents also indicated that there was no impact of the program on the pride that new COs feel working for the institution (45.0%), the job satisfaction of new COs (52.6%), or the views that new COs hold about the institution (40.0%). Approximately half of other staff indicated that there were no impacts of the program on the remaining characteristics of organizational commitment captured by Likert scale responses.

Consistent with the perspectives of Onboarding participants, the majority of other staff

indicated that the Onboarding Program had no impact (40.0%) or a negative or very negative impact (45.0%) on the staff turnover rates at the institution. The thematic analysis on open-ended responses expanded on this finding. A prominent theme that emerged from the responses of other staff was the staff turnover at Kent institution. Other staff commonly indicated that there was high turnover amongst staff, which had an influence on the relationship dynamics of staff, and negatively impacted job stress and performance. One respondent indicated:

Kent institution is a toxic work environment, a huge influx of newer staff, with a mass exodus of experienced staff members has resulted in an environment that is very cliquey in small groups. Involuntary Overtime since 2018 has contributed to a lot of resentment between staff, in addition to the newer staff members who are uncomfortable with [their] job or state that they [are] 'fine' yet do not enforce or follow institutional rules and policy.

Therefore, it was evident through the perceptions of all staff that turnover is an ongoing concern at Kent institution, and that it had unfortunate impacts on the workplace culture. It was commonly indicated that there was an abundance of newer COs and an absence of experienced COs working at the institution.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine the effectiveness of the Correctional Officer Onboarding Pilot Program, which was implemented at Kent Institution in September 2019. Overall, through the perspectives of current and past Onboarding participants, it is evident that the Onboarding Program effectively assists with their transition from the Correctional Training Program to the realities of the correctional environment. The guidance offered by mentors and the opportunities for additional control post training positively contribute to their integration into the institution. While the perspectives of other staff supported the positive impacts of the program in this regard, they also identified resource issues due to overwhelming numbers of new COs and limited senior staff working at the institution available to support the program.

One objective of this research was to observe the influence that the Onboarding Program has on staff relationships. Overall, findings in this area were mixed. While relationships amongst new COs were conveyed as largely positive, relationships with other staff and management presented as more complicated. Both Onboarding participants and other staff agreed that there is a clear divide between the new and senior staff at the institution. Both perspectives suggested ongoing concerns with staff and management relationships. Results propose a disconnect between staff and management, as the majority of both Onboarding participants and other staff indicated negative or no impacts of the program on the ability for essential information to flow effectively from Senior Management.

Perspectives of the relationships between Onboarding participants and the program's team of mentors were also of interest. The majority of participants reported positive experiences with their mentors, as they highlighted the value of the one-on-one training in reinforcing fundamental skills, the key role of mentors in helping with their transition from the Training Academy to the institution, and the overall importance of the mentor position to the success of the program. However, it was evident that there is a shortage of mentors, which impacted the ability of many participants to establish these valued relationships. Initial feedback on the Onboarding Program indicated that mentors were highly regarded as supportive and approachable, and that their role was instrumental in cultivating an inviting atmosphere for new COs (Sullivan & Hanby, 2021). Therefore, this drop in the number of mentors is noteworthy, as mentor relationships were a fundamental program component emphasized in previous emerging

research conducted on the program.

Three aspects of workplace culture were examined in this study: job performance, values and ethics, and organizational commitment. In terms of job performance, there was a clear disconnect between the perspectives of Onboarding participants and other staff in this area. Onboarding participants generally had positive views regarding the impact of the program on their abilities and overall job performance, while other staff reported no or more negative impacts, particularly on the abilities of new COs to interact with and defuse situations involving offenders. Interestingly, Onboarding participants also emphasized that they could benefit from more training on the communication with offenders. Previous research has demonstrated the importance of mentorship in improving the dynamic security practice of COs (Doherty & White, 2014). Thus, the limited mentors involved in the program, and the absence of senior staff working at the institution could help explain why participants are experiencing issues developing these essential communication skills.

Second, the effects of the Onboarding Program on the values and ethics of staff were explored. The majority of Onboarding participants expressed positive views regarding the impact of the program on their ability to integrate CSC values and ethics. However, other staff were mostly undecided or disagreed that the Onboarding Program encourages the integration of values and ethics for new COs. Of note, half of other staff disagreed that the program reduces concerns about the behaviour of new COs, while 40.0% were undecided. Thus, results suggest that other staff do not feel confident in the abilities and behaviours of new COs, even after the implementation of the Onboarding Program. However, both other staff and Onboarding participants emphasized the burnout experienced by many staff due to excessive training responsibilities, as well as the high turnover and leave usage by staff at the institution. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on institutional operations were also highlighted, as this disruption to procedures exacerbated staff burnout. While concrete impacts on values and ethics were not observed in the current study, this may be attributed in part to the undesirable conditions of operating during a global pandemic.

The final aspect of workplace culture that was measured in this study was organizational commitment. Overall, Onboarding participants and other staff had unfavorable views regarding intentions to stay at the institution. Although the majority of Onboarding participants responded that they were willing to put in effort to help the success of the institution, their views of the

institution generally were largely negative. Similarly, most other staff reported no impacts or negative impacts of the Onboarding Program on the organizational commitment of COs. It was also evident through the perspectives of both other staff and Onboarding participants that the institution has a substantial issue with staff turnover. Given that job stress, perceptions of a hostile environment, and a lack of cohesiveness among staff are antecedents of organizational commitment, it is unfortunately unsurprising that Kent Institution struggles with staff retention (Hogan et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2021; Lambert, 2004).

Conclusions

Taken together, the findings of this study indicate that a Correctional Officer Onboarding Program assists new COs with the transition from the Training Academy to the correctional environment. A structured program during the first year of employment can enhance the training delivered to participants and help to reinforce fundamental competencies that are first developed in CTP. While results indicate that the Onboarding Program is having a direct impact on program participants, broader impacts of the program on elements of workplace culture were not observed in the current study. Using a wide range of perspectives of staff working at Kent institution, it was apparent that while the Onboarding Program has potential, challenges with the program's implementation and inconsistencies in the delivery of program elements has impacted its success in improving workplace culture.

Notably, the results of this study suggest that there were insufficient resources to accommodate the number of new recruits joining the Onboarding Program. The absence of experienced staff working at Kent Institution was a concern, as many training responsibilities associated with the program were assigned to new, less experienced COs. This influences the quality of training delivered to participants as well as key components of the program, such as the structured shadowing and values and ethics training. More specifically, mentoring, a critical element of the program has declined due to turnover amongst the team of mentors. Increasing the number of mentors involved in the program was the most commonly indicated recommendation to improve the program, and mentors were highlighted as one of the most valued components of the program. These positive views of mentors are consistent with previous research which found mentoring for COs beneficial to both the adjustment of new recruits to the correctional environment, and to protecting COs against burnout (Farnese et al., 2017). Moreover, increased mentor involvement could help to improve organizational commitment and job satisfaction

amongst participants (Allen et al., 2004; Scandura, 1997). Likewise, a critical role of the program's mentors is to be involved in the decision as to whether the new CO is ready for roster integration, and to support this transition. Given the decline in the program's mentors, the results suggest that participants are not adequately assessed prior to their roster integration, and that they do not have that intended support during their first weeks on the roster. A clear distinction was apparent between Onboarding participants who began the program during the first phases of the program and current participants who entered the program after its initial implementation (and during the COVID-19 pandemic). While the past participants highlighted more positive experiences and referenced their mentors as being key to their success, the current participants reported less positive experiences and less support from their mentors. This reduction in mentor support appears to be a result of the decrease in the number of mentor participants in the program, and is not a reflection of the perceived value of the mentor relationship.

Another central program component that appears to be unstable is the implementation of two review boards. The purpose of the review boards is to assess the new CO and their ability to respond to situations within the CSC Values framework and National Standards. Moreover, the review boards were meant to offer an opportunity for the CO to discuss any areas that they may be struggling with, and the final review board was to involve a decision as to whether the CO has demonstrated an ability to meet the standards of the Performance Management Plan. Given the varied perspectives of other staff regarding the job performance of new COs, it is evident that the use of review boards could be beneficial to ensuring participants are adequately delivering their CO responsibilities.

Consequently, many elements of the Onboarding Program have fluctuated or diminished since the initial implementation of the program. This is likely due in part to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on operations in the institution. Many changes were instated to the procedures of the institution in response to the pandemic, such as enhanced public health and cleaning protocols, suspensions of many on-site programs and resources, and fluctuating rules that staff and offenders were required to follow. The pandemic may have also influenced absenteeism of staff, as any staff testing positive for the COVID-19 virus would need to isolate at home, thus affecting institutional operations, as well as staff burnout. As a result, the program has operated with less structure, which could have impacted its overall efficiency and effectiveness (Staunton, 2017).

Limitations & Future Directions

The strengths of this research include the diverse perspectives gathered from institutional staff of various positions in order to provide a comprehensive view of the impacts of the program on the institutional environment, as well as the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to best capture the perceptions of respondents. However, this research presents some limitations. Given the turnover of many of the program's mentors by the time of data collection, the research was unable to capture a broad range of mentor perspectives. The perceptions of the mentors who are directly involved in the operation of the program would be extremely valuable to understanding its impacts and challenges. In addition, although data collection occurred during a period when there were no outbreaks of COVID-19 at institutions, the pandemic nonetheless may have affected participation in this study, resulting in a less than ideal response rate (27%). Similar to the turnover of mentors, the large staff turnover more broadly may have also impacted participation. These concerns surrounding sample size prevented the ability to make more definitive conclusions of the results. Specifically, the results of the Likert questions of other staff were largely split, and the sample for this group was small ($n = 21$). A larger sample size may have resulted in the ability to detect more significant effects. More broadly, sample size concerns also restricted the analyses that could be performed. This study was limited to descriptive analyses, while a larger sample size could have allowed for comparative analyses, which may have resulted in the detection of significant differences between groups. It would be beneficial for future research to examine the impacts of the Onboarding Program once it is operating to its full potential, as components of the program and institutional operations overall were undeniably subject to influence by the pandemic.

Lastly, a comprehensive measurement of workplace culture was not feasible with the current methodology and instead was examined in terms of staff performance, values and ethics, and organizational commitment. Although this study presents important implications for the Correctional Officer Onboarding Program on these key elements of workplace culture, this research was not able to fully capture workplace culture, nor did it include any groups for comparison. Future research would be beneficial to disentangle the impacts of the Onboarding Program on a broader definition of workplace culture at Kent Institution, and in comparison to other maximum-security institutions.

References

- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., Poteet, M. L., Lentz, E., & Lima, L. (2004). Career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*(1), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.1.127>
- Armstrong, G. S., & Griffin, M. L. (2004). Does the job matter? Comparing correlates of stress among treatment and correctional staff in prisons. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 32*(6), 577–592. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2004.08.007>
- Bauer, & Erdogan, B. (2011). Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees. In *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, Vol 3: Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization* (pp. 51–64). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12171-002>
- Bensimon, P. (2005). *Correctional Officers and their first year: An empirical investigation*. R-179. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada
- Brough, P. & Williams, J. (2007). Managing occupational stress in a high-risk industry: Measuring the job demands of Correctional Officers. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 34*(4), 555–567. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854806294147>
- Caldwell, C. & Peters, R. (2018). New employee onboarding – psychological contracts and ethical perspectives. *Journal of Management Development, 37*(1), 27-39. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-10-2016-0202>
- Carleton, R. N., Afifi, T. O., Turner, S., Taillieu, T., Duranceau, S., LeBouthillier, D. M., Sareen, J., Ricciardelli, R., MacPhee, R. S., Groll, D., Hozempa, K., Brunet, A., Weekes, J. R., Griffiths, C. T., Abrams, K. J., Jones, N. A., Beshai, S., Cramm, H. A., Dobson, K. S., ... Asmundson, G. J. G. (2018). Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 63*(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743717723825>
- Castle, T. L. (2008). Satisfied in the Jail?: Exploring the predictors of job satisfaction among jail officers. *Criminal Justice Review, 33*(1), 48-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016808315586>
- Correctional Service of Canada (2018). *Commissioner's Directive (CD) Number 001: Mission, values, and ethics framework of the Correctional Service of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://thehub/En/about-csc/corporate-information/Pages/mission-priorities.aspx>
- Doherty, S., & White, M. (2014). *Dynamic security practice among Correctional Officers: Acquiring the skills*. RS 14-15. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Dowden, C., & Tellier, C. (2004). Predicting work-related stress in correctional officers: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 32*(1), 31–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2003.10.003>

- Farnese, M. L., Barbieri, B., Bellò, B., & Bartone, P. T. (2017). Don't abandon hope all ye who enter here: The protective role of formal mentoring and learning processes on burnout in correctional officers. *Work, 58*(3), 319-331. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>
- Farnese, M. L., Bellò, B., Livi, S., Barbieri, B., & Gubbiotti, P. (2016) Learning the Ropes: The Protective Role of Mentoring in Correctional Police Officers' Socialization Process. *Military Psychology, 28*(6), 429-447. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930280405>
- Finney, C., Stergiopoulos, E., Hensel, J., Bonato, S., & Dewa, C. S. (2013). Organizational stressors associated with job stress and burnout in correctional officers: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health, 13*(1), 82–82. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-82>
- Fusco, N., Ricciardelli, R., Jamshidi, L., Carleton, R. N., Barnim, N., Hilton, Z., & Groll, D. (2021). When Our Work Hits Home: Trauma and Mental Disorders in Correctional Officers and Other Correctional Workers. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 11*, 493391–493391. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.493391>
- Griffin, M. L., Hogan, N. L., Lambert, E. G., Tucker-Gail, K. A., & Baker, D. N. (2010). Job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and the burnout of correctional staff. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 37*(2), 239–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854809351682>
- Griffin. (2006). Gender and Stress: A comparative assessment of sources of stress among Correctional Officers. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 22*(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986205285054>
- Hogan, N. L., Lambert, E. G., & Griffin, M. L. (2013). Loyalty, love, and investments: The impact of job outcomes on the organizational commitment of correctional staff. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 40*(4), 355–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854812469944>
- Jaegers, L. A., Vaughn, M. G., Werth, P., Matthieu, M. M., Ahmad, S. O., & Barnidge, E. (2021). Work–family conflict, depression, and burnout among jail correctional officers: A 1-year prospective study. *Safety and Health at Work, 12*(2), 167–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2020.10.008>
- Jiang, S., Lambert, E. G., Liu, J., Kelley, T. M., & Zhang, J. (2018). Effects of work environment variables on Chinese prison staff organizational commitment. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 51*(2), 275–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865817720628>
- Johnston, M. S., Ricciardelli, R., & McKendy, L. (2021). Suffering in Silence: Work and mental health experiences among provincial correctional workers in Canada. *Corrections: Policy, Practice and Research, 1–19*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23774657.2021.1978906>
- Keinan, G., & Malach-Pines, A. (2007). Stress and burnout among prison personnel: Sources, outcomes, and intervention strategies. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 34*(3), 380–398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854806290007>

- Kotejoshyer, R., Gilmer, D. O., Namazi, S., Farr, D., Henning, R. A., & Cherniack, M. (2021). Impact of a total worker health mentoring program in a correctional workforce. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(16), 8436–. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168436>
- Kram, K., & Hall, D. T. (1989). Mentoring as an antidote to stress during corporate trauma. *Human Resource Management*, 28(4), 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930280405>
- Lambert, E. G., Hogan, N. L., & Altheimer, I. (2010). An exploratory examination of the consequences of burnout in terms of life satisfaction, turnover intent, and absenteeism among private correctional staff. *The Prison Journal*, 90(1), 94-114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885509357586>
- Lambert, E. G., Hogan, N. L., Dial, K. C., Jiang, S., & Khondaker, M. I. (2012). Is the job burning me out? An exploratory test of the job characteristics model on the emotional burnout of prison staff. *The Prison Journal (Philadelphia, Pa.)*, 92(1), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885511428794>
- Lambert, E. G., Leone, M., Hogan, N. L., Buckner, Z., Worley, R., & Worley, V. B. (2021). To be committed or not: A systematic review of the empirical literature on organizational commitment among correctional staff. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 34(1), 88–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2020.1762082>
- Lambert, E. G. (2004). The Impact of job characteristics on Correctional Staff members. *The Prison Journal (Philadelphia, Pa.)*, 84(2), 208–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885504265078>
- Malicevic Balic, Z. (2017). *Onboarding: The effect of a new hire program on employee engagement and retention*. (Publication No. 10281595) [Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Moon, B., & Maxwell, S. R. (2004). The sources and consequences of corrections officers' stress: A South Korean example. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 32(4), 359–370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2004.04.006>
- Office of the Correctional Investigator (2011). *Unauthorized force: An investigation into the dangerous use of firearms at Kent Institution between January 8-18, 2010*. Retrieved from <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20110321-eng.aspx>
- Office of the Correctional Investigator (2014). *Kent Investigation Follow-up: Letter to the Commissioner*. Retrieved from <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20140110let-eng.aspx>
- Ricciardelli, R., Power, N., & Medeiros, D. S. (2018). Correctional officers in Canada: Interpreting workplace violence. *Criminal Justice Review (Atlanta, Ga.)*, 43(4), 458–476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016817752433>

- Ricciardelli, R. (2021). Socialization across the three stages of the Correctional Service of Canada's Correctional Officer Training Program: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*, <https://doi.org/10.21428/88de04a1.2cb79f6d>
- Robinson, D., Porporino, F. K., Simourd, L. (1992). *Staff Commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada
- Savicki, V., Cooley, E., & Gjesvold, J. (2003). Harassment as a predictor of job burnout in correctional officers. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *30*(5), 602–619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854803254494>
- Scandura, T. (1997). Mentoring and organizational justice: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *51*(1), 58–69. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1997.1588>
- Snell, A. (2006). Researching onboarding best practice: Using research to connect onboarding processes with employee satisfaction. *Strategic HR Review*, *5*(6), 32–35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14754390680000925>
- Staunton, E. (2017). *An exploratory study of employees' perspectives on the value of onboarding programs*. (Publication No. 10256425) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Sullivan, R., & Hanby, L. (2021). *Onboarding Program: Exploring Correctional Officer experiences*. ERR-21-02. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada
- Wittenberg, P. M. (1998). Successful mentoring in a correctional environment. *Federal Probation*, *62*(2), 75-80.