

# The Timing of Correctional Reintegration Program Delivery: A Review of International Correctional Agencies

*Among the minority of correctional agencies that address the timing of delivery of CRPs, offenders' release dates and needs were the most common considerations.*

## Why we did this study

Correctional reintegration programs (CRPs) are an essential part of many correctional agencies' efforts to rehabilitate incarcerated men and women. Given considerable evidence showing that CRPs that adhere to the Risk-Need-Responsivity principles reduce the risk of reoffending, scholars and correctional agencies are now exploring additional ways to optimize the efficacy and efficiency of correctional interventions. In particular, there has been increased attention on the optimal timing of CRP delivery during an offender's sentence to improve program completion rates and help reduce the risk of recidivism.

The purpose of this report was to review documentation publicly available from various correctional agencies in different regions and jurisdictions to identify the best practices of timely enrollment and completion of CRPs, the effectiveness of these practices in reducing recidivism, and how these could be applied to the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) program model.

## What we did

The government webpages available in English or French of 70 correctional agencies in 13 countries were reviewed for publicly available documentation, policy, legislation, and research pertaining to the timing of delivery of CRPs prior to community release. In total, 21 agencies representing three countries were included in the final review.

## What we found

The review identified a number of strategies employed by the 21 correctional agencies in how and when they deliver CRPs prior to community release. These timing strategies were classified into four broad categories: 1) timing of CRP adapted to the offender, 2) timing of CRP based on available resources, 3) timing of CRP based on the offender's release date, and 4) other timing strategies. Some correctional agencies employed more than one strategy and thus were classified under multiple themes.

Timing of CRP based on the offender's release date was identified as the most common strategy for CRP delivery (adopted by fifteen correctional agencies), followed by timing of CRP adapted to the offender (adopted by ten agencies).

The latter includes offenders' immediate need for program, their willingness to participate, and programs tailored to target risk and needs at specific stages during offenders' sentences to maximize on treatment efficacy. Six correctional agencies delivered CRPs based on available resources (i.e., the availability of staff and room locations). The final category includes additional strategies that were not as common in the review, such as administering programs early in offenders' sentences, on a rolling basis, or during a period in offenders' sentences that would be considered the most effective in achieving their case plan goals and objectives. Only four correctional agencies delivered CRPs according to this theme.

## What it means

Overall, these findings may reflect that the majority of correctional agencies base the optimal time to enroll in and complete programs on the offender's release date. CSC's correctional planning falls under this category, giving priority to programming to those serving four years or less to ensure program completion before parole eligibility dates. Yet, due to a lack of empirical research, this report was unable to inform CSC of whether this strategy is a best practice at this time.

Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies across various jurisdictions outlined in this review is required to advise CSC on the best practices for CRP delivery. Nonetheless, a recent CSC report found that the timing of programs closer to day parole eligibility dates was associated with reduced recidivism,<sup>1</sup> suggesting that CSC may be on the right path in ensuring that offenders with shorter sentences are prioritized for correctional programs to complete programs closer to earliest possible release dates. Thus, establishing strategies to ensure this is attainable will be critical.

## For more information

Tanga, M., Wardrop, K., & Sheahan, C. (2023). *The Timing of Correctional Reintegration Program Delivery: A Review of International Correctional Agencies*. (Research Report R-448). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> Wardrop, K., & Sheahan, C. (2022). *The relationship between the timing of completion of correctional programs and recidivism outcomes*. (Research Report-439). Correctional Service of Canada.