

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Impacts of Indigenous Intervention Centres on Women's Institutional Behaviour

Preliminary data suggests that IIC involvement has positive impacts on the institutional behaviour of Indigenous women.

Why we did this study

Indigenous women face unique challenges within the Canadian criminal justice system. Within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), Indigenous Intervention Centres (IICs) were developed to streamline Indigenous resources and services, providing a culturally responsive and integrated approach to case management. IICs aim to increase success and healing for Indigenous offenders, while ensuring CSC supports their safe reintegration into society. In collaboration with the Indigenous Initiatives Directorate, this study examines the impacts of IICs on the progress and outcomes of Indigenous offenders.

What we did

Indigenous women who were admitted to a federal institution between April 1, 2018 and March 15, 2020 and participated in IICs ($N = 172$) were compared to Indigenous women that were eligible but did not participate ($N = 32$). In order to participate in IICs, offenders must meet certain eligibility criteria related to shorter sentence length, non-sexual offence types,¹ program eligibility (i.e., none or moderate program needs), and a willingness to work with an Elder/Spiritual Advisor and participate in the Indigenous continuum of care.

Groups were compared on demographics, offence and sentence characteristics, risk and need profile, culturally-specific intervention participation, and institutional behavior during the first year of incarceration following admission.

What we found

Unequal sized comparison groups and a small sample size for the non-participant group presented challenges in analyses in terms of finding statistically significant results. The results presented herein are only those that were significant, unless otherwise noted.

IIC participants and non-participants were comparable in risk and need characteristics. Non-participants were slightly higher in static risk and lower in reintegration potential and motivation, though these differences did not reach significance. Women that participated in IICs were less likely to have identified responsivity concerns.

¹ Eligibility criteria was modified in January 2021, removing the restrictions on sex offences.

Compared to non-participants, IIC participants showed greater interest and participation in Indigenous initiatives, both at intake and throughout incarceration (e.g., development of a Healing Plan, Initial Elder Review, Indigenous staff assigned to caseload). For women with an identified correctional program referral, IIC participants were more likely to complete Indigenous correctional programs compared to non-participants. IIC participants were also more likely to complete employment programs.

In terms of problematic behaviour, IIC participants were less likely to have institutional incidents, and minor or serious disciplinary charges. Though IIC participants were more likely to receive a decrease in security level, this difference did not reach significance. Consistent with the objectives of the IIC model, participants were more likely to receive discretionary release than non-participants.

What it means

While a small comparison group presented some statistical challenges, from an operational perspective it is positive that the vast majority of eligible Indigenous women are accessing IICs. Preliminary descriptive findings of the study offer support for the collective contribution of multiple Indigenous-specific interventions in improving the institutional behaviour of participating Indigenous women.

Larger sample sizes are required to assess other objectives of the IIC model (e.g., timely access to programs, transitions to lower security sooner in sentence). The next phase of this research will examine the impacts of IIC involvement on reintegration, both in terms of earlier access to conditional release (i.e., at first eligibility date) and post-release outcomes.

For more information

Hanby, L., Beauchamp, T., & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2023). *Impacts of Indigenous Intervention Centre Participation on Institutional Behaviour* (Research Report R-452). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

