

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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Correctional Interventions for Radicalized Offenders: A Literature Review

Overall, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to the assessment, management, intervention, and staff training related to radicalized offenders.

Why we did this study

Over the last several years, the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Research Branch has contributed to research regarding federally incarcerated radicalized offenders. CSC defines a 'radicalized offender' as "an ideologically motivated offender who commits, aspires or conspires to commit, or promotes violent acts in order to achieve ideological objectives" (CSC, 2012).¹ This literature review was conducted to explore the best practices of correctional interventions for radicalized offenders in jurisdictions across the world.

What we did

This report reviewed the key research related to the assessment, management, intervention approaches, and staff training related to radicalized offenders. The findings of this literature review aim to support and assess CSC initiatives related to the management of radicalized offenders and staff training.

What we found

Overall, there is no universal risk assessment for radicalized offenders as correctional services have developed their own assessments based on operational considerations specific to their offender population. The majority of jurisdictions use a structured professional judgement approach to risk assessments, which include explicit guidelines for which factors should be considered, but the combination of those factors and the overall evaluation of risk are left up to the professional judgment of the assessor.

Generally, there are five population management strategies used: separation, isolation, concentration, integration, and dispersal. Management strategies are chosen based on a variety of factors, such as available resources and number of radicalized offenders, among others. Some jurisdictions choose a management strategy on a case-by-case basis or based on the offender's extremist affiliation, beliefs, and ideologies, whereas others have implemented only one strategy for all radicalized offenders.

Interventions are usually aimed at deradicalization or disengagement. Deradicalization focuses on the radicalized offender's beliefs and ideology, whereas disengagement targets the offender's behaviour and actions. However, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to intervention services for radicalized offenders. Instead, correctional programming should be tailored for local contexts.

Staff training for most jurisdictions focus on signs of radicalization occurring within the institution and the methods for reporting. However, it is unclear if the identified signs of radicalization are applicable to all radicalized offenders, regardless of ideology (i.e. left- or right-wing), as many identified signs or examples of radicalization appear to be based on Islamist extremism.

What it means

Although CSC does not currently provide any specific or unique programming for radicalized offenders, common themes identified in the literature have pointed to the importance of employing a tailored, individualized approach to case management as well as emphasizing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, all of which CSC currently offers. Moreover, it is evident that there is clear overlap between interventions for radicalized offenders and with what should be provided to rehabilitate non-radicalized offenders, including education, employment, vocational training, psychological services, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, and community support services.

For more information

Smeth, A., Cram, S., & Beauchamp, T (2023). *Correctional Interventions for Radicalized Offenders: A Literature Review* (Research Report R-463). 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.

¹ Correctional Service Canada. (2012). *Radicalization strategy working group definition*. Ottawa, ON: Author.