

# FORUM

on Corrections Research

January 1998, Volume 10, Number 1

## Featured issues

### Offender Reintegration

Situating Risk

Potential

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January 1998, Volume 10, Number 1

# FORUM

ON CORRECTIONS RESEARCH

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# Recent statistical trends shaping the corrections population in Canada

by Roger Boe, Larry Motiuk and Michael Muirhead<sup>1</sup>  
Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

During the five-year period 1989–1990 to 1994–1995 the inmate populations in Canada grew rapidly. According to a special report prepared for the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Justice, the federal penitentiary population grew especially quickly — by 22%, a growth rate twice the historic average.<sup>2</sup> Provincial prison populations also grew rapidly, although their 12% growth was relatively modest by comparison. Fortunately, inmate populations have begun to recede from the peaks achieved in 1994 and 1995, and the correctional system growth rate appears to be slackening.

Although this rapid growth has abated, considerable interest has arisen in identifying and understanding its sources. A special working group of deputy ministers and heads of corrections is currently studying the issue, and periodically issues progress reports.<sup>3</sup> The Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada is also examining these inmate population growth patterns to identify and quantify factors that might lead to better forecasting. This article reports on some of our preliminary findings.

## Sources of rapid population growth

The special FPT working group suggested a number of causes for the rapid growth in inmate populations. The working group agreed that several factors in combination were the likely source of the rapid growth:

- “At the provincial/territorial level of the system more custodial sentences were being given and for longer periods of time; there has been significant growth in charges for sexual and other assaults.
- “Federally, there have been fewer conditional releases granted and more revocations of conditional release, resulting in more time being served by more offenders; in addition, there has been significant growth in the proportion of offenders serving sentences for violent offences including homicide.”<sup>4</sup>

The crime rate in Canada began to decline in 1991 so the sudden growth in inmate populations was most likely attributable to a combination of other factors. This paper examines the three most plausible causes, namely:

- a rapid increase in prison and penitentiary admissions;
- changes in the length of the average sentence handed down by the courts; and
- changes in the average length of time served in custody by offenders.

Unfortunately, not enough data are available yet from the new Adult Court Survey of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics to do a time series analysis, so we cannot say much about actual sentencing trends. The analysis will obviously benefit once this court data is available.

## Trends in annual prison admissions

There is little doubt that a sharp increase in annual admissions contributed significantly to the rapid increase in the inmate populations in provincial and territorial prisons (see Table 1). This increase was also notable at the federal jurisdictional level, although the build-up in annual admissions began earlier and peaked earlier at the provincial-territorial level — it occurred mainly in the period between 1986–1987 and 1992–1993 and peaked in 1992–1993, a year earlier than the peak in federal admissions in 1993–1994. This was predominantly caused by increases in the “remand” (i.e., non-sentenced) population that began in 1985–1986. For most of this period, if remand admissions had not increased, the admission trend would likely have remained relatively flat (see Figure 1).

**There is little doubt that a sharp increase in annual admissions contributed significantly to the rapid increase in the inmate populations.**

Table 1

### Provincial Custody Admissions, Aggregate Sentence and Time Served

Annual admissions to provincial custody, sentenced and remand														
	1983-1984	1984-1985	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990	1990-1991	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997
Sentenced admissions	129,748	123,771	119,299	116,269	117,325	116,051	115,100	114,834	120,733	121,817	119,789	117,938	114,562	107,997
Remand admissions	60,885	61,042	63,722	67,638	72,816	82,202	84,797	92,893	123,014	123,929	120,945	120,922	115,768	117,462
Total admissions	190,633	184,813	183,021	183,907	190,141	198,253	199,897	207,727	243,747	245,746	240,734	238,860	230,330	225,459
Median aggregate sentence for inmates in provincial custody (days)														
Median aggregate sentence	28	28	30	30	30	31	31	31	31	31	31	33	31	31
Median time served by inmates in provincial custody (days)														
Sentenced releases	24	14	20	22	21	21	22	20	19	18	26	27	27	24
Remand releases	11	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	5	4	6	6	6	7
Total releases	19	9	12	13	9	9	12	10	11	10	11	8	12	16

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Adult Correctional Services in Canada*.

Figure 1

#### Annual Admissions to Provincial Custody

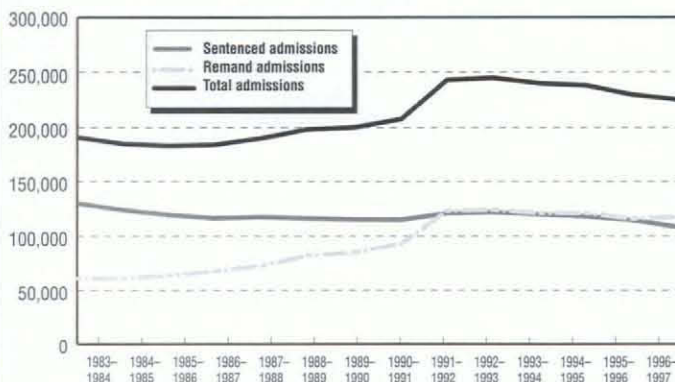
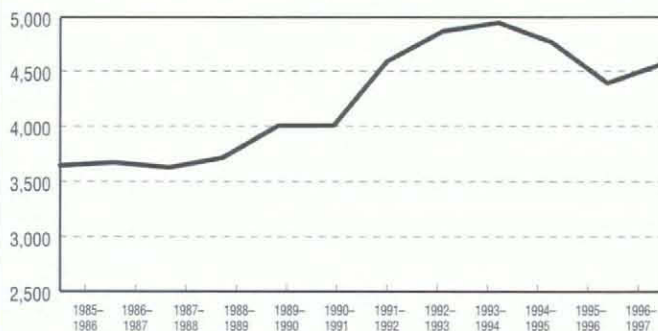


Figure 2

#### Annual Admissions to Federal Custody on Warrant of Committal



Our analysis of federal admissions focuses primarily on federal Warrant of Committal admissions (i.e., inmates serving a 'determinate' sentence of two years or more). Other admission types were excluded to permit an examination of aggregate sentence length and time served.

The federal Warrant of Committal admissions sample accounts for nearly two thirds of all federal admissions each year (revocation admissions account for the next largest proportion, or about 30% of admissions each year).<sup>5</sup> Federal admission trends show that the annual number of Warrant of Committal admissions began to increase noticeably only in 1989-1990 (see Figure 2).

Federal Warrant of Committal admissions increased from 4,004 in 1989-1990 to 4,948 in 1993-1994 — almost 1,000 offenders per year or nearly 25% (see Table 2). After peaking in 1993-1994, admissions decreased to 4,569 per year by 1996-1997. Clearly, the increase in federal Warrant of Committal admissions was significant and contributed in large measure to the rapid growth experienced during the period.

The rapid growth in the federal inmate population began about two years after provincial and territorial admissions had begun to increase. Federal growth accelerated in 1991-1992 and peaked in 1993-1994, lagging the provincial-territorial system by one year. Because the two increases are so nearly synchronized, one could infer that federal and provincial-territorial admission rates were responding to a common force or series of events, but that question remains unanswered. Since peaking two or three years ago, the growth rate has significantly declined in both systems.

## Trends in the average length of sentence

Each year, Statistics Canada publishes the average (median, in days) aggregate sentence for sentenced admissions to provincial and territorial custody and the average (mean, in months) aggregate sentence for admissions to federal custody.<sup>6</sup>

The average sentence length reported for provincial and territorial offenders is about 31 days and it has remained at or about this length since 1988–1989. Median aggregate sentence length for provincial and territorial sentenced admissions has increased since the early 1980s, from 28 days to 31 days, an increase of nearly 11% (see Figure 3). This increase occurred between 1984–1985 and 1988–1989, and, since then, the median sentence has remained stable except for a one-year spike in 1994–1995, which seems to have been transitory. The combination of larger numbers of remand admissions described above and the 11% longer average sentences would contribute substantially to the growth of inmate populations in provincial and territorial prisons.

The mean average aggregate sentence for federal Warrant of Committal admissions is significantly longer than the average provincial-territorial

toward shorter federal aggregate sentences.

Unlike the evidence presented for the length of the average provincial or territorial sentence, the federal trend suggests that population growth in the federal correctional system was unlikely to have resulted from an increase in the length of the average sentence.

Figure 4

Mean Aggregate Sentence at Admission to Federal Custody (Months)



## Trends in the average time served

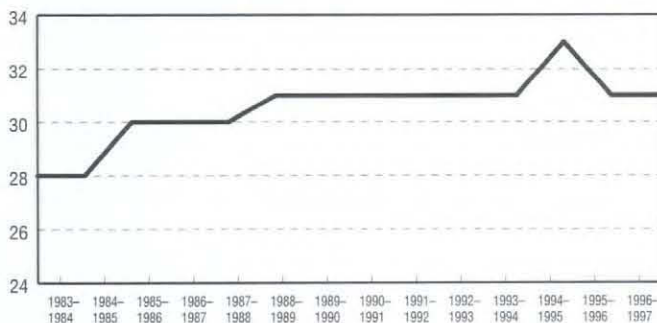
The average time served on recent provincial and territorial sentences (for sentenced releases) appears now to be about 25 days. The average aggregate sentence was found to be about 31 days, so this indicates that the average sentenced provincial offender serves about three quarters of the aggregate sentence in custody. The aggregate sentence length has remained fairly stable over the past decade while the average time served has increased somewhat during this period, thereby contributing to the growth of the provincial and territorial inmate populations.

The average time served for provincial and territorial sentenced offenders increased during the period but time served for remand offenders remained relatively stable (see Figure 5). Remand admissions, however, accounted for most of the admission growth over the past decade and the time served for

remand releases showed no real increase. The net effect of these various trends is that the overall time served in provincial and territorial custody has probably decreased slightly although there is a significant spike in the sentenced time served in recent years. With respect to correctional population growth, it is difficult to see any clear pattern although time served for sentenced releases and for total releases have increased since 1992–1993.

Figure 3

Median Aggregate Sentence for Inmates in Provincial Custody (Days)



sentence — about 44 months. This reflects the two-year rule: custodial sentences of two years or more are served in federal penitentiaries, while sentences less than two years may be served in provincial or territorial prisons. The average federal sentence also became shorter over the same period (see Figure 4).

Although there is some year-to-year variation in the federal average, the trend is unmistakably

Figure 5

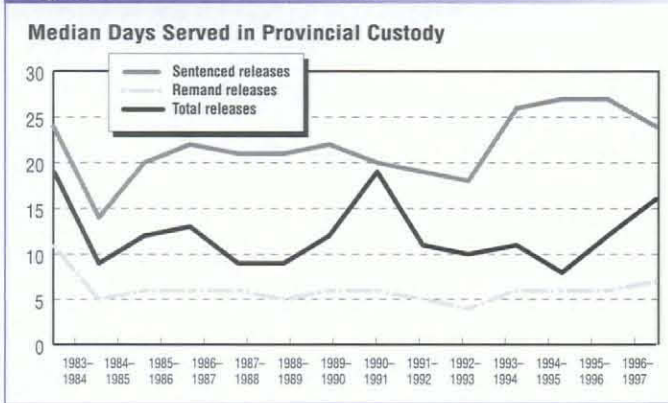
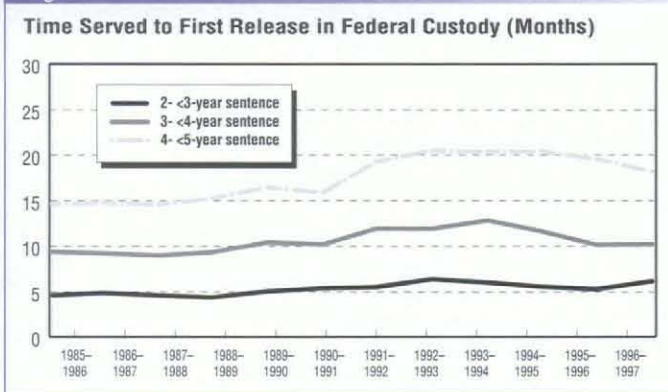


Figure 6



For federal offenders, the average time served in federal custody until first release reflects the discretionary release aspect of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (1992)*.<sup>7</sup> The data collected is for Warrant of Committal admissions and indicates that the average time served in federal custody has remained relatively constant over the period under review. Figure 6 shows only the average time served for offenders admitted over the past decade with shorter aggregate sentences (e.g., those between two years to less than three years and including four years to less than five years) because the follow-up period for offenders with longer sentences in the more recent years is not long enough for good estimates. (Note that offenders sentenced to terms of less than five years represent nearly 80% of all Warrant of Committal admissions). Most federal offenders, especially those serving shorter two- to five-year sentences, serve about half of their sentence in custody and the other half under supervision in the community. Provincial or territorial offenders serve only about one third of their sentence in custody.

Table 2

**Federal Warrant of Committal admissions, aggregate sentence**

Sentence length	Annual admissions to federal custody											
	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990	1990-1991	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997
2<3 years	1,462	1,477	1,458	1,524	1,644	1,588	1,928	2,050	2,037	2,041	1,961	1,818
3<4 years	938	921	898	933	1,040	1,018	1,191	1,190	1,281	1,165	1,015	1,019
4<5 years	449	487	460	438	506	540	552	640	603	558	530	617
5<6 years	285	260	281	276	283	317	337	340	363	327	326	334
6<7 years	132	129	147	145	173	166	171	188	214	199	162	183
7<8 years	112	132	99	111	116	88	120	141	134	141	140	133
8<9 years	82	71	82	85	65	93	94	108	93	96	62	78
9<10 years	48	40	39	46	42	45	49	46	57	58	42	59
10+ years	136	155	162	157	135	150	148	166	166	182	153	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,644</b>	<b>3,672</b>	<b>3,626</b>	<b>3,715</b>	<b>4,004</b>	<b>4,005</b>	<b>4,590</b>	<b>4,869</b>	<b>4,948</b>	<b>4,767</b>	<b>4,391</b>	<b>4,569</b>
	<b>Mean aggregate sentence at Warrant of Committal admission (months)</b>											
Mean aggregate sentence	46.6	47.3	47.2	47.2	46.0	46.6	44.9	45.5	45.5	45.8	44.5	43.1
	<b>Average time served to first release (months)</b>											
Sentence length												
2<3 years	15.71	14.17	14.71	14.82	14.39	13.79	13.41	13.23	13.68	13.96	13.80	—
3<4 years	21.04	18.77	18.57	19.10	18.23	17.84	17.47	17.31	18.35	16.97	—	—
4<5 years	25.35	23.70	25.27	24.52	22.15	23.59	22.52	23.79	23.70	—	—	—
Total	22.25	21.67	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Adult Correctional Services in Canada*.



The average time served in federal custody appears to have decreased slightly since 1987. It is therefore unlikely that the length of time served would have contributed materially to the recent rapid growth of the federal inmate population.

## Summary and conclusions

Of the three major factors examined here, growth in new admissions seems to be the main factor in the sudden population growth in correctional institutions. This growth appeared first in the provincial-territorial system, and lasted about five years, from 1986–1987 to 1991–1992. In the federal system, the increase began three years later (starting in 1989–1990), also lasted about five years, and ended in 1994–1995, after provincial admission growth had peaked.

Secondly, provincial and territorial systems also have to take into account the increase (11%) in aggregate sentences, along with a slight recent increase in the average time served. Both the average sentence and time served trends show a decrease for federal admissions, suggesting that these factors had a moderating effect on penitentiary population growth.

If the growth of Canada's inmate population was driven mainly by an increase in new admissions, what were the forces driving the growth in admissions? This question cannot be answered from these data; further research is required.

The special working group mentioned several factors other than the three examined here. Perhaps some answers may be found in that list. In addition, we think some of the growth resulted from major changes in the corrections legislation (e.g., Bill C-67, 1987; Bill C-36, 1992) and the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Finally, since 1978, Canada has experienced two major recessions, a massive restructuring of the economy and considerable regional restructuring. These changes have all affected the populations of correctional systems, but the extent of these effects has yet to be analyzed.

These results present the corrections community with another challenge — admission patterns are notoriously difficult to predict. The Service is

just beginning to develop a forecasting model for federal admissions. We expect this development to augment our knowledge about correctional population dynamics, and hope to understand the general predictors of growth better. We will report our results as this research progresses. ■

**Of the three major factors examined here, growth in new admissions seems to be the main factor in the sudden population growth in correctional institutions.**

<sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

<sup>2</sup> *Corrections Population Growth, Report for Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice* (Ottawa, ON, May 1996): 1 and 4.

<sup>3</sup> A progress report under the same title was issued in February 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Corrections Population Growth*: 2.

<sup>5</sup> A Warrant of Committal admission file was developed for the Service covering the 1985–1986 to 1995–1996 period. The total population from January 1, 1994, to September 1, 1996, contains 88,477 federal admissions, of which approximately two thirds (66.4%) are Warrant of Committal admissions, slightly under one third (30.6%) are Revocation or Termination admissions, and the rest (3%) are "Other" admissions. Of the approximately 59,000

Warrant of Committal admissions, 3.6% were indeterminate sentences (e.g., with no aggregate sentence recorded) and 11.3% were admissions with an aggregate sentence of less than two years. The remaining 85% of Warrant of Committal admissions were selected for analysis. By limiting the study to complete fiscal years (1985–1986 through 1995–1996), the analysis file yielded 46,231 offenders.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Adult Correctional Services Canada* (annual), Cat. no. 85-211.

<sup>7</sup> A federal sentence includes both statutory community supervision (e.g., statutory release — normally beginning at the last third of the sentence) and discretionary community supervision (e.g., day parole, full parole or both); discretionary community supervision can begin after serving six months of the sentence and is at the discretion of the National Parole Board.

# Task Force on Reintegration of Offenders: A summary

**D**uring its meeting of September 1996, the Executive Committee of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) approved the terms of reference of the Task Force on Reintegration of Offenders, which submitted its report in January 1997.<sup>1</sup>

*Since 1994, fewer and fewer offenders are being granted a discretionary conditional release. Although some recent initiatives had been undertaken to isolate causes and suggest changes to CSC reintegration processes and activities, a group committed to handling the problems defined had yet to be formed.*

*Recent Auditor General reports had also identified areas where CSC has not managed its operations well enough. As summarized in the November 1996 Auditor General report on offender reintegration, CSC lacks commonly accepted work standards or practices, quality assurance procedures, and performance information. Also, CSC suffers from inadequate change management skills and needs to clarify case management roles in institutions.*

*The problems related to reintegration activities, combined with the identified management weaknesses, affect CSC's ability to carry out its mandate to reintegrate offenders safely into the community. These problems also lead to non-compliance with the requirement to provide each offender with the least restrictive environment possible.*

*Improvements in targeted areas should improve use of correctional resources and enhance public safety.*

## The Task Force mandate

In light of the above, the Task Force on Reintegration of Offenders was to:

- propose what CSC must do to improve its management of reintegration activities, and suggest a plan for implementing the improvements;
- propose short-term improvements to reintegration processes and activities to enhance effectiveness; and
- suggest changes to the current design of reintegration activities to enhance CSC's ability to achieve its objectives.

The Task Force was required to review the official description of the current operational design and management framework of the reintegration activity and propose specific changes where improvements were needed.

To complete this program, the Task Force chose to examine three parts of the reintegration process: first, the offender intake and assessment process; second, institutional case management and programs; and, third, community supervision and its program components.

For each of these areas, the Task Force examined documentation such as policy and procedures to find descriptions of the values, processes, jobs and structures related to reintegration, and information on associated management activities and day-to-day measures. These tests were used to find out whether the organization could effectively and consistently articulate its operations and, where it could not, to locate and identify weaknesses and recommend appropriate changes.

## Major findings and observations

The following observations established much of the rationale for the proposals made in the report.

The Task Force observed that reintegration is a complex endeavour that requires focus and order at all levels of the organization. In this, the Task Force made specific observations that resemble observations of the Policy Review Task Force. One very important observation was that authority, responsibility and accountability is extremely diffuse for much of the work required in reintegration: when everyone is supposed to do everything, the organization cannot be sure that anyone actually does anything.

Reintegration and population management are delicately balanced, especially in institutional settings, but also in community supervision. The balance must be well understood and supported to keep reintegration a constant priority throughout the organization. Reintegration of offenders is not a population management tool, and CSC should neither use nor appear to use reintegration to keep down the number of inmates.

Although the process descriptions in the Case Management Manual amount to a form of case differentiation, CSC policy and staff practices do not handle the various groups of offenders in significantly distinctive ways, and this observation applies to all three reintegration processes. Therefore, all offenders may be subjected to the same exhaustive analysis, assessment and programming, whether they need it or not. The evidence also indicates that we tend not to consider an offender's individual risk and needs assessment in planning and delivering programming and other services.

The Task Force also found that ideas about risk assessment were easier to discuss and organize than ideas about risk management. On the risk management side, core programs tend to be seen as the only valid technique; therefore, we tend to refer nearly all offenders to programs and insist that offenders complete programs before conditional release. This perception also leads us to downplay the usefulness of other correctional interventions that could either replace programming for particular offenders, or augment programs for higher-risk offenders.

Community corrections demands continuous attention from the organization. The Task Force reviewed a significant body of work produced by the Community Corrections Council over the past two years, and the work achieved to date should lead to further improvements in the management of community corrections.

The quality of work is most critical when the National Parole Board or a Warden is at the point of deciding to release an offender. If, by

this stage, the process is flawed or incomplete, the wrong decision is likely to be made — and, unfortunately, work cannot be corrected retroactively. We must do a consistently good job throughout the offender's incarceration, ensuring that the links in the process are first created and then reinforced, and that high-quality work is expected and performed throughout the case management process.

The maintenance and improvement of unit management is a major reintegration issue for institutions. As it is currently implemented, unit management is more effective in population management than in reintegration, basically because day-to-day issues demand the constant attention of key staff, particularly unit managers and case management officers. Although unit management is still the best institutional correctional model available to CSC, the Task Force proposed changes to institutional operations related to reintegration. After reviewing the original unit management principles and plans, the Task Force concluded that unit management can be operated according to its principles, in a way that is both effective and supportive of sound case management and reintegration strategies for offenders.

### **Values and beliefs related to reintegration**

The Task Force believed that, although Core Value I and Core Value II of the Mission Document provide a strategic framework for CSC's values and beliefs about reintegration, CSC's values specific to reintegration are neither fully articulated nor recognized as such in related policy and process documents. The following are the values the Task Force considered applicable to the day-to-day work that must be done to accomplish our reintegration goals.

- CSC has at its disposal a range of people-oriented intervention techniques that will manage the risk posed by offenders, and the use of these techniques should be tailored to the risk of the individual offender. Since offenders are different, we do not use the same techniques for all offenders.

- Criminogenic needs and risk must be identified at the beginning of an offender's sentence, during the assessment phase.
- We set a high value on dialogue between community and institutional staff at all phases of the reintegration process.
- Excellent case management is based on the use of professional judgment and objective tools to justify, support and explain decisions or recommendations.
- All staff involved in reintegration need qualified supervision, and the quality of their work and their professional development should receive close and continuous attention from line supervisors.
- In the community, risk is managed through several intervention techniques, and the relative importance and use of these techniques depends on the risk and needs of the offender. An offender must be not only seen by staff at a certain frequency, but he or she must also receive good-quality contacts with appropriate content and purpose.
- The case management officer should be personally responsible for his or her work on an individual offender's case, and should carry out the first step in the quality assurance process.
- While the offender moves through various placements in the institution and in the community, everyone — that is, CSC staff and managers and offenders — must view the transfer from institution to community as one step in a progression from more to less control.
- Reasonable decisions require the assembly of enough information from all relevant sources.

### Proposals

The Task Force made specific proposals related to its terms of reference, based mostly on the observations noted above. The following summary covers the most important proposals in the report.

The **operational design** of reintegration should outline the values, processes, jobs and structures, and management measures that apply to reintegration.

A review of the major policy documents and the Case Management Manual should permit CSC to develop standard operating practices that state our values and beliefs about reintegration, explaining them clearly and requiring the process of reintegration to flow from assessment through the institutional phase into the community. Concepts, goals, policies and procedures should be consistent throughout the three sub-processes.

One of the most important problems identified by the Task Force involves **compliance control and quality assurance, and performance measurement**.

The Task Force stated that the areas of compliance control (work to be done and the timeliness of that work) and quality assurance (quality enhancement and reduction of errors) must improve. Improvements in quality assurance can also improve timeliness and content, but the central concern of quality assurance is the work as it is being done. For each reintegration sub-process, the Task Force proposed a list of compliance control and quality assurance elements, and recommended that standards and instruments be developed for each sub-process.

The Task Force also proposed a comprehensive set of performance and management indicators to be implemented at all levels in CSC. The management indicators were intended to help managers diagnose operational problems and detect strengths and weaknesses, while the performance indicators would produce a retrospective view of overall performance.

**Risk-based case differentiation.** This is one of the most strategic proposals in the report. The Task Force proposed that the overall risk/needs rating produced by the offender intake assessment should be used to place offenders in one of three basic intervention categories:

1. The **release-oriented intervention** category would apply to low-risk offenders. Core intervention (defined as the programs set out in the correctional strategy) would not normally be required and, if required, programs would be delivered in the community. Release of the offender at the earliest eligibility date would be the goal.
2. The **institution and community intervention** category would apply to moderate-risk offenders. Based on the level of need, the program strategy could include institutional programming combined with follow-up in the community, or programming delivered entirely in the community. Depending on the nature and level of needs, the preferred release date could be at day parole eligibility.
3. The **high-intensity intervention** category would apply to high-risk offenders. Core interventions would be delivered in institutions before release is considered and pursued after release in the community, as required.

This differentiation is supported by the notion that certain groups would not normally receive programming in institutions and, if they require programs or other interventions to reduce or manage risk, these would be provided in the community. The distinction rests primarily on risk assessment and on the important concept that several key types of intervention can manage risk in the community as well as in an institution.

**Offender intake assessment.** The Task Force recommended that while certain changes can be made to the offender intake assessment process, it should remain centralized and designed to produce a comprehensive standardized assessment of offender risk and needs early in the sentence, thus providing a sound foundation for correctional planning and intervention.

Intake units should initiate the process of risk-based case differentiation, as this is an important (if not the most significant) determination that can be made shortly after the offender's admission to calculate his or her most probable release date and the best way to release safely.

The Task Force did not recommend changing the maximum time allowed for the initial assessment, but it is expected that if offenders are correctly differentiated as recommended by the Task Force, low-risk offenders will spend much less time in intake units than high-risk offenders, as recent data indicate is possible.

The Task Force also observed that intake units vary widely in available resources and in the supplementary assessments they conduct. The Task Force recommended that the seven intake units should be more consistent in their organization, operations and funding.

The Task Force also addressed information collection, recommending that intake units take responsibility for information gathering throughout an offender's sentence. In most cases, comprehensive assessments can be completed using the information provided through the Fingerprint Service, the post-sentence community assessment, the police report (or police information in the post-sentence community assessment) and the interviews and analysis conducted by intake staff. If, at that point, police or court reports are still outstanding, the offender should still be placed and the intake unit would obtain the missing reports for case management staff, who may need them to support release decisions.

#### **A reintegration function for CSC institutions.**

Under the premise that operational units must improve their management of reintegration, the Task Force turned its attention to the way institutions are structured to carry out the function. Programs are separated from case management at most institutions and case management staff often know less than they should about programs. Therefore, many offenders are referred to programs they do not need, and because program staff are often uninformed about case management, their performance is not effectively reported. Reintegration is so diffuse a responsibility that no single manager below the level of deputy warden has the authority to ensure that reintegration activities are properly integrated and carried out.

Program staff and case management staff should cooperate closely on reintegration, but the reality is that sometimes they do not, and sometimes they are at odds. This is a critical problem, as these groups do most reintegration work. Program and case management staff could be reorganized in a single department, or, to avoid a major organizational change, CSC could implement work practice standards requiring them to work together.

Because of strong concerns within CSC to consider the impact on unit management, the Task Force recommended that CSC develop a reintegration function within the unit management operational model.

As an interim measure, institutions must establish a reintegration function that ensures that case management and program staff work together in a single, timely, integrated process. This reintegration function should include a quality assurance system for case management and program delivery, and support unit managers' and program managers' quality assurance and compliance control efforts. The person heading the function should also work closely with the National Parole Board, acting as the institution's liaison on matters concerning the quality of case preparation.

This function should also be seen as a way to stop the significant erosion in recent years in the value of the work and expectations of case management officers. Case management officers work together too rarely to build on each other's expertise. They get little direct supervision that encourages quality analysis, and institutions have no managers who can devote sufficient time and attention specifically to case management. Whatever institutional organization is eventually chosen, the model must:

- achieve an appropriate balance in organizational commitment to reintegration activities, as the primary focus, and day-to-day population management;
- ensure that the structure gives reintegration staff and managers the responsibility and authority they need to provide appropriate accountability for the function; and

- integrate management measures and performance indicators that hold reintegration managers and staff accountable for results.

The Task Force recommended that each institution establish an interim position of reintegration manager. One of the first proposed tasks of the reintegration manager was to conduct an audit of the major compliance control and quality assurance elements of the institution's case management operations. Using the results of this audit, the reintegration manager would assign case management supervisors as needed to help units improve the quality of case management work. The Task Force suggested an audit tool that covered most of the areas to be examined to allow the reintegration manager to do this task quickly.

**The role of case management officers and level II correctional officers.** The Task Force recommended that case management officers (CMOs) be the only staff who prepare decision documents and make recommendations requiring the conduct of risk assessment and analysis for conditional release and community contact activities. Concurrently, while level II correctional officers (CO-IIs) would remain the primary contact with offenders, CO-IIs would not be involved in preparing recommendation documents for conditional release and community contact. The Task Force recommended that the duties of CO-IIs reflect their role as the primary staff who interact with offenders and sustain the momentum of behaviour change, as was originally envisaged when unit management was introduced in institutions in the late 1980s.

**Workload, recruitment and training of case management officers.** The Task Force observed that the CMO workload is significantly increased by the constant reassessment of analysis and preparation of lengthy narrative reports, narratives that still sometimes fail to describe the offender clearly and succinctly. CMOs spend little time talking to offenders about their correctional plans, objectives and performance, and their recommendation documents are based too heavily on reports and observations collected from other staff.

CSC has no consistent explanation for its wide variation in caseloads. The Task Force reviewed CMO workloads in individual institutions, and concluded that, pending the completion of a recommended study to establish caseloads in institutions and the community, individual caseloads for institutional CMOs be established at 30 offenders in maximum security, 25 in medium security and 28 in minimum security.

The Task Force also recommended an integrated recruiting and training strategy for hiring CMOs with a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree in a related discipline, without allowance for equivalency testing. The Task Force also recommended that external recruits receive initial training before starting work and that they undergo a period of on-the-job training leading to certification as a CMO. Serving CSC employees in acting CMO positions or recruited as CMOs should undergo the same training.

**Community supervision and programs.** Since 1995, the work of the Community Corrections Council has focused primarily on putting in place the management and resource framework recommended in the Auditor General's report of 1994, which found gaps in the management of community corrections similar to those detailed in the 1996 reports on rehabilitation programs and reintegration. At the same time, work has been done to improve policy and operations affecting the community. The Task Force therefore recommended that the Council continue the work it has begun.

In addition, it suggested that CSC will be in a better position to deal with the challenges of reintegration in the future if community corrections builds a consistent support framework in each community.

This requires a long-term commitment to developing working relationships with a variety of traditional and new community partners. These relationships would produce a stable source of community support for corrections and other criminal justice initiatives.

Although the Task Force conclusions were different for the community and for institutions, it recommended that a review of community organization still be conducted. The quality

assurance and supervisory coaching processes proposed by the Task Force require close, direct, continuous communication between community CMOs and their immediate supervisors; also, caseloads are currently low but they vary significantly among and within regions. These variations may be acceptable, but they must be scrutinized to determine whether the various approaches equip community corrections to carry out its mandate.

**CSC's relationship with the National Parole Board.** The mission of the National Parole Board and that of CSC are basically the same, and both organizations are governed by the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, which sets out respective and common authorities and responsibilities.

Considering the complexity of the legislation, the many forms of releases that can be applied to individual offenders and the often different authorities for different forms of release, the Task Force recommended that opportunities be found for the two organizations to work together on policy development, and to express, from time to time, their policy or processes jointly in appropriate areas. It should also be possible to conduct joint training or at least share training packages.

The Task Force also recommended that the reintegration function proposed for institutions should be the regular point of contact for the National Parole Board on case preparation matters, and that each region assign an official as its day-to-day liaison with the Board.

**All parts of CSC contribute to reintegration.** The Task Force listed some staff functions, such as human resources, staff training, research and informatics, that contribute significantly to the establishment of an environment that promotes offender change. ■

<sup>1</sup> This version of the executive summary of the Task Force report has been edited for stylistic consistency with other FORUM papers.

Task Force members: from CSC — Lucie McClung, Nancy Stableforth, Marcel Chiasson, Robert Babineau, Normand Granger, Mike Provan, Jeff Christian, Doug McMillan, Linda McLaren and Denis Méthé; and from the National Parole Board — Jean-Marc Trudeau.

# Understanding offender reintegration

by Arden Thurber<sup>1</sup>

Director General, Offender Reintegration, Correctional Service of Canada

**R**eintegrating offenders into society raises concerns for everyone. Many people are confused about criminal justice issues because their perceptions come from the coverage they see, read or hear in the news media. Some people do not fully understand the concept of reintegrating offenders and, therefore, say “not in my backyard.”

Over the years, the Correctional Service of Canada has been lucky enough to have many people volunteer time and energy to support offender reintegration. Citizens' Advisory Committees and non-governmental organizations such as the Elizabeth Fry Society and the John Howard Society make a significant contribution to the reintegration of offenders.

Despite the efforts of the Correctional Service of Canada and offender support groups, the public often views offender reintegration with concern. This concern may arise from misinformation.

Almost all offenders will eventually be released from custody and return to the community, and the Correctional Service of Canada is responsible for preparing offenders to make that return safely and as easily as possible. However, the Service is also required to give the utmost consideration to the safety of the communities that receive released offenders.

It may be time for the Correctional Service of Canada to review the scope of its communication strategies for the offender reintegration program. Well-informed people are less likely to perceive offender reintegration as a hazard to their community. At present, the Service has the resources to conduct a more aggressive public information campaign targeting non-governmental organizations, Citizens' Advisory Committees and volunteer groups. The Correctional Service of Canada must be seen as taking the lead in finding ways to allay public fears.

## A simple definition

**S**imply defined, “offender reintegration” is all activity and programming conducted to prepare an offender to return safely to the community and live as a law-abiding citizen. To understand offender reintegration, one must understand the variables considered in decisions about releasing offenders to the community. For each offender, the Service does the following:

- collects all the relevant information about the offender that is available, including items such as the judge's reasons for sentencing and any victim impact statements;
- assesses the offender's risk level (likelihood that he or she will reoffend) and criminogenic needs (life functions that lead to criminal behaviour);
- reduces the offender's risk level by increasing his or her knowledge and skills, and changing the attitudes and behaviours that lead to criminal behaviour;
- develops and implements programs and individual interventions that effect change in areas that contribute to criminal behaviour;
- in cooperation with the offender, develops a plan to increase the likelihood that he or she will function in the community as a law-abiding citizen;
- motivates and helps the offender follow the correctional plan and benefit from correctional programs and interventions;
- monitors and assesses the offender's progress in learning and changing;
- makes recommendations to the National Parole Board as to the offender's readiness for release and the conditions, if any, under which he or she should be released;
- after release, helps the offender respect the conditions of the release and resolve day-to-day living problems;
- makes required programs and interventions available in the community;
- monitors the offender's behaviour to ensure that he or she is respecting the release conditions and not indulging in criminal behaviour; and
- if required, suspends the offender's release, carries out specific intervention, and reinstates or recommends revocation of the release as appropriate.



The Service can carry out this program for each offender only through effective partnerships with courts, police, other federal departments and agencies, provincial governments, municipalities and voluntary organizations.

The public should know that the Correctional Service of Canada operates under the 1992 *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*,<sup>2</sup> which states the purpose of federal corrections as:

The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by:

- (a) carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of offenders; and
- (b) assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

### Guiding principles

The Act also sets out 10 guiding principles for the Service including the following:

1. that the protection of society be the paramount consideration in the corrections process;
2. that the Service enhance its effectiveness and openness through the timely exchange of relevant information with other components of the criminal justice system, and through communication about its correctional policies and programs to offenders, victims and the public;
3. that the Service use the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members and offenders;
4. that offenders retain the rights and privileges of all members of society, except those rights and privileges that are necessarily removed or restricted as a consequence of the sentence;

5. that the Service facilitate the involvement of members of the public in matters relating to the operations of the Service;
6. that correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and be responsive to the special needs of women and Aboriginal peoples, as well as to the needs of other groups of offenders with special requirements; and
7. that offenders are expected to obey penitentiary rules and conditions

governing temporary absence, work release, parole and statutory release, and to actively participate in programs designed to promote their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Through the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, Parliament has given the Service very clear legal direction. The Correctional Service of Canada has articulated its values and beliefs in its Mission Document, which has been endorsed by every Solicitor General since 1989, including the current minister, the Honourable Andy Scott, who formally signed the document in October 1997.

The Mission Document Statement sets out the following Mission:

The Correctional Service of Canada, as part of the criminal justice system and respecting the rule of law, contributes to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control.<sup>3</sup>

**The Mission:  
The Correctional  
Service of  
Canada, as part  
of the criminal  
justice system and  
respecting the  
rule of law,  
contributes to the  
protection of  
society by actively  
encouraging  
and assisting  
offenders to  
become law-  
abiding citizens,  
while exercising  
reasonable, safe,  
secure and  
humane control.**

The Mission Document notes that the Mission Statement, though very similar to the statement of purpose in the Act, adds two distinctive ideas. The first is captured in the forceful expression “actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens.” This means that the Service does not simply administer the sentence but also, at every stage, works with the offender to change his or her behaviour. All policies, programs and activities are directed to that end.

The second idea is that the relationship between assistance and control is dynamic. Through planned programming and treatment, offenders receive appropriate assistance to help them correct their criminal behaviour. This enables them to assume progressively greater degrees of freedom and responsibility. We ensure control by monitoring their behaviour and intervening when necessary. Assistance and control are inseparable, although balancing them correctly is often difficult. Our aim is to assist as much as possible and to control as much as necessary.

Although the Mission Statement gives these two elements equal importance, it mentions assistance first, focusing on working with individual offenders to bring about their safe reintegration. This is a unique feature of our Mission. Control is not less important for being mentioned second, but the degree and nature of the control exercised should support and not hinder reintegration efforts.

It is important to recognize that the vast majority of offenders will eventually return to the community. Except for the relatively small proportion of offenders serving indeterminate sentences, imprisonment in itself is only a temporary public-safety measure. Long-term protection is best achieved through a strategy that promotes and sustains the offender's efforts to reintegrate into society as a law-abiding citizen.

### **Balancing encouragement with control**

Throughout the offender's sentence, during both the incarceration and release phases, efforts of encouragement and assistance are balanced with measures of control, always with the understanding that public safety is paramount.

In late 1996, two significant events encouraged the Correctional Service of Canada to focus more attention on reintegration. First, the Auditor General of Canada devoted a chapter

of his fall report to Parliament to this topic, noting several areas for improvement. Second, the Commissioner formed a Task Force on Reintegration of Offenders to study the situation and make recommendations to improve our performance.

Anticipating the extra effort involved in improving the quality of the Service's reintegration work, the Commissioner also restructured and strengthened the national and regional office components responsible for reintegration and other operational tasks.

The Task Force submitted its report in January 1997 and, since then, changes have been made. Here are some highlights:

**Long-term protection is best achieved through a strategy that promotes and sustains the offender's efforts to reintegrate into society as a law-abiding citizen.**

- Each institution and parole district now has a reintegration manager, who is responsible for coordinating and improving the various reintegration tasks.
- The caseload of individual case management officers in institutions was fixed at 25. All regions have completed the staffing and training required to meet this standard.
- Applicants for case management officer positions now must meet a higher education standard.
- The training program for new case management officers has been lengthened and redesigned, and all case management officers must complete 10 days of professional development training per year.
- Low-risk offenders will receive more of their programming in the community.
- Program referrals are being monitored more closely to make sure that only offenders who require specific programs are referred.
- The speed at which information is obtained from courts and police is now systematically monitored. Improvement in this area is evident.
- More is being done to improve the communication and understanding between institutional staff and community staff.

These changes were implemented to improve the results of offender reintegration. It is now necessary to monitor and measure the Service's progress.

Every offender should be properly prepared to have his or her case reviewed by the National Parole Board at the time when first eligible. "Properly prepared" means having completed all programs and interventions required before release and having had the effects of those programs fully assessed. It also means having completed a detailed release management plan.

While information systems are being developed to measure this outcome, some proxy measures are being used, such as:

- number of releases;
- number of offenders granted conditional releases;
- number of offenders who remain incarcerated past their parole eligibility dates; and
- number of cases that do not proceed to review because essential information is missing.

These proxy indicators show progress. For example, during 1997 more than 2,500 offenders successfully reached their Warrant Expiry Date under community supervision. The proportion of offenders who remain incarcerated past their parole eligibility date, and have not had a previous release, is declining. Thanks to the reintegration managers, fewer cases are delayed because essential information is missing.

Close attention to these performance measures has kept the organization focused on timely case preparation and safe releases.

### Other initiatives

Several other important initiatives will soon produce positive results. One of these initiatives arose from staff complaints about the complexity and onerous nature of the policies and procedures that govern how they work with offenders. Staff said that they spend so much time documenting what is happening with an offender that they do not have enough time to work with that offender.

The complexity of the process is understandable. The work is serious, the various deficiencies noted in investigations and inquests must be corrected, and the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* and its Regulations are very detailed. But the process is too cluttered. Therefore, in June 1997 the Commissioner launched a project to simplify the process and return to basic, good case documentation. This project has already produced some streamlining — the demand on staff time should be reduced without impinging on the elements essential to good casework and safe releases.

The Task Force on Long-Term Offenders is another of these current corrective initiatives. Approximately 1,700 offenders are now serving life sentences, and several hundred more are serving sentences of more than 10 years. Most of our approaches are designed for the average offender, who is serving a sentence of four to six years and will probably be released after two to three years. Some of these approaches are valid for long-term offenders, but some need revision. We need to consider how to help offenders serve long sentences as usefully as possible. To study this problem, a task force has been formed, led by Warden Ken Petersen of Mission Institute and including experienced volunteers with many years of effective work with long-term offenders and a long-term offender who works with this group as a counsellor.

A third initiative has to do with the use of additional conditions. When an offender is released, certain standard conditions are imposed (e.g., report regularly to a parole officer, keep the peace and be of good behaviour). The National Parole Board may also impose conditions specific to an offender (e.g., abstain from intoxicants, participate in treatment). Should an offender breach any of these conditions, his or her conditional release will be suspended and may be revoked.

Currently, about twice as many offenders have their releases revoked for breach of a condition than for committing a new offence. In many cases, this indicates good supervision; the parole officer intervenes because the breach indicates that the offender is returning to behaviour that is likely to lead to a new offence.

Excessive or inappropriate conditions are sometimes recommended and imposed; for example, not every offender needs a condition to abstain from alcohol. Therefore, the National Parole Board and the Service are revising the policy on additional conditions to ensure only conditions essential to a safe release are imposed.

Effective reintegration requires casework and timely case preparation to achieve safe releases. Effective reintegration also requires using all the resources available, and promptly informing the private sector and volunteer

organizations on policies, procedures and rationale that improve the program.

The Correctional Service of Canada is evolving to pursue all avenues toward and opportunities for better, safer offender reintegration.

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<sup>2</sup> *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, RSC, C-20, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> *Mission of the Correctional Service of Canada*, Cat. no. JS 82-46/1997 (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997).

## New Research Briefs recently published

### *B-18 Female Young Offenders in Canada: Recent Trends*

*Date of Publication: 09-01-1997*

*By: C. Dell and R. Boe*

### *B-19 Homicide, Sex, Robbery and Drug Offenders in Federal Corrections: An End-of-1997 Review*

*Date of Publication: 01-01-1998*

*By: L. Motiuk and R. Belcourt*

### *B-20 Recent Trends and Patterns Shaping the Corrections Population in Canada (Revised)*

*Date of Publication: 01-04-1998*

*By: R. Boe, L. Motiuk and M. Muirhead*

# Situating risk assessment in the reintegration potential framework

by *Larry Motiuk and Ralph Serin*<sup>1</sup>  
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Over recent decades, criminal justice researchers have highlighted conceptual and methodological advances in risk assessment technology, distinguishing between “statistical” and “clinical” prediction, and between “static” and “dynamic” factors. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, because of the relatively low predictive accuracy of the available risk assessment instruments, researchers focused on false positives — that is, incorrect placement or release of offenders who subsequently succeeded. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, improvements in the accuracy of various risk scales had shifted concerns to false negatives — that is, prematurely released offenders who subsequently failed.

This latter research was fueled by public concerns for community safety and new legislation developed to allay those concerns.

Today, because society has a low tolerance for false negatives, decision makers are overly concerned about failures, and this excessive concern may be impeding reintegration efforts. Correctional decision errors can be minimized by improving systematic risk/needs assessment strategies and standards of practice. Such a strategy should help us to identify and release offenders with good potential for successful reintegration. Offenders with high reintegration potential might be defined as low-risk offenders or moderate-risk offenders who are manageable in the community with prescriptive intervention and appropriate supervision.

This article identifies several issues relating to reintegration potential that apply to all correctional jurisdictions to help decision makers determine where to make judicious changes to increase reintegration. This approach should also ensure that offenders are released safely and in a timely manner, consistent with each jurisdiction’s mission statement. This article argues that risk assessment can be bound into reintegration efforts in a way that minimizes decision errors. It also recognizes that jurisdictions may vary in their tolerance of false negatives, particularly with specific types of offenders or specific types of failure.

## Reintegration

A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics presents a one-day snapshot of provincial and federal offenders.<sup>2</sup> Although the federal jurisdiction differs from provincial and territorial jurisdictions in the risk/needs profiles of their inmates and the proportion of violent offenders in their correctional population, there is sufficient range to suggest developing differentiated strategies according to risk/need factors.

Reintegration encompasses a broad range of decisions intended to: place offenders in the least restrictive setting possible, grant temporary absence or conditional release, and invoke suspension or revocation of conditional release when necessary. Each of these correctional practices, however, is also an index of reintegration success, and significantly affect an offender’s movement through his or her sentence. For instance, Luciani, Motiuk and Nafekh<sup>3</sup> reviewed case management decisions regarding placement in minimum security using different cutoffs for the Custody Rating Scale (CRS), an initial security classification tool used by the Correctional Service of Canada. Modifying CRS cutoffs reduced the number of days served, with

minimal impact on the number of escapes. Specifically, offenders placed directly in minimum security spent fewer days incarcerated than offenders placed directly in medium security. Offenders who went straight to minimum security also benefited from a higher rate of parole grants.

“Decarceration” has been defined as the selection of offenders suitable for early release.<sup>4</sup> Identification of suitable offenders raises questions about selection criteria, risk

**Offenders with high reintegration potential might be defined as low-risk offenders or moderate-risk offenders who are manageable in the community with prescriptive intervention and appropriate supervision.**

scales, and using treatment and program information in correctional and parole decision making. Although this emphasis on early release is central to reintegration, other factors may also influence the likelihood of decisions to grant discretionary release. For instance, Motiuk and Belcourt<sup>5</sup> found that an offender who had received a temporary absence was highly likely to be subsequently granted parole. This suggests gains in one area of reintegration may yield increases in another.

### Risk and security classification instruments

Most jurisdictions have specific strategies for assessing offender risk. Although an overview of these approaches is beyond the scope of this paper, such work is in progress.<sup>6</sup> Evidence indicates that the various risk scales used in Canadian corrections are highly intercorrelated — that is, the choice of a specific risk assessment instrument is mainly an operational issue, since none has been proved to be markedly superior. In fact, a thorough review of the offender assessment literature strongly encourages assessment strategies that use several instruments.<sup>7</sup>

Other issues to consider from a systems perspective are content and process: Do the instruments reflect sufficient content to meet the guidelines for risk assessment?<sup>8</sup> In the case of objective classification instruments, it has been proposed that they be used as anchors, and that the use of case-specific information be increased. For process, it is important that staff who prepare reports for decision makers clearly articulate how they have integrated risk factors and estimates of recidivism into their assessments. Staff in several jurisdictions have received comprehensive risk assessment training to ensure that they understand that risk assessment scales are valuable but no substitute for sound correctional decision making.

Offender risk/needs assessments are done to inform staff about an offender's requirements and criminogenic needs. This allows decisions to be made regarding specific treatment targets and the appropriate intensity and

mode of intervention for an offender. Recently, a systems approach to community-based offender risk management led to the development and implementation of risk/needs instruments such as the Level of Service Inventory — Ontario Revised (LSI-OR) in Ontario, and the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (CRNMS) in federal corrections. These dynamic risk assessment tools produce indications of reassessment needs as well as case needs. The LSI-OR and the CRNMS have been demonstrated to be correlated to recidivism. Such an assessment strategy can be incorporated into guidelines for preventive supervision that would yield gains in reintegration — that is, monitoring, supervision and intervention could be gradually increased to coincide with an offender's time of increased risk. Even modest reductions in suspensions and revocations would increase the number of offenders safely serving their sentences in the community.

One final risk assessment issue is the need to address decision errors. Currently, many decision makers use risk assessment tools to estimate the offender's risk of reoffending. These scales can also be used to inform staff about the probability of types of failure, and the decision errors most associated with the various cutoff scores on the instrument. This method permits staff to consider the likelihood and costs of recidivism. For example, some events, especially sexual reoffences, are relatively rare, but

have high costs when they occur. Including decision errors in the risk assessment tool allows consideration of multiple cutoffs to minimize both false positives and false negatives. It is crucial that base rates be known for various types of failure, various types of release (e.g., discretionary, expiration of sentence) and various settings, regions and security levels.

**Staff in several jurisdictions have received comprehensive risk assessment training to ensure that they understand that risk assessment scales are valuable but no substitute for sound correctional decision making.**

### Meeting the full potential for reintegration of offenders

Several indicators show that emphasizing false negatives may be impeding reintegration efforts. By changing the way the CRS is

applied, transfers to minimum security and parole grants could be increased, without an increase in escapes. This would minimize false positives, which lead to unnecessary higher-security incarceration, without increasing false negatives, which lead to escapes. Another indicator relates to the results of examination of temporary absence program participation and release of offenders. The number of offenders granted temporary absences has diminished markedly over the past several years, and it is not clear whether this reduction is related to policy changes or concern about failure. When one considers that successful temporary absences predict successful release on parole, then reductions in temporary absence grants tend to reduce parole grants. This situation suggests considerable opportunity for reintegration gains.

### What intervention could do

It is generally accepted that effective correctional intervention is important to the reduction of offender risk. Consistent with this view, a concerted effort is required to ensure that correctional programs and intervention are linked to reintegration efforts. If this is to occur, however, core programs must be continuously evaluated and the changes indicated by the evaluations must be integrated. Furthermore, the accreditation of correctional programs must ensure that programs meet standards for content and delivery. Finally, a mechanism is required to incorporate treatment information into decisions regarding reintegration potential.<sup>9</sup>

### Application to various jurisdictions

Although the application of approaches noted in this article may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, several themes merit attention. Objective security classification is desirable for good correctional management and to demonstrate that decisions are informed and rationalized. Systematic and objective classification may also reduce decision errors regarding the security level at which offenders

are incarcerated. Not only is over-classification more expensive, but it also limits offenders' release opportunities.

In correctional systems, temporary absence programs are inextricably linked to subsequent discretionary release. Careful attention to temporary absence programs should yield gains in other reintegration areas. Similarly, overly stringent parole-suspension practices will concentrate the offender population in prison. Even a modest reduction in suspensions and probation breaches through better community management might yield substantial gains in the population of offenders living safely in the community.

**The process and content reflected in traditional risk/needs assessments are compatible with the goals of reintegration, but require refocusing.**

Correctional programs remain an important risk-reduction strategy, but speculation continues on the best way to integrate treatment into reintegration decisions. We do know, however, that community-based programs tend to be more efficacious, which suggests that they should be used more.

Offence-based guidelines for security classification or discretionary release are unlikely to minimize decision errors as effectively as statistically anchored and case-differential risk/needs assessment strategies do. All jurisdictions must make release decisions before expiration of sentence, preferably through operational applications of research findings (e.g., LSI-OR,

Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale). Further, standards of practice are available for guidelines on completing risk assessments,<sup>10</sup> and should be incorporated into correctional practices.

### Summary

Incorporating systematic risk/needs assessments and principles into a reintegration potential framework seems both legitimate and potentially fruitful. The process and content reflected in traditional risk/needs assessments are compatible with the goals of reintegration, but require refocusing. This can be done only if correctional staff and decision

makers consider the issue of decision errors more carefully. Current research highlights several areas where gains can be made, and indicates that reintegration efforts in one area may produce gains in several other areas. If such gain is, in fact, exponential, then only modest gains might be preferred at the initial stage. This would allow researchers to evaluate the impact of changes in procedures,

guidelines and cutoffs designed to improve reintegration efforts. This policy will also appeal to those who argue that reintegration is not indicated for resistant and high-risk offenders. The release of offenders with high reintegration potential is consistent with recent legislation targeting high-risk offenders. ■

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# Exploring reintegration potential: Impacts of initial placement practice

by F. P. Luciani<sup>1</sup>

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Canadian incarceration rates remain among the highest reported by western or industrial countries<sup>2</sup> despite: decreasing rates of crime<sup>3</sup> and admissions to federal custody;<sup>4</sup> new legislation to expedite the release of low-risk offenders (Bill C-55); modern risk assessment technology; new programs<sup>5</sup> to improve the release potential of offenders; and a growing acceptance of alternatives to incarceration. Although the institutional and conditional release populations of the Correctional Service of Canada have decreased recently, the decrease is largely attributable to a sharp decline in Warrant of Committal admissions, a by-product of the falling crime rate. In response, the Service has adopted a reintegration strategy to increase discretionary releases of appropriate offenders that includes: reconfiguring organizational structures and responsibilities; emphasizing “reintegration potential” rather than “risk assessment”; eliminating duplication of effort to streamline case management functions; applying institutional programs judiciously so that they target only criminogenic factors; giving case management officers broader discretion and more latitude to use professional judgment; and encouraging efficiency throughout the case management process.

## Improving decision making and efficiencies

The centrepieces of the reintegration strategy can be boiled down to two key tactics — identifying release potential and expediting release. With the introduction of accelerated full and day parole reviews, many of the most obvious candidates for reintegration are now being released by statute, leaving the difficult task of identifying and developing reintegration potential in a more tenuous candidate pool. The Service relies on a variety of system-wide, objective measures to assess security classification, risk and needs, psychological profiles, and recidivism potential, and these measures are central to the identification of reintegration potential. Objective measures offer a method for finding more offenders suitable for release, relating reintegration potential to standardized risk

profiles, and monitoring, assessing and refining decision-making protocols. For example, a recent survey of Offender Intake Assessment Profiles on the Offender Management System (OMS)<sup>6</sup> revealed that, of the many offenders past their parole eligibility date, 319 were rated “low-risk/low-need,” 216 were rated “low-risk/medium-need,” and 405 were rated “medium-risk/low-need” by their current case management officer. On average, the low-risk/low-need group were 307 days past parole eligibility, the low-risk/medium-need group were 261 days past, and the medium-risk/low-need group were 131 days past. Releasing on the parole eligibility date and improving the rate of discretionary releases (for example, by 50% for the low-risk/low-need group; 30% for low-risk/medium-need group; and 20% for the medium-risk/low-need group), could increase the total of days on conditional release by 80,000 days, and add 210 full-year cases to community caseloads.

Similar surveys indicate variations across the Service’s five regions in institutional-community population distributions, in suspension and revocation rates, and in days under temporary detention. These regional and responsibility centre disparities in case management functioning suggest that contributions to reintegration could be realized by improving efficiencies and encouraging practices used at the most efficient units. The accumulated impact of a general efficiency model, designed to achieve even modest improvements throughout all case management functions, and targeting offenders for release by indexed assessment, can lead gradually to substantial increases in community caseloads.

To illustrate the potential impact on reintegration of appropriate, efficient decision making, a detailed analysis of initial placement

practice was undertaken using Custody Rating Scale (CRS) data. Initial placement practice is particularly useful for investigation because: it is governed by a specific policy to pursue the least restrictive measures of confinement; it employs an objective method of initial classification; and it uses electronically accessible data that are complete and reliable enough to permit relatively competent projections and assertions. In the rest of this discussion, the contribution of modest changes to initial placement practice to reintegration is illustrated.

### Initial placement and reintegration

In the past 25 years, objective methods of initial security classification and reclassification have proliferated throughout correctional jurisdictions.<sup>7</sup> When compared with traditional classification procedures, objective measures have been credited with lowering security classification profiles without adverse effect on the rates of prison misconduct, escapes and fatalities.<sup>8</sup> In a recent Correctional Service of Canada study<sup>9</sup> comparing initial placement practice with CRS scores, similar findings were reported. The study found that the scale assigned a higher proportion of offenders to lower security categories than actual initial placement, and was more accurate in predicting incidence of institutional maladjustment and escape from minimum security. Of particular importance to the reintegration strategy was the finding that offenders with similar risks, as measured by both the CRS and the Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) Scale, but initially placed in different security levels, were granted discretionary release at substantially different rates and varied widely in the number of days served before release. For example, the discretionary release rates of offenders rated and placed in minimum security was 17% higher, and they received their release an average of 77 days earlier, than offenders with similar CRS and SIR ratings placed in medium security. (Conversely, the

release rate of offenders rated medium security but initially placed in minimum security was higher than that of the minimum-rated but medium-placed group, despite the lower risk ratings of the latter.) The results demonstrate that the security level of an offender's initial placement significantly affects both the likelihood and the timing of discretionary release. More specifically, the lower the level of initial security placement, the greater the probability of discretionary release and the shorter the period of incarceration before release. It clearly suggests the reintegration potential of initial placement.

**The results demonstrate that the security level of an offender's initial placement significantly affects both the likelihood and the timing of discretionary release.**

The relationship between discretionary release, earlier release and initial placement to lower security level, particularly minimum-security placement, is not difficult to explain. Initial placement to any of the Service's unfenced minimum-security facilities places a burden of trust on the offender not unlike that involved in conditional release. Successful adjustment to minimum security contributes substantially to the offender's release credibility. This fact is formally recognized by the SIR scale, which assigns higher risk ratings to inmates of maximum-security institutions. The sharp increase in minimum-security program opportunities since 1992 has allowed many more offenders

to be initially placed in minimum-security institutions and receive a better preparation for release. Initial placement at the lowest security levels avoids the time-consuming and often unnecessary reclassification and institutional transfer process — the route that many successfully released candidates traditionally take to minimum-security institutions. Finally, case management teams at minimum-security institutions tend to be much more release-oriented, usually because they have less time to process large numbers of higher-quality release candidates and, as a result, the case preparation regimen is expeditious and highly efficient.

## The impact of modest changes to initial placement

In April 1997, CRS, placement and release data were drawn from OMS on all offenders for whom a CRS was prepared in the six years (1991 to 1997) that the CRS was in use. The majority of these data represent the more recent years, when use of the CRS was promoted. The data were used to recalculate the discretionary-release and days-before-release rates to determine the differential effects of various CRS and placement options. Table 1 shows the concordance rates between CRS security level ratings and actual penitentiary placements for more than 14,000 files.

offenders rated minimum security who were nevertheless placed in medium-security institutions (43.2% or 1,613). While this group is partly offset by offenders rated medium security who were placed in minimum security (1,115), such placements tend to produce increases in escape and institutional incident rates.<sup>11</sup>

Next we turn to the potential impact on discretionary release of improving concordance with the CRS scores of offenders rated minimum security. In Table 2, we recalculated the discretionary release rates and average days before release for offenders rated minimum security by the CRS, based on data drawn in April 1997.

Table 1

		Security Level of Placement			CRS Distribution
		Maximum	Medium	Minimum	
<b>Maximum CRS Rating</b>	Frequency	451	404	10	865
	% of row	52.1	46.7	1.2	
	% of total <i>n</i>	3.2	2.9	0.07	6.15
<b>Medium CRS rating</b>	Frequency	562	7,777	1,115	9,454
	% of row	5.9	82.3	11.8	
	% of total <i>n</i>	4.0	55.3	7.9	67.3
<b>Minimum CRS rating</b>	Frequency	33	1,613	2,090	3,736
	% of row	0.9	43.2	55.9	
	% of total <i>n</i>	0.2	11.5	14.9	26.6
<b>Placement Distribution</b>	Total <i>n</i>	1,046	9,794	3,215	14,055
	% of total	7.4	69.7	22.9	100

The discretionary release rate of offenders rated minimum security and placed in minimum security is 84% and the average number of days before release was 311. This compares with a 62% release rate and 376 days before release for offenders rated minimum security but placed in medium security. The results confirm those reported earlier and, again, demonstrate that offenders rated but not placed in minimum can experience as much as a 22% differential in discretionary release potential and, on average, remain incarcerated 65 days longer.

The overall CRS-placement concordance rate, as represented by the sum of the total percentages on the diagonal, is 73%, a reassuring rate of agreement, given that 8% to 12%<sup>10</sup> of the disagreements may arise from non-security considerations such as a need for protection, medical treatment, programs or availability of cell accommodation at the rated level. Focusing specifically on minimum security, the CRS rated a higher proportion of offenders as minimum security (26.6%) than were actually placed there (22.9%). Overall concordance is a reflection of the substantial agreement between medium-security-rated and medium-security-placed offenders (82.3%), but the most striking finding, particularly from the perspective of reintegration, was the large proportion of

As noted in Table 1, as many as 1,613 (43%) of offenders rated minimum security by the CRS were placed in medium security. If we assume that between 8% and 12% of these placements result from non-security risk factors rather than a basic disagreement with the CRS rating, this leaves many minimum-rated offenders placed in medium security who could have been placed according to their CRS rating.

What is the potential for initial placements in minimum security? Table 3, the differential release and average days-before-release rates are applied to the annual average CRS override and admission rates to illustrate the regional and national impact of improving concordance to 80% of offenders rated minimum security. The impacts are a function

Table 2

Effect of Security Level of Placement on Length of Incarceration				
	Minimum Rated, Minimum Placed	Minimum Rated, Medium Placed	Estimated Gain in Release Rate	Estimated Reduction in Days of Incarceration Per Additional Release
Discretionary Release Rate	84%	62%	22%	—
Days of Incarceration	311	376	—	65

of the number of projected admissions and the current rate of overrides of offenders rated minimum security. As the table shows, the impacts vary sharply across the regions. By way of explanation, the Atlantic region averaged annually approximately 1,054 offender admissions from 1993 to 1997, of which 9.56% were rated minimum security but were placed in medium security. By improving the Atlantic region's concordance rate with offenders rated minimum security to 80%, 81 more offenders may have been initially placed in minimum security. Thus, if the rest of their sentence went well, an additional 22% or 18 offenders, would be released if the full placement effect is realized. Finally, if all additional offenders placed in minimum security were released earlier, a total of 4,423 days of incarceration would be saved.

Additional adjustments can also be made to the security level cutoff values of the CRS to allow for an increase in the distribution to minimum security

or to customize distributions to fit the unique needs of individual regions. In the current study, approximately 26% of the national sample was assigned to the minimum-security category but, by raising the institutional adjustment sub-scale by 2.8 points (from 79.5 to 82.2 points) and the security risk sub-scale by 2 points (from 58.5 to 60.5 points), an additional 4% or 30% of offenders, would be minimum-security candidates. By adjusting the CRS to allow for a 30% minimum-security distribution and using an 80% concordance rate, the minimum-security candidate pool increased by 1,066 offenders, with concomitant potential to reduce days before release by more than 57,000 and increase discretionary releases by 234 offenders. The risk associated with the new cutoff values is minor relative to the original values, and the actual performance of the more liberal cutoff values can be carefully tracked. (In a simulation exercise using the sample developed for the CRS validation

Table 3

Net Annual Gain in Minimum-security Population, Discretionary Release and Reduction in Days of Incarceration at 80% CRS Concordance						
	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairie	Pacific	National
Average annual admission (1993 to 1997)	1,054	2,443	2,041	2,218	979	
Minimum to medium override rate 1995-1996 admissions*	9.56%	13.26%	9.43%	16.93%	13.71%	
<b>Net gain in minimum population with 80% concordance**</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>901</b>
<b>Net reduction in days of incarceration***</b>	<b>4,423</b>	<b>14,141</b>	<b>8,408</b>	<b>16,380</b>	<b>5,842</b>	<b>49,194</b>
<b>Net gain in discretionary release****</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>199</b>

Notes: National totals are sum of regional numbers.

- \* Proportion of total annual admissions rated minimum but overridden to medium-security.
- \*\* Projections based on a reduction in regional overrides to 20% of rates reported in 1995-1996.
- \*\*\* Projection based on 65 days reduction per additional minimum-security placement resulting from improving concordance with minimum-rated offenders to 80%.
- \*\*\*\* Projections based on a 22% increase in discretionary release of appropriate offenders placed in minimum security.

study cutoff values, similar to those identified above, which allowed for a 30% minimum-security distribution, resulted in no change in the escape rate of offenders initially placed in minimum security over the escape rate reported for the original cutoff values.)

## Conclusions

Clearly, the number of additional placements and releases and the reduction in incarceration days cannot be precisely calculated until the number of non-security overrides is known, the effects of the placement practices and traditions of each region are accounted for, and adjustments are made to factor in implementation effects and accommodation restrictions. Despite the impediments to realizing the full potential for releases, efforts to encourage initial placement in minimum security not only advance the principle of "least restrictive measure of confinement," but are also good correctional practice. Objective measures of offender classification provide a mechanism to challenge the conservative inclinations<sup>12</sup> often pervading classification systems that rely too heavily on personal or subjective judgments and fall prey to many of the cognitive limitations associated with clinical judgment.<sup>13</sup>

Expediently placing as many offenders as possible at the lowest possible security level at the start of their sentence can minimize the effect of and contribute to the cost-effectiveness of managing prisons. Objective measures represent the corporate norms and provide the corporate authority for security classification decisions. This recognizes that the basic responsibility for classification protocols rest with the agency and, with a competent application of the protocols by

the case management officer, the security classification exercise is less inclined to be influenced by conservative inclinations that often affect classification decisions. The objective measures provide a powerful tool to control the flow of offenders across security levels and could be an important impetus to the reintegration strategy that remains to be fully exploited.

**Expediently placing as many offenders as possible at the lowest possible security level at the start of their sentence can minimize the effect of and contribute to the cost-effectiveness of managing prisons.**

A final word of caution is warranted, lest the impression is left that objective or actuarial measures are being advocated to the exclusion of what is popularly referred to as "professional judgment." On the contrary, objective measures are intended to inform professional judgment, not replace or overwhelm it. All too often, however, professional judgment is confused with what is more properly defined as "personal or subjective judgment," which is often influenced by personal taste, experience and prejudice. Subjective judgements are often antagonistic toward objective or actuarial approaches and antithetical to the notion of professional judgment. Judgment is professional to the extent that it embraces a theoretical framework that helps explain the behaviour in question; it is supported by a body of

knowledge derived from empirical experience; it is represented by publicly explicit criteria and protocols that encourage fair and consistent decision making; and it has the public endorsement of and is enforced by its practitioners. Professional judgment requires a balance between unfettered subjectivity and blind acquiescence to actuarial tables. Within this context, objective measures can contribute both to the integrity of security classification practice and the success of the reintegration strategy. ■

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## Just Released

*The Research Branch recently released:*

**R-60 *A Two-Year Release Follow-Up of Federal Offenders Who Participated in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program***

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*Date of Publication: 09-01-1997*

*By: J. Johnston*

# Treatment responsiveness, intervention, and reintegration: A conceptual model

by *Ralph Serin*<sup>1</sup>

*Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada*

**T**his article highlights the constructs relevant to treatment responsiveness<sup>2</sup> and incorporates them into a risk management strategy for offender reintegration. In this context, treatment responsiveness is a composite of treatment readiness and performance, and is defined as factors that affect intervention.<sup>3</sup> Effective intervention will reduce risk and increase the probability of successful reintegration.<sup>4</sup> In this article, "reintegration" covers transfers to reduced security as well as discretionary release to the community. Successful involvement in programs is one indicator that an offender is likely to reintegrate successfully.<sup>5</sup>

The proposed model emphasizes systematic risk/needs assessment<sup>6</sup> to determine an offender's treatment requirements, including the appropriate intensity of treatment. This information anchors an offender's overall risk management strategy by giving correctional staff specific targets to consider for interventions, and by indicating the best setting for program delivery. Generally, programs should be provided early in an offender's sentence to ensure timely case preparation. The order of program delivery also probably influences the offender's response to treatment.

Structured assessments of treatment readiness and performance can provide a composite index of successful intervention. Further, treatment performance provides an intermediate measure of success that is critical to the effective management of offenders through their sentence. How these intermediate measures relate to successful release remains to be demonstrated, however.

## Background

**A**lthough increasing evidence indicates that appropriate correctional intervention reduces recidivism,<sup>7</sup> a standardized method for incorporating treatment information into estimates of reintegration potential is currently unavailable. Without such a strategy, correctional staff are compelled to speculate about the efficacy of intervention for an individual offender, and his or her suitability for reintegration — a situation that could increase decision errors. The goal of corrections is to minimize decision errors, and effective intervention is considered an important method of increasing release potential.

The principles of effective correctional programming are well articulated<sup>8</sup> and will not be repeated here. Accreditation reviews will assess how well programs reflect these principles. The proposed model assumes that, if they are to produce effective interventions, programs must reflect these principles.<sup>9</sup>

Offenders vary with respect to their treatment needs and motivation; therefore, their responses to intervention vary, and it is not clear how their treatment performance might be integrated into release decisions. Development of a structured assessment method would be an important start, but staff would still need a comprehensive model to follow. Because the utility of treatment<sup>10</sup> and the validity of clinical decision making are increasingly debated,<sup>11</sup> the Research Branch has developed specific measures of treatment readiness and treatment performance.<sup>12</sup>

This article describes a strategy for integrating treatment information into risk management strategies. The effectiveness of such a model will influence the reintegration of offenders referred for correctional intervention. The model is being presented now to stimulate interest in its validation and/or the development of alternative strategies.

## Description

The essential components of the model are: pretreatment appraisals of risk and need, assessment of treatment readiness or motivation, and assessment of treatment participation and gain. The latter two components are combined to reflect treatment responsiveness.<sup>13</sup> Risk appraisals should indicate both the individual offender's criminogenic factors and the group variables associated with risk recidivism. Although individual criminogenic needs tend to be dynamic, actuarial scales often concentrate on static factors,<sup>14</sup> and actuarial or statistical estimates of likelihood of reoffending are preferred as the basis of a risk appraisal. However, it is not

clearly understood that actuarial scales can provide cutoffs that help users identify the decision errors for different types of outcome for different scores.<sup>15</sup>

Prochaska and colleagues describe the construct of treatment readiness.<sup>16</sup> Miller<sup>17</sup> also discusses the importance of motivation on treatment effectiveness in his work on motivational interviewing.<sup>18</sup> Treatment readiness in offenders has been best studied with respect to substance abuse.<sup>19</sup> This work is promising, but has yet to produce reliable, valid self-report measures of treatment readiness that apply to offenders. Other research suggests that structured clinical ratings using behavioural referents might address difficulties of social desirability inherent in such assessments.<sup>20</sup> Motivation, then, is an important construct in considering how an offender will respond to treatment. Clinically, this has translated into efforts to enhance treatment engagement and therapeutic affiliation in a variety of resistant populations.<sup>21</sup>

Specific aspects of treatment gain have been demonstrated to be important in determining outcomes for sex offenders<sup>22</sup> and substance abusers.<sup>23</sup> Recent studies indicate that structured assessments of treatment participation and gain may add to what can be done in pretreatment risk appraisals to predict reoffence.<sup>24</sup> Given the need for this work to be readily testable and operationally relevant, a somewhat restricted definition of treatment responsivity has been proposed in this model.<sup>25</sup> The combination of treatment readiness (motivation and participation) and performance (behaviour measures of treatment participation and gains) are summed to reflect treatment responsivity.

This work by the Research Branch is intended to provide treatment staff with behaviourally based guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of specific interventions. These measures are being piloted and are likely to be introduced to clinicians and program delivery staff for operational use.

### Decision rules

The next step is to provide explicit guidelines to integrate risk assessment and treatment measures so that reintegration potential can be

determined accurately. Without such guidelines, the potential for judgment error is great.

Research supports linking treatment intensity with pretreatment risk and need appraisals<sup>26</sup> — more intensive intervention should be reserved for higher-need, higher-risk offenders. This aspect of intervention is not reflected in the current model, partly because few hierarchical programs are available. The model was developed to be used with core programs (i.e., living skills and substance abuse) for which the particular intervention is reflected in the Correctional Treatment Plan and the identified criminogenic needs. To some extent, risk is currently addressed by the offender's security level where intervention is provided.

Once an offender is referred to a correctional treatment program, he or she is interviewed for admission. If admitted, treatment staff assess the offender's readiness for treatment (see Table 1 for the items represented in treatment readiness measures). The present model reflects overall ratings of low, moderate or high treatment readiness. Similarly, treatment performance (see Table 2) can be assessed as low, moderate or high.

Table 1

#### Indices for Treatment Readiness

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Problem recognition     | 7. Views about treatment |
| 2. Goal setting            | 8. Self-efficacy         |
| 3. Motivation              | 9. Dissonance            |
| 4. Self-appraisal          | 10. External supports    |
| 5. Expectations            | 11. Affective component  |
| 6. Behavioural consistency |                          |

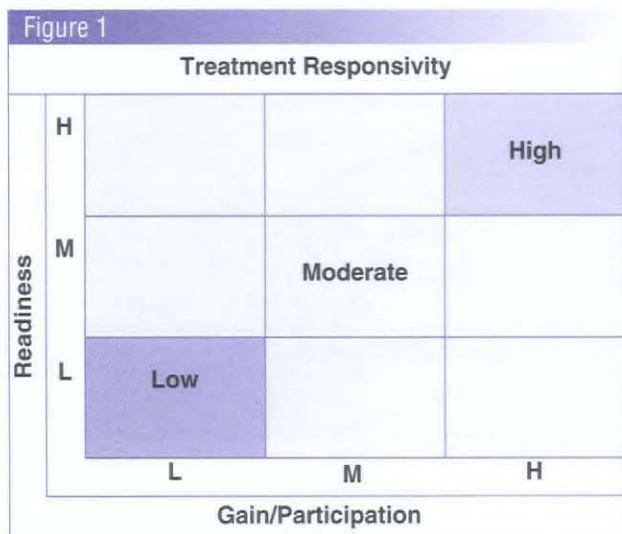
Table 2

#### Indices for Treatment Performance

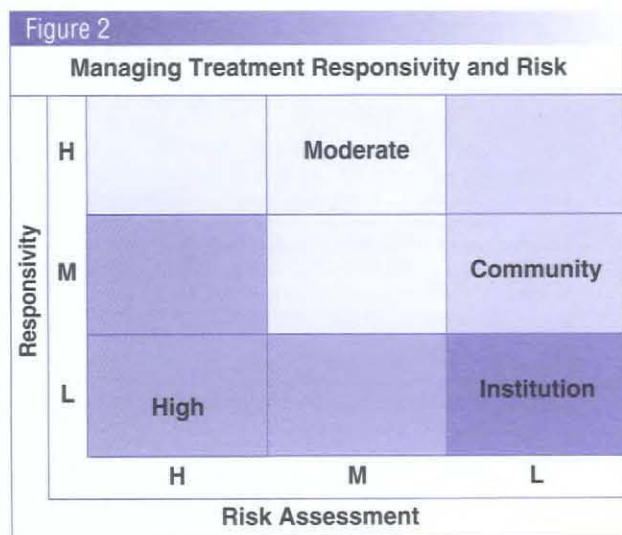
- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Knowledge of program content | 9. Insight                           |
| 2. Skills acquisition           | 10. Attendance                       |
| 3. Disclosure                   | 11. Disruptiveness                   |
| 4. Confidence                   | 12. Appropriateness                  |
| 5. Knowledge application        | 13. Depth of emotional understanding |
| 6. Skills application           | 14. Participation                    |
| 7. Understanding of criminality |                                      |
| 8. Motivation                   |                                      |



Figure 1 presents a conservative model of treatment responsiveness. For instance, low readings and low performance combine to indicate of an overall rating of poor responsiveness. High readiness and high performance combine to indicate high responsiveness. Any other combinations yield an overall rating of moderate to ensure a judicious assessment of responsiveness.



Treatment responsiveness and risk appraisals are combined to arrive at the offender's reintegration potential or risk management strategy (see Figure 2). Ratings of low,



moderate or high responsiveness and risk are inverted to reflect that high responsiveness and low risk are the preferred situation, yielding the lowest risk management concerns and, therefore, the highest reintegration potential. To avoid an overestimate of intervention effectiveness, the cells have been differentially weighted, although this requires validation. That is, low or moderate responsiveness when combined with high risk yields an overall rating of high-risk management concerns as does low responsiveness and moderate risk. High responsiveness and high or moderate risk yields an overall rating of moderate-risk management concerns. Low responsiveness and low risk yields an overall rating of low-risk management concerns, but probably indicates that the offender should be placed in a minimum-security institution. Moderate and high responsiveness and low risk yield an overall rating of low-risk management concerns, indicating either community-based management or placement in a minimum-security institution. The difference between these last two categories could also reflect factors such as time served, availability of programs in the community and dynamic risk factors.

### Testing the model

Although speculative, this model provides a set of decision rules for incorporating treatment information into risk management strategies and, therefore, links intervention to reintegration potential. (This approach is preliminary and may benefit from further conceptual work.) It assumes that an offender has completed a treatment program for its application. This may not always be the case, and treatment readiness measures or prior response to intervention (e.g., in another jurisdiction) may be the only treatment information available. Employing such indices for a measure of treatment responsiveness may significantly limit the utility of the model. Obviously, the model requires validation, beginning with the initial pilot work with the treatment measures<sup>27</sup> and a consideration of cutoffs for these clinical ratings. Nonetheless,

it should at least stimulate interest in the development of strategies for systematically

incorporating intervention factors into correctional decision making. ■

- <sup>1</sup> 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.
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# Educating Offenders

by **Dennis J. Stevens**<sup>1</sup>

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To examine the effects of education on incarcerated offenders, 60 inmates who had earned a baccalaureate degree while incarcerated were tracked after their release from the North Carolina Department of Corrections. Their recidivism rates were compared with inmates who had not pursued education while incarcerated. The data for this study were gathered from education and recidivism studies of 30 U.S. states. The results show that inmates who earned baccalaureate degrees while incarcerated became law-abiding individuals significantly more often than inmates who had not advanced their education while incarcerated. Since it is less expensive to educate inmates than to reincarcerate them, lowering recidivism rates should become a mission of the correctional community, and college degree programs must be an intrinsic part of that mission.

American prison experts concern themselves with correctional population yet seem to neglect correctional outcomes. That is, 425,409 inmates were released from American institutions in 1993 and, once released, many of those inmates received no significant opportunity to change their lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> Although the American public is decidedly punitive toward criminals, it is more lenient toward inmates because they are not an immediate threat. And while the public does not expect correctional organizations to control crime, people believe that incarceration alone will stop crime.<sup>3</sup> That is, people expect incarceration to teach the offender a lesson.

Therefore, it could reasonably be argued that, from the public's perspective, reducing recidivism is the responsibility of the community into which convicts are released, not the prisons from which they are released. Nonetheless, placing unprepared, uneducated, unusually bitter individuals in the community could increase the threat to public safety and increase recidivism, because many Americans see violence as an appropriate response to danger.<sup>4</sup> (For the purpose of this article, recidivism is defined as a return to prison for a criminal offence other than a technical violation of parole.)<sup>5</sup> Many released inmates, however, commit crimes and elude detection or receive penalties other than incarceration for their crimes.

Correctional education has three functions: first, it acts as an agent of change for both the inmate and the system; second, it remains committed to freedom of inquiry; and third, it provides an opportunity to study, evaluate and respond to all variables in the individual, the system and society that are to benefit from the educational concerns with process, product and social reform.<sup>6</sup> Correctional education will reduce unproductive prison time, help inmates understand society, give non-custody professionals an opportunity to monitor correctional operations, and reduce recidivism. Although some researchers see academic progress as the primary purpose of education, it does confer secondary benefits such as employability.

## The controversy

Does correctional education reduce recidivism? Most of the evidence appears to be inconclusive.<sup>7</sup> Some writers argue that the evidence does not correlate correction education with reduced recidivism, while others go further and suggest that nothing can alter criminally violent behaviour.<sup>8</sup> These opponents argue that criminal tendencies learned on the outside cannot be unlearned on the inside. Martison<sup>9</sup> argues that, except for some isolated cases, the rehabilitation efforts of advanced education reported so far (1947–1967) have done nothing appreciable to reduce recidivism. Martison's influence in corrections has frequently been associated with the shift from a treatment/rehabilitation orientation to a just-deserts/justice orientation.

## Methodology

All degree-granting institutions participating in North Carolina inmate education were asked to submit data about male and female inmates to whom they granted degrees. Additionally, 10 years' worth of criminal records of North Carolina non-degree-inmates were examined.

Specifically, 320 inmates earned 373 post-secondary degrees in North Carolina prisons from one private university and four community colleges between 1981 and 1991. The participants in this study originally resided in one female prison and five male prisons, largely in the southeastern region of North Carolina. All were high-security prisons serving high-risk offenders.

## Findings

When the North Carolina data were pooled with data from other U.S. states, the results clearly showed that earning a degree while incarcerated significantly reduced recidivism in both male and female offenders. More specifically, 60 educated men and women prisoners who earned a four-year degree in prison were not reincarcerated during the three years after their release, and all but one of these individuals found employment relating to their degree. The degree-earning offenders earned more than they did before their incarceration (if employed — most were unemployed at the time of their arrest and conviction). These findings support the position of Ryan and Mauldin<sup>10</sup> and are consistent with Jenkins, Pendry and Steurer,<sup>11</sup> who report that inmates released from prison who had completed a two- or four-year degree while incarcerated earned far more money than they had before going to prison.

State statistics show that approximately 40% of North Carolina's general prison population was reincarcerated within three years of release.<sup>12</sup> Applying this statistic to the study sample (assuming that the degree-earning offenders were typical of the general inmate population of North Carolina) would mean that 24 former inmates (40% × 60) instead of three would have been reincarcerated. The difference of 21 inmates saved North Carolina taxpayers \$1,942.29 per day (at \$92.49 per inmate) or \$708,935.85 for the first year of reincarceration and each year thereafter.<sup>13</sup> This fact is consistent with calculations from a state auditor who projected a saving of US\$6.6 million for every 1% reduction in recidivism.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that, although all states were asked to submit data, only 30 correctional educational directors responded and only eight of those were from states that had studied the correctional education and recidivism question. After evaluating their data, it appears that the earning of two-year and four-year college degrees by inmates lowers recidivism rates. The following are examples of the data received.

## Alabama

In Alabama, adult correctional education is provided through the Department of Post-Secondary Education. The Alabama two-year college system is responsible for delivering correctional education programs to inmates

throughout the state. One community college was established to serve seven correctional institutions. Of Alabama's 19,492 inmates, approximately 11% are enrolled full time in correctional education. The general prison population recidivism rate in any given 12-month period averages 35%, compared with 1% for inmates who complete post-secondary degrees.<sup>15</sup>

## Florida

Florida's correctional system has approximately 60,000 inmates. Of these, 23% (14,000) participated

in diverse academic, vocational and special education programs delivered by the Correctional Education School Authority (CESA). More than 7,000 diplomas and certificates of achievement or completion were awarded. CESA-educated inmates were 19% more likely to find employment after release than inmates who were not CESA-trained. Clearly, employment opportunities reduce recidivism. However, CESA had not conducted any recidivism tests based on education.<sup>16</sup>

## Illinois

In 1988, the Illinois Department of Corrections studied 760 releases including: inmates who completed academic education programs only; inmates who completed vocational programs only; inmates who completed both academic and

**The results clearly showed that earning a degree while incarcerated significantly reduced recidivism in both male and female offenders.**

vocational programs; and a control group. Results show that releasees<sup>17</sup> who completed academic secondary or post-secondary programs or non-accredited community college vocational programs were less likely to reoffend and more likely be employed than the control group, who did not complete either vocational or post-secondary school education while incarcerated.

## Oklahoma

Oklahoma researchers examined 360 inmates who, while incarcerated in Oklahoma, participated in college-level courses offered through the Televised Instructional System (TIS). TIS participants were matched with a cohort of non-participants. Results show that TIS participants had lower recidivism rates than the matching group.<sup>18</sup>

## Maryland

In Maryland, Jenkins and his colleagues reported that inmates released from prison who had completed a two- or a four-year degree while incarcerated were most likely to be employed. Of further importance, 46% of the inmates released from the general prison population of Maryland's 19,014 inmates were returned to prison within three years of their release, compared with none of the 120 inmates who received degrees while in prison.

## New York

In 1992, New York's Correctional Service reported that 24 colleges and universities throughout the state provide college programming for approximately 3,500 inmates in 66 correctional institutions. Of the inmates who earned a college degree (academic or vocational) while incarcerated, 26% were returned to prison, compared with the 45% who were returned from New York's general prison population.

## Texas

In Texas, 44,282 of the state's 120,000 inmates (38%) received educational services. The criminal justice center at Sam Houston State

University conducted a two-year recidivism study of inmates in the Texas system. Of the 60 men and women who had earned degrees and were released, 10% (6) returned to prison. Generally, the recidivism rate in Texas is 36%.

Other data were analyzed to determine recidivism rates for various types of degree earners who left Texas prisons between September 1990 and August 1991. Two years after release, the overall recidivism rate for degree holders was only 12% and inversely differentiated by type of degree (associate 14%, baccalaureate 6%, masters 0%). The projected savings to Texas taxpayers for the reductions in recidivism described above range from US\$11.6 million to as high as US\$130.7 million.

## Conclusion

The consistency in the study results demands acknowledgment — that is, positive educational intervention for inmates is necessary because it is practical, ethical and effective at reducing crime. When the costs of accredited correctional education are compared with the costs of reincarceration, results support funding for correctional education. Conservatively, of 425,409 inmates released in 1993, 45% will reoffend within three years.

It is recommended that the correctional system do whatever is necessary to keep the public safe from recurring criminal behaviour. One of the most cost-effective methods of accomplishing

this objective is to educate criminals. An effective education, including a holistic educational experience, can be provided by experienced educators through accredited institutions of higher learning. It is important to note that short-sighted or poorly managed educational experiences are inappropriate in the prison classroom, and unlikely to contribute to the results reported in this article.

In sum, high-quality education is the least-expensive model of recidivism reduction. With certain offenders, education will work. Other offenders are unlikely to be deterred from

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committing crime by anything the correctional system has to offer. The results of this study clearly identify a link between correctional

education and reduction of recidivism by means of employment. ■

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## Coming up in *Forum on Corrections Research*

The May 1998 issue of FORUM will focus on "Parole and Corrections."

# Innovation in reintegration programming: Skills for Employment program

by *Roberta Lynn Sinclair, Roger Boe and Colleen Anne Dell*<sup>1</sup>

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**E**mployment plays a key role in our society and is crucial to the successful reintegration of offenders. The Skills for Employment program developed at Drumheller Institution, Alberta, has two components: a three-week, in-class course, and three months of on-the-job training. Preliminary findings suggest that the program is attracting its target group of offenders (those with unstable employment histories) and experiences a high completion rate. A second stage of research had been introduced to continue tracking the program's completion rates, release and readmission rates, and the employment success rate of offenders released in the community. The Skills for Employment program is a valuable tool for building reintegration skills.

Employment gives us purpose and fulfills our need to be independent and productive. Although many offenders express a similar connection with employment, federal inmates often identify employment as an area of concern. It has long been suggested that the employability<sup>2</sup> of an offender is positively associated with lower rates of recidivism<sup>3</sup> and, hence, successful reintegration. This article gives a preliminary assessment of the Skills for Employment program initiated by Drumheller Institution.

## Background

**I**n April 1993, the Correctional Service of Canada contacted the Centre for Career Development Innovation (Concordia University College, Edmonton, Alberta), and together developed the Skills for Employment program for Drumheller Correctional Institution.<sup>4</sup> This program has two components: a three-week, in-class course and three months of on-the-job training. Profiles of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to obtain entry-level positions in each job area<sup>5</sup> were created. Successful participants receive a certificate that is recognized by the Centre. However, affiliation with Drumheller Institution is not acknowledged on the certificates so potential employers will focus on the training obtained by the applicant.

The primary goal of the Skills for Employment program is to help inmates learn specific job skills and become competitive in the job market after their release. These skills are expected to help inmates reintegrate into the community. The goals of the program are to provide inmates with<sup>6</sup> marketable entry-level skills and clearly defined on-the-job training opportunities.

Although case managers are encouraged to solicit participation, the inmates must initiate entry to the program, mirroring the self-initiation process required to find a job on release.

## Methodology<sup>7</sup>

The project has two phases. The first is an evaluative framework, as summarized in this article. Program information was gathered from Drumheller Institution and compiled into a data set that captured program type (three-week and/or three month), program start and completion dates, course completion status,<sup>8</sup> and Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) Scale scores.

The second phase will include expanded information on course status (successful, continuation, withdrawn, interrupted or unsuccessful), readmission information and information on reintegration success. Plans are being developed for a pre- and post-program evaluation of the three-week and three-month components. However, since these data were not available at the time of writing, the article focuses on descriptive findings.

The following methodological limitations of this study should be noted: the SIR scale has been applied only to federal, male, non-Aboriginal offenders, although 16% of the sample population is Aboriginal, and SIR scores were available for only 66% of the remaining offenders.

## Participant profile

The participants in the Skills for Employment program at Drumheller are similar to the inmate population as a whole.<sup>9</sup> This population is male, Caucasian (55%), English-speaking, married/common-law (42%) and aged 21 to 39 when admitted for their current offence (65%). A large majority (73%) have experienced a previous incarceration,<sup>10</sup> about 50% once and about 50% twice. Of those previously incarcerated, more than half (60%) were first convicted by the age of 18. As Table 1 illustrates, the largest groups of offenders are serving a sentence for armed robbery (which includes break and enter), narcotics offences or homicide.

## Employment at the time of offence<sup>11</sup>

As expected, employment was identified as a challenge for these offenders: at the time of their current offence, 66% were unemployed.

Table 2

### Demographics by Program

Demographics	Only three-week	Only three-month	Both programs
Employment status at time of offence:			
Employed	32%	47%	24%
Unemployed	68%	53%	75%
Race:			
Caucasian	48%	65%	77%
North American Indian	37%	26%	11%
Other	14%	9%	11%

As Table 2 illustrates, those who participated in both programs also had the highest unemployment rate (75%). The unemployment rates for participants in the three-week course and three-month course are relatively similar (68% and 53% respectively). It is interesting to note that the highest rates of unemployment at the time of offence were in the theft (83%), and break and enter (77%) categories. Those who had been incarcerated five or more times had the highest rate of unemployment (74%). This rate dropped slightly with three to four previous incarcerations (70%), and one to two previous incarcerations (68%). The lowest unemployment rate was in the no prior conviction category (54%). The highest rate of unemployment was associated with the 21 to 39 age range, in which 63% were unemployed.

## Course participation and completion<sup>12</sup>

Most offenders (83%) participated in the three-week program, 12% took the three-month training, and 5% both. Referring to Table 2, the most significant difference in race and program occurs in the both program category (Caucasian 77%, Aboriginal 11%). The difference in race in the three-week course is not as substantial as it is in the

Table 1

### Participants in Skills for Employment Program by Type of Offence

Current Offence	Description	Percentage
Armed robbery	Break and enter and commit or with intent, forcible entry, unlawfully in dwelling, illegal possession or firearm, carrying concealed weapon	32%
Possession of or trafficking in narcotics or controlled drugs	Offences under the <i>Food and Drug Act</i> , <i>Narcotics Control Act</i>	24%
Homicide	Act resulting in death, except by automobile (refers to <i>Criminal Code</i> definition of murder and manslaughter)	22%
Dangerous driving	Criminal negligence while operating a motor vehicle, arson, kidnapping, hijacking, abduction, obstructing a peace officer	11%
Receiving or possession of stolen goods		7%
Sexual offence(s)	All possible sexual offences listed in the <i>Criminal Code of Canada</i>	3%
Offences while incarcerated	Conviction for escape or attempted escape from a federal or provincial correctional facility or court, or from an escort; not including unlawfully at large	2%

Source: Revised Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale (SIR-R1)



three-month course. This research focused on two groups: those who successfully completed the course; and a combined category of unsuccessful, withdrawn, transferred and continuing participants. Of the 510 individuals with a course status attached to their program, 61% have successfully completed the course. The three-week course completion rate was 67%; in the three-month course, the completion rate was 33%. Of those offenders who participated in both courses, 35% successfully completed. The three-week course may have had a higher completion rate because it was shorter.

### Concluding comments

As highlighted above, the Skills for Employment program appears to attract its target offenders. Preliminary research on the Skills for Employment program at Drumheller Institution suggests that a high percentage of

offenders who take these programs are unemployed at the time of offence, have a criminal history before their current offence, and identify employability as a concern. By preparing offenders with relevant employment skills, we can give them another tool to help them reintegrate into the community thereby reducing the chances of recidivism.

To evaluate this program as a reintegration tool, the second phase of this study will focus on readmission rates. It will be beneficial to include release and readmission dates and intake assessment values relevant to offender employment in evaluating the Skills for Employment program.

Everyone agrees, offenders and non-offenders alike, that work plays a large role in our society. By giving offenders a chance to build on their current employment skills and learn new skills, we help them prepare to find employment after release. ■

**By preparing offenders with relevant employment skills, we can give them another tool to help them reintegrate into the community thereby reducing the chances of recidivism.**

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<sup>2</sup> Employability refers to an individual's ability to find, adapt to and keep a job. J. Brouillard and A. Siroise, "Employability in practice," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 8, 1 (1996): 32-34.

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<sup>4</sup> Drumheller Correctional Institution is a medium-security federal establishment near Edmonton, Alberta, that houses a variety of inmates ranging from high to low security risks. Approximately 95% of the inmates are general population; however 5% are administrative segregation.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these profiles, see P. Mulgrew, "Generic and employability skills for inmates," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 8, 1 (1996): 29-31.

<sup>6</sup> See P. Mulgrew, "Generic and employability skills for inmates," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 8, 1 (1996): 29-31 for further details of the skills in each section.

<sup>7</sup> The data set was compiled with the assistance of the Correctional Service of Canada Research Branch Analyst Mark Nafekh.

<sup>8</sup> In this study, those who have completed the course successfully are grouped together, and the second group consists of offenders who have the following course statuses: continuation, withdrawn, paroled or transferred, unsuccessful. This is a limitation of the database and will be expanded in the second phase. Future research will investigate these groups exclusively to provide more information on how many are finishing the course successfully, reach a different course status, or both. In this way, we will be better equipped to determine whether and how those offenders differ from offenders who successfully finish the course.

<sup>9</sup> Draft in progress, Roger Boe, "Drumheller Skills for Employment Program: The First 100 Graduates."

<sup>10</sup> Previous incarceration: Previous refers to a period of incarceration that expired (i.e., Warrant Expiry Date) before the current total aggregate sentence. Incarceration is a separate original admission to a custodial place; penal institution refers to jail, prison or penitentiary in each case.

<sup>11</sup> Excluding Aboriginal offenders and missing cases, the results are based on n=291.

<sup>12</sup> The term "associated" is used to indicate that they are all included in the analysis, regardless of course status (for example, completion, continued, withdrawn, transferred or unsuccessful).

# A profile of federally sentenced women in the community: Addressing needs for successful integration

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**R**esearch has documented a clear and consistent relationship between the type and number of needs that offenders present and the likelihood of successful community reintegration.<sup>2</sup> This relationship highlights the importance of assessing and reassessing offender needs, with continuity of care from sentencing, through incarceration, to community supervision. Indeed, this tenet is a cornerstone of the mission statement of the Correctional Service of Canada: "actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control."<sup>3</sup>

*Individual, comprehensive risk/needs assessments are essential to the provision of appropriate programming, both within the institution and, after release in the community. Therefore identifying and evaluating criminogenic needs<sup>4</sup> are essential to correctional intervention. This article is an overview of demographic data, criminal history and needs of federally sentenced women currently on conditional release.*

**N**ational implementation of the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (CRNMS) in Canadian corrections has provided a method for comprehensive and systematic evaluation of each offender released from federal incarceration, and every six months throughout her period of supervision.<sup>5</sup> Briefly, the CRNMS involves collecting case-specific information to determine the offender's personal criminal risk and need areas.

A combination of overall risk and need levels serves in part to determine how often the offender should contact parole officers. However, it is the need areas alone that are amenable to correctional intervention, and therefore should be the focus of program planning for successful reintegration. The CRNMS process considers 12 need domains: academic and vocational, employment pattern, financial management, marital and family relations, companions, accommodation, behavioural and emotional stability, alcohol use, drug use, mental ability, health, and attitude. The instrument is designed to rank each need on either a three- or four-point continuum, ranging from "asset to community

adjustment" (not applicable to all needs) through "no current difficulties" and "some need for improvement" to "significant need for improvement."

Approximately 350 federally sentenced women are currently on conditional release<sup>6</sup> in Canada, but CRNMS data were available for only 297 on September 30, 1997. These data were the basis for analyses in the present investigation.

## Sample

Since its implementation, all data derived from CRNMS have been entered into the CSC Offender Management System (OMS), which is an automated database. For the present research, the most recent CRNMS data for currently supervised federal female offenders were extracted from OMS. This process produced a sample of 297 or about 85% of all federally sentenced women currently on conditional release. The study sample is clearly representative of the overall population of federally sentenced women in the community.

## Demographic information

According to these data, about 13% of federally sentenced women on conditional release are Aboriginal, and the majority of non-Aboriginals are Caucasian. The average age is 37.9, with a range from 20 to 90 years old. Almost half (43.9%) are single, 32.1% are married or living common-law, 16.6% are divorced or separated, and the remaining 7.4% are either widowed or of unknown marital status.

A high proportion (45%) of women on conditional release from federal sentences are supervised in the Ontario region. Almost one third (29%) reside in the Prairies, 11% in Quebec, 9% in the Atlantic region, and 6% are supervised in the Pacific region.

## Criminal history

Most women currently on conditional release from federal custody (87.5%) have served only one term of federal<sup>7</sup> incarceration. Another 10% are on release from their second federal term. Five women (1.7%) have served federal sentences three times, and two women (0.7%) are on release from their fourth term of federal incarceration.

More than one quarter (25.6%) of women currently under community supervision have been convicted of homicide. Accordingly, almost one fifth (17.2%) are serving life sentences. Although this percentage seems high, it must be borne in mind that life-sentenced offenders remain under community supervision indefinitely, while offenders with shorter sentences are supervised only until their warrant expires.

About 17% of federally sentenced women in the community have been convicted of a drug-related offence. Only two women in the sample (less than 1%) have been convicted of a sexual offence. A similarly small proportion (2.4%) have a history of break and enter, although 11.4% have been convicted of robbery, and 15.8% of theft.

Based on a thorough review of each offender's criminal history, including its severity and diversity, plus the parole officer's discretion, an overall risk score is assigned. Of those women currently under community supervision, the majority (70.4%) are rated as low risk. An additional 13.5% are considered medium risk, while the remaining 16.2% are rated as high risk.

## Release type and phase of release

Most women in the sample had been granted discretionary release: either day parole (12.1%) or full parole (77.8%). Only a small minority (10.1%) served two thirds of their sentence and received only statutory release. This bodes well for the federally sentenced women in the sample, as offenders granted discretionary release are generally considered good candidates for successful community reintegration. Moreover, solid empirical evidence<sup>8</sup> affirms this notion: in comparison with those detained until

statutory release or sentence completion, women granted discretionary release are less likely to return to federal custody.

Forty-five percent of the sample of federally sentenced women under federal supervision had been in the community for more than one year. Another 19% were in their second phase of release and have been in the community between six months and one year. Finally, about one third (36%) are at the initial stage, meaning that they were released from prison within the previous six months. Again, it is encouraging to find that almost half the sample had successfully completed more than one year of community supervision. Research has consistently demonstrated that those who reoffend tend to do so within the first year of release.

## Case need levels

As mentioned, appropriate correctional programming begins with a comprehensive needs assessment. In other words, to provide offenders in the community with the best services possible, we must first decide which needs to address. We must also consider the severity of the problem in the need domain, to match the intensity of treatment to the magnitude of need.

As previously described, the CRNMS classifies and rates offenders across 12 need domains. A percentage distribution of needs by severity is shown in Table 1.

Perhaps what is most noteworthy about the data in Table 1 is the large percentage of women showing "considerable difficulty" in the employment domain. Moreover, about three quarters of federally sentenced women in the community show either "some" or "considerable" need for improvement in this area. It was therefore not surprising to find that almost 70% also experience at least some difficulty with academic and vocational skills. Finally, about three quarters of the sample are rated as having either "some" or "considerable" difficulty in the behavioural and emotional domain. Some might argue that these problems result from the double-bind of being women in a patriarchy, as well as offenders in a vengeful society.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1

**Percentage Distribution of Case Need Levels:  
Female Offenders Under Supervision (n = 297)**

Need domain	Asset %	No difficulty %	Some difficulty %	Considerable difficulty %
Academic and vocational	n/a	35.0	47.6	17.5
Employment	3.5	24.8	44.8	26.9
Financial management	2.1	30.8	51.0	16.1
Marital and family relations	10.1	30.8	41.6	17.5
Companions	11.9	36.8	35.1	16.1
Accommodation	7.3	67.1	17.8	7.7
Behavioural and emotional	n/a	25.9	59.4	15.7
Alcohol abuse	n/a	83.6	11.9	4.5
Drug use	n/a	77.3	12.9	9.8
Mental ability	n/a	95.1	3.8	1.0
Health	n/a	68.5	25.5	5.9
Attitude	22.5	68.1	4.6	4.9

**Comparing needs by gender**

For a cursory look into whether the needs of federally sentenced women in the community differ from the needs of similar male offenders, CRNMS data were retrieved for a random sample of 300 men currently under supervision. Ratings on all need domains were dichotomized to collapse “some difficulty” and “considerable difficulty” into an indication of presence of need, and “no difficulty” and “asset” (where applicable) into an indication of absence of need. Chi-square analyses were performed to test for between-gender differences in all 12 domains (see Figure 1).

Significant between-gender differences emerged in four need domains: alcohol use, behavioural and emotional stability, marital and family relations, and academic and vocational skills. Compared with the male offenders, women under community supervision have more needs in three domains: emotional stability, marital and family relations, and academic and vocational skills. However, the men have

more problems with abuse of intoxicants, especially alcohol.

When the number of needs was totalled, the women had, on average, more needs than the men, although the number of needs rated “some difficulty” or “considerable difficulty” ranged from 0 to 11 for both the men and the women. Specifically, the mean number of needs for men was 4.5, and the mean number of needs for women was 5.0. Statistical analysis (*t*-test) showed this difference to be significant at  $p < .05$ .

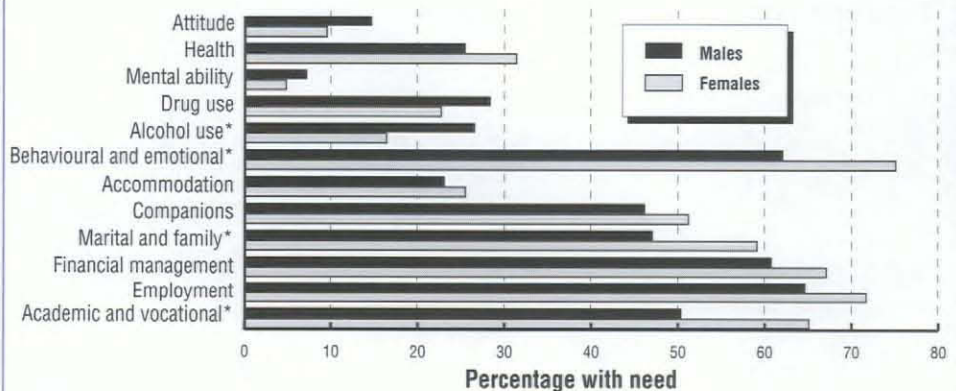
**Conclusions**

The fact that women offenders in the community have, on average, more needs than similar male offenders needs to be addressed. Moreover, a higher proportion of women have problems in the academic, behavioural, and marital and family domains. This should be reflected in community correctional intervention strategies.

There is good news. In recognition of the diverse, special needs of women offenders, the Service will tailor assessment, management and treatment strategies accordingly. For example, six new facilities for federally sentenced women have opened so that women can serve their sentences close to their families and social supports.

Figure 1

**Percentage Distribution of Needs of Offenders on Conditional Release**



Note: \* $p < .05$

Moreover, the new facilities are based on an "independent living" model to facilitate the transition from incarceration to the community.

The Correctional Service of Canada has tailored some core programs (e.g., cognitive skills) to the needs of female offenders, and is implementing and evaluating programs specific to this group, such as mother-and-child and peer-support programs. These changes have important implications, especially for post-release adjustment.

**In recognition of the diverse, special needs of women offenders, the Service will tailor assessment, management and treatment strategies accordingly.**

The assessment and reassessment of criminogenic needs is an important first step in service delivery for all offenders. Moreover, these data can be used to tailor treatment strategies targeting specific groups. The Service seems to be moving in the right direction to enhance community reintegration for women on conditional release. Current and prospective research initiatives will produce more definitive answers to the question: What can we do to help women on conditional release live more successfully in the community? ■

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<sup>2</sup> P. Gendreau, T. Little and C. Goggin, "A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Adult Offender Recidivism: Assessment Guidelines for Classification and Treatment" (Report submitted to the Corrections Branch, Ontario Ministry Secretariat, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> *Mission of the Correctional Service of Canada*, Cat. no. JS 82-46/1997 (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997): 4.

<sup>4</sup> Criminogenic needs reflect attributes of the offender that are changeable and, when changed, affect the likelihood of recidivism.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed description of CRNMS, see L. Motiuk "The Community Risk/Needs Management Scale: An effective supervision tool," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 9, 1 (1997): 8-12.

<sup>6</sup> Conditional release in Canada includes day parole, full parole and mandatory supervision. Offenders are eligible for day parole six months before they are eligible for full parole, and they are eligible for full parole after having served one third of their sentence. Mandatory supervision begins when the offender has served two thirds of the sentence.

<sup>7</sup> In Canada, offenders sentenced to two years or more of incarceration are under federal jurisdiction, while those sentenced to less than two years of incarceration are under provincial jurisdiction.

<sup>8</sup> R. Belcourt, T. Nouwens and L. Lefebvre, "Examining the unexamined: Recidivism among female offenders," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 5, 3 (1993): 10-14.

<sup>9</sup> M. Eaton, *Women after Prison* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1993).

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# Community supervision: Current practices and future directions

by Shelley Brown<sup>1</sup> and Edward Zamble<sup>2</sup>

**C**ommunity supervision is the final and arguably the most important link in the offender reintegration process. On any given day, about 10,000 offenders are on some form of federal conditional release, be it temporary absence, program release, day parole, full parole or statutory release. The Correctional Service of Canada currently employs 900 parole staff in 67 parole offices across Canada: two thirds are directly responsible for parole supervision and one third are responsible for managerial and administrative tasks. Approximately 167 community-based residential facilities or halfway houses are owned and operated by either the Correctional Service of Canada or non-governmental agencies such as the Salvation Army, the John Howard Society or the Elizabeth Fry Society.<sup>3</sup>

Recent legislative changes proposing long-term community supervision for high-risk offenders,<sup>4</sup> along with external Service audit reports<sup>5</sup> and internal Service documents,<sup>6</sup> have increased the attention paid to community and alternative supervision strategies. This article has two purposes: first, to provide a brief overview of the Service's current community supervision practices and, second, to explore emerging trends in the adult and juvenile offender literature that may help the Service improve its community supervision practices

## Current Service supervision practices

**T**he objective of parole supervision is "to help offenders on conditional release become law-abiding citizens by providing them with assistance and service and by ensuring that proper control is maintained, to minimize the risk of their committing new offences."<sup>7</sup> The parole officer is responsible for providing "appropriate supervision based upon ongoing risk and needs assessment of the offender. The supervision may include counselling, verification of the offender's behaviour, confirmation of employment and referral to agencies and individuals as required."<sup>8</sup> In short, the parole officer is tasked with the dual responsibility of protecting society through control mechanisms, such as monitoring offender behaviour, and of facilitating the successful reintegration of offenders through rehabilitative efforts.

Parole officers use a variety of strategies and tools to help carry out their responsibilities. One such tool, the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (CRNMS), helps with the implementation, revision and monitoring of the risk/needs assessment and correctional plan initiated at the beginning of the offender's sentence. The CRNMS is a standardized risk/needs assessment tool that generates a low-risk or high-risk rating coupled with an overall needs rating of low, moderate or high. Although the risk rating is determined primarily from the Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) Scale and the National Parole Board's overall risk rating, the overall needs rating is derived from a compilation of 12 individual criminogenic need domains.<sup>9</sup> The CRNMS is responsible for focusing the nature of the supervision, as well as program and counselling requirements specified in the community treatment plan. The CRNMS results also dictate the frequency of supervision contacts between the parole officer and the offender.

Parole officers are also expected to maintain close ties with the police and the offender's family, friends and employer to verify the offender's employment or education and residence status through scheduled and unscheduled site visits, and to monitor the offender's compliance with special National Parole Board conditions. The final and most extreme strategy available to the parole officer is to issue a warrant to either temporarily or permanently suspend the offender's conditional release status.<sup>10</sup>

## The next generation of community corrections

Since 1992, the Correctional Service of Canada has examined compliance with conditional release supervision standards through national and regional audits. The overall results were positive, but the audits indicated a need for improved training. Deficiencies in

some correctional plans were found,<sup>11</sup> as well as confusion over the scoring and administration of the CRNMS. Unfortunately, these audits did not provide a detailed analysis of the quality or usefulness of supervision contacts, nor did they assess the amount of time dedicated to counselling or rehabilitative efforts versus surveillance or control-oriented strategies. Such analyses are important, given recent empirical evidence demonstrating the ineffectiveness of intensive supervision programs (ISPs).

ISPs are probation and parole supervision models characterized by control strategies such as intensive monitoring and surveillance rather than treatment-oriented programs. Although the evidence clearly demonstrates that these approaches do not decrease recidivism, ISPs with a strong rehabilitation component do seem to reduce recidivism. Further, it has been argued that intensive rehabilitation supervision strategies, delivered according to the principles of risk, need and responsivity, would provide a promising foundation for the next generation of community corrections.<sup>12</sup> However, the next generation of community corrections might also benefit from recent advancements delineated in the coping-relapse model of criminal offending as well as recent innovations in the treatment of chronic juvenile delinquency.

Perhaps the best example of an effective treatment approach is multisystemic therapy (MST), an innovative, community-based program targeting chronic juvenile offenders. MST is heavily rooted in Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological model of development.<sup>13</sup> Further, it was also derived from several multi-way, longitudinal, causal modelling studies of juvenile delinquency,<sup>14</sup> as well as studies demonstrating the inability of community-based interventions targeting only one or two components of a youth's ecology to reduce antisocial behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Collectively, these initiatives galvanized Dr. Scott Henggeler to develop, implement and evaluate MST.

Briefly, MST is a highly individualized, cognitive-behavioural, community-based treatment program. It treats problems specifically related to the youth's antisocial problems, and addresses the environmental systems known to foster juvenile delinquency, such as parental discipline and monitoring practices, family-affective relations, peer associations and scholastic performance. MST is a flexible treatment approach that adapts to the adolescent's strengths, weaknesses and ecology, and is typically

available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, depending on the nature and severity of the client's needs. Controlled evaluation studies and independent reviews have unanimously concluded that MST is one of the most promising treatment programs currently available for youths with serious problems.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, MST, like the Service's standard treatment programs, operates according to the risk, need and responsivity principles; however, unlike most Service programs, MST moves beyond the offender and into the offender's ecology.

Until recently, MST was exclusively American. In May 1997, under the leadership of Dr. Alan Leschied, the federal Department of Justice and the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services launched an ambitious research project entitled Clinical Trials of Multisystemic Therapy Targeting High-Risk Offenders. This four-year initiative targeting Phase I

young offenders at high risk of future criminal involvement is currently being piloted in four Ontario cities. Dr. Leschied and his colleagues are working closely with Henggeler's staff to ensure treatment integrity.<sup>17</sup> The results of this initiative are eagerly awaited.

Adapting a similar treatment strategy for certain groups of high-risk adult offenders being supervised in the community merits exploration, despite inherent obstacles. However, before attempting to develop an MST program for adult offenders, it would be prudent to identify a theoretical model of

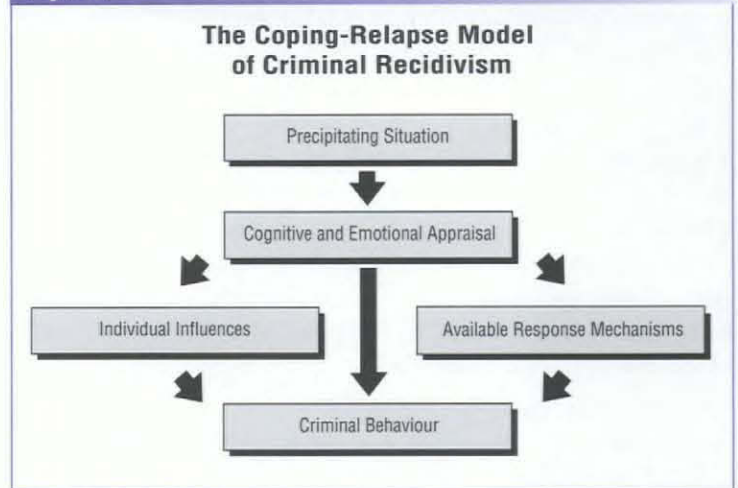
**It has been argued that intensive rehabilitation supervision strategies, delivered according to the principles of risk, need and responsivity, would provide a promising foundation for the next generation of community corrections.**

criminal relapse that not only describes nonspecific proximal antecedents to criminal recidivism, but also outlines unique offence precursors for different types of criminal offending.

The coping-relapse model of criminal recidivism recently proposed by Zamble and Quinsey<sup>18</sup> could provide the initial theoretical framework for this task. The coping-relapse model delineates an adult model of criminal reoffending in chronic offenders guided by the principles of developmental psychology,<sup>19</sup> coping theory<sup>20</sup> and, to some extent, the general relapse prevention literature.<sup>21</sup> The theory makes a firm distinction between the origins of criminal behaviour and the factors responsible for its continuation or resumption. The theory then argues that recidivism is the result of a breakdown process. The model starts with the occurrence of a precipitating environmental situation that is highly variable, ranging from chronic life stressors such as marital discord to relatively mundane daily hassles such as crowded public transportation. At this stage, the individual appraises the situation using cognitive or emotional criteria, or both, to determine whether the situation is personally threatening or challenging. Individual influences and response mechanisms govern whether the event is perceived as challenging. Individual influences are generally enduring static traits, such as temperament and emotional reactivity, while response mechanisms are generally dynamic traits such as coping ability, substance abuse, criminal cognitions, and criminal knowledge and experience.

If internal and external mediating factors cause an individual to perceive a situation as problematic, the person will likely respond maladaptively. Individuals who respond violently to perceived personal challenges, believe that the use of violence is justifiable, associate with others they know to be criminals, and happen to be under the influence of an intoxicant are likely to respond to everyday interpersonal stress with criminal assault. The theory proposes a continuous and interactive process in which each final response results in a new sequence of events

Figure 1



resulting in another precipitating situation, another appraisal and, eventually, another response (see Figure 1).

The coping-relapse model is well-supported by recent empirical work,<sup>22</sup> although it certainly requires further investigation. Contemporary treatment programs for sex offenders and, more recently, violent offenders, are based largely on the theoretical premise that dynamic antecedents play a significant role in the recidivism process. However, empirical support for this position is weak, based entirely on a scattering of retrospective studies.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the predictive validity of retrospectively rated antecedents in substance-abuse relapse has been questioned.<sup>24</sup> Despite the practical and organizational difficulties, the prospective and systematic assessment and reassessment of dynamic risk is paramount if we are to develop sound, empirically based treatment strategies.

### Are we ready for the next generation of community corrections?

Whether we are ready may be an irrelevant question, in light of growing prison populations and new legislation supporting the long-term community supervision of high-risk offenders. It is clear that recidivism is a complex process involving multi-problem offenders in multi-problem environments. Intervention strategies striving for long-term reductions in recidivism must do more than treat the offender's criminogenic needs in the confines of a clinical or parole-supervision



office. It must also address the criminogenic needs of the ecology that reinforces the offender's criminal behaviour, as well as the manner in which the offender and the environment interact.

Is the Correctional Service of Canada ready for such an approach? We believe the answer is yes. For almost a year, relapse prevention has been part of the standard curriculum for case management recruits.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, recent recommendations by parole officers concerning alternative supervision strategies are entirely compatible with the coping-relapse model and MST. Parole officers recognize the importance of understanding and analyzing offender crime cycles, using relapse-prevention techniques

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that involve the offender's family, addressing the family's need for access to services and intervention, using multidisciplinary supervision teams and, lastly, emphasizing home and community visits over office visits.<sup>26</sup>

Developing and testing a conceptual model for the next generation of community corrections will take time, effort and resources. However, collaborative research efforts involving Service field staff, managers and researchers, along with recognized academic experts, should prove most promising. ■

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<sup>3</sup> Correctional Service of Canada, "Introduction: Mandate and Mission," in the Service's Electronic Infonet: Infocenter: Strategic Documents: CSC Outlook 1996/97 to 98/99 [On-line] (Available <http://infonet/infonet/strategic/introduction.htm>, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> *Statutes of Canada*, An Act to amend the *Criminal Code* (high-risk offenders), the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, the *Criminal Records Act*, the *Prisons and Reformatories Act* and the *Department of the Solicitor General Act* (Chapter 17, 1997).

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