



# Research at a glance

## An Assessment of the Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP)

*Women Centered Training meets its objective of providing CSC staff with knowledge on the needs of women*

### Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Women Offender Sector (WOS) delivers the Women-Centred Training Orientation Program (WCTOP) to all Primary Workers/Older Sisters (CX-02 deployments, recruits, or promotions) and all Behavioural Counsellors who will be working in women offender institutions. This training provides staff members with information on the specific needs of women offenders. Since the effectiveness and perceived benefit of the training had yet to be evaluated, this study involved an assessment of the 10-day WCTOP.

### What we did

Participants included 101 staff members who participated in the 10-day training program and facilitators who administered a training session between October 2013 and March 2015. The assessment included participant and facilitator feedback on the training sessions, pre- and immediate post-training knowledge questionnaires, and an 8-month follow-up ( $n = 31$ ) knowledge retention and application survey. The following questions were examined:

- Does the WCTOP format facilitate staff learning and are session objectives being met? (i.e., *knowledge presentation*);
- Is WCTOP effective in improving staff baseline knowledge of the women-centred approach? (i.e., *knowledge acquisition*); and
- Is WCTOP effective in equipping staff with necessary information and preparing them for working with women offenders? (i.e., *knowledge retention & application*).

### What we found

**Knowledge Presentation:** Overall, facilitators and participants found the way the training was presented to be effective. Facilitators found the role-play exercises to be of particular value, while participants found effective communication, the women-centred approach, and Aboriginal cultural awareness to be of most value. Areas for possible improvement included organization of content and more pertinent/useful

materials. Participants considered the session on 'Aboriginal culture awareness' to be the most useful, while the session on 'Personal and team issues' the least useful.

**Knowledge Acquisition & Retention:** Participants' average scores on the knowledge assessment questionnaire increased from 62.7% to 78.6% pre- to post-training, and at 8-months post-training it remained at 78.5%.

**Knowledge Application:** Survey results from the 8-month follow-up revealed that the majority of staff participants found WCTOP to be at least "moderately helpful" in completing their job duties working with women offenders. The training sessions that applied most to staff were 'empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices as well as respect and dignity', 'health, self-injury, and suicide', 'conflict theory and communication skills', and 'supportive environment and shared responsibility'.

### What it means

As a whole, the 10-day WCTOP meets its objectives of increasing knowledge and awareness of the policies and procedures that govern women offenders. In addition, program participants demonstrated an understanding of women offender issues and the principles of *Creating Choices* and most staff indicated they apply the information in their work. Further amendments that would enhance the training would be continued updating of research and the provision of the most current information on women offenders.

### For more information

Nolan, A., Harris, A., & Derkzen, D. (2017). *An assessment of the Women-Centred Training Program* (Research Report R-385). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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