

The Correctional Research and Development Sector of the Correctional Service of Canada

The Correctional Research and Development Sector was formed in late 1994 as part of the reorganization of the Correctional Service of Canada's national headquarters. This "new" sector has incorporated the Service's former Research, Correctional Programs, and Staff Training and Development divisions into one group.

The unification is a significant step, as the three divisions should always be (and usually were) involved in the transformation of research findings into programming or staff-training efforts, or in the identification and development of new research initiatives. Their union should facilitate this cohesiveness, as well as hopefully sparking new creative energy, as some of the Service's most innovative people work more closely together.

Further, while restructuring, the Service has maintained its commitment to correctional research and program development. In an age of cutbacks, the funding committed to the Correctional Research and Development Sector remains equal to (if not slightly more than) the total funding previously given to its three core divisions prior to their unification. What is the sector's mandate? The Correctional Research and Development Sector, like all Correctional Service of Canada components, has a mandate to help achieve the Service's corporate objectives:

- to consistently manage offenders in accordance with their risk of violent reoffending and provide appropriate programming that contributes to the release of low-risk offenders when they become eligible;
- to provide a safe and healthy correctional environment for both staff and offenders;
- to ensure that Service staff follow policy, meet operational standards, use resources efficiently and effectively, and exercise professional judgment; and
- to help all staff make reasonable and informed decisions by providing timely, accurate, easily accessible and meaningful offender-related data.

The Correctional Research and Development Sector will contribute to the fulfillment of these objectives by helping the Service continually improve its understanding of the offender population, effective offender management, and trends in corrections, criminology and criminal justice.

The sector will also develop programs, approaches and tools related to all aspects of corrections (particularly risk reduction) and assist in their implementation, and will explain the Service's approach to its correctional mandate to staff and the public. Finally, the sector will use research and analysis to improve the Service's understanding of security-intelligence trends that may impact on current or future operations. The team approach The sector will use multidisciplinary teams in sector projects to ensure that the right expertise is focused on the right problem at the right time. This should improve the sector's ability to deliver knowledge and to arrive at more accurate estimates of the money and effort needed to translate this knowledge into practical results.

The sector is also experimenting with "team leader sessions" as an internal discussion and training forum.

Once the format of these sessions has been finalized, they will become the sector's primary vehicle for identifying and discussing internal strategic issues and decisions. Resource management The Correctional Research and Development Sector will generate more detailed estimates of the real cost of projects (such as by obtaining field-staff estimates) to help improve the planning and management of sector resources. The sector will also use a time allocation formula to more accurately measure the time staff have available for project work. Hopefully, these efforts will give the sector a realistic picture of what it can achieve - or of what it needs to achieve more. The Correctional Research and Development Committee The Correctional Research and Development Committee is a strategic think tank within which ideas, concerns and concepts can be discussed. The Commissioner of the Service will chair the committee and its members will include the Correctional Research and Development Sector's three senior managers, as well as representatives from the Canadian Centre for Management Development, the National Parole Board, Citizens' Advisory Committees and the Service's regions (among others).

However, the committee is not a decision making body. It is a sounding board for ideas and a mirror on the correctional environment that will, hopefully, allow the Service to both learn of new issues and receive expert advice on managing current ones. The Correctional Research and Development Resource Centre The Correctional Research and Development Resource Centre will bring together much of the information needed by sector staff in a single location. It will store research data, documents and reports, videotapes, and other materials, as well as acting as a distribution point for publications and equipment.

The centre will also provide links to electronically stored information in on-site data files, the Correctional Service of Canada network, the Solicitor General Ministry Secretariat library or the Internet. Printed documents may also eventually be scanned so they can be stored electronically. The goal is to reduce the staff time spent searching for information or recreating existing knowledge.

The centre will also coordinate the creation and distribution of information packages for staff, external partners (such as academics) and the public. One of the primary information products will be a series of packages tentatively titled *What Do We Know About...?*. Each package will summarize the Service's current knowledge on a particular topic (such as sex offenders). The centre will supplement these packages, where possible, with audiovisual material to simplify group presentations. Knowledge of action The first result of sector work will almost always be knowledge or tools. However, if we treat this knowledge as the end result, we will have failed to achieve our mandate. Simple knowledge, in and of itself, does not get us very far. It is only by transforming knowledge into practice that it gains real value. We must, therefore, embrace a "Knowledge to action" approach in delivering products.

At the most basic level, this means actively participating in mechanisms created to solicit the sector's input. The most appropriate individuals must take part in such intersector activities. These representatives must canvass other sector members for useful contributions to the discussions and must deliver any responses as soon as possible to maximize the response time and options available to the Service.

Further, all Correctional Research and Development projects will provide estimates of any organizational impact (including costs) likely to result from implementation of the project's results. This will include an action plan for ensuring that all appropriate sectors are aware of, and poised to respond to, the impacts.

The sector will also invite a couple of operational managers (such as wardens or district directors) to provide a quick, focused "reality check" of the sector's impact analysis by reviewing sector conclusions. These individuals will be asked to confirm or challenge our conclusions and to suggest any improvements in the proposed implementation process.

Finally, all sector projects will include an information package (that can be circulated by the resource centre) that explains the implementation impact of the project to regional and field management, staff and offenders.

This commitment to transforming knowledge into action perhaps best symbolizes the role of the Correctional Research and Development Sector and of its research magazine - *Forum on Corrections Research*.

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