

Millhaven's specialized sex offender intake assessment: A preliminary evaluation

The Millhaven Sex Offender Assessment Service was established in 1993 in direct response to recommendations made to the Correctional Service of Canada.⁽²⁾ Millhaven Institution is the Service's reception and assessment unit for most of Ontario's federally sentenced offenders and was, therefore, a logical location for a sex offender intake assessment service.

This article will evaluate the implementation of Millhaven's sex offender assessment services in two ways. First, it will describe the assessment service components that respond to the six main recommendations that prompted the system's creation. The article will then examine the preliminary impressions of the service held by various "stakeholder groups" in Ontario. Identifying sex offenders Procedures for identifying sex offenders were initiated with relative ease at Millhaven. There was some initial concern that the identification of sex offenders would lead to institutional violence, but this has not proven to be a problem. Offenders are categorized according to:

- their current term - currently serving a sentence for either a major or non-major admitting sex offence;
- a previous term - have a previous conviction for a major or non-major admitting sex offence; or
- a current sex-related offence - currently serving a sentence for an offence(s) that is sexual in nature but not labeled as such (for example, charges related to the sex offence may not have been laid because the sexual behaviour accompanied a more serious offence).

Current-term sex offenders are identified by a review of the *Criminal Code* convictions of all offenders entering Millhaven Institution. Any offender convicted of an offence with a sexual component is automatically referred for assessment.

Previous-term sex offenders and offenders with sex-related convictions are identified by case management and psychology personnel based on information obtained from sources such as the RCMP Finger Print Service, the Canadian Police Information Centre database, police reports and victim impact statements. Psychosocial history A narrative format is used to obtain information about offender psychosocial histories. These case histories are important to designing appropriate treatment, estimating risk, and developing individualized risk management and relapse prevention programs. More important, risk-prediction instruments must have access to complete offender histories. Sex offence descriptions Official documents are used to produce a detailed description of the offender's entire record of sex offences (and included in each psycho-social history). The documents are listed in the report for convenience and reference. At least one of the following reports is usually available:

- police report;
- Crown brief;
- victim impact statement;
- agreed statement of facts;
- sentencing reasons; and
- court transcript.

Official information is also used to determine the offender's typology. Most typologies are based on both offender and victim characteristics, such as number of victims, victim gender and victim age. Categorical scales are also used to rate degree of physical violence and sexual intrusion.

A comparable offender description of the offence immediately follows the official version. The offender's version, including denial or minimization, is written as the offender presents it - without interpretation. This information is vital in preparing scales such as the Denial and Minimization Checklist⁽³⁾ and for some aspects of the risk measures mentioned earlier. Risk evaluation Three well-known scales are used to evaluate each offender for risk of recidivism. For example, case managers routinely complete the General Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale.⁽⁴⁾ This scale score and its standardized interpretation are used for comparison purposes and as a predictor of general recidivism.

The Level of Service Inventory (Revised)⁽⁵⁾ is also used. Offender total scores and the likelihood of recidivism according to that score are used to measure the risk of general recidivism. This inventory has been shown to have dynamic predictive validity.

The Psychopathy Checklist (Revised) is, perhaps, the foremost predictor of violent recidivism, and its use is also well established with sex offender populations.⁽⁶⁾ Psychopathy Checklist scores are presented according to cutoffs.⁽⁷⁾ Treatment program triage The Service's Ontario Region provides treatment for minimum-, medium- and maximum-security sex offenders. The Regional Treatment Centre (Ontario) deals with offenders of all security levels and offers two sex offender treatment programs - a group program designed for relatively high-functioning offenders, and an individualized program designed for lower-functioning or psychiatrically disturbed offenders.

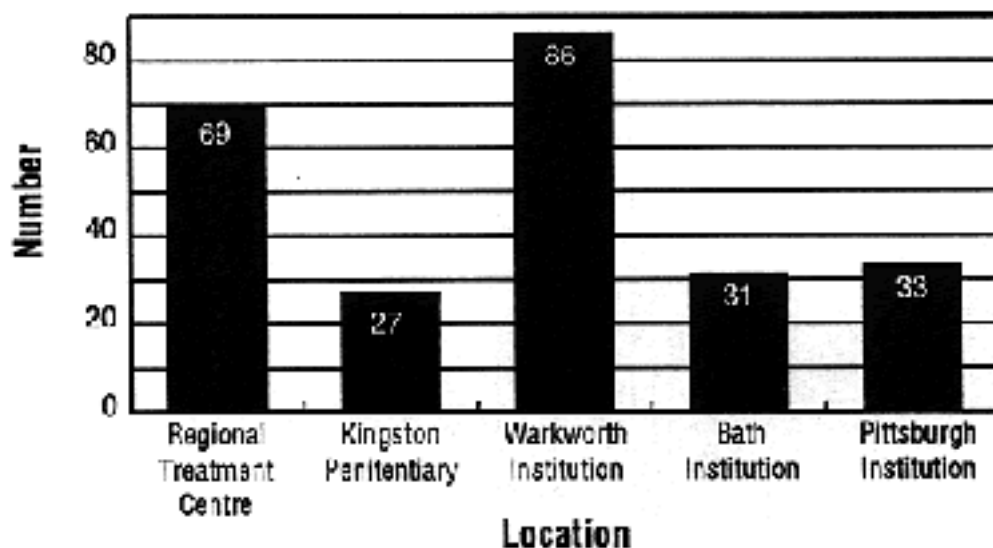
The Kingston Penitentiary Satellite Sex Offender Program treats maximum- security offenders, while the Warkworth Sexual Behaviour Clinic works with medium-security offenders. The Bath Sex Offender program deals with offenders who have moved down from higher security levels, many of whom have received treatment in other programs. The Bath program also works with low- to moderate-risk sex offenders.

Finally, the Pittsburgh Sex Offender Program works with low-risk sex offenders placed directly into minimum security after assessment at Millhaven. Each minimum-security institution also operates a relapse prevention program.

Part of the Millhaven assessment report is a recommendation as to the offender's need for sex offender programming and the most suitable program for his risk/need profile. The offender is then placed on the waiting list for that program (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Institutional Breakdown of Program Recommendations



Computerized information system A comprehensive information database was developed for use with Ontario Region sex offenders. The information included in the database responds to the needs of administrators, clinicians and researchers. Program evaluation Millhaven's Sex Offender Assessment Service can be said to affect five stakeholder groups:

- institutional administrators;
- Millhaven case management officers;
- case management officers in other institutions;
- psychologists in other institutions; and
- sex offender treatment staff.

Institutional administrators are stakeholders because they are responsible for the day-to-day management of sex offenders. Millhaven case management officers are stakeholders because they decide where each offender will begin serving his sentence. Case management officers in other institutions are stakeholders because they are responsible for offender involvement in institutional programs. Institutional psychologists are stakeholders because they often deal with offender crisis management and programming. Finally, program staff are stakeholders because they ultimately treat offenders.

A total of 45 anonymous questionnaires were mailed to these stakeholders along with an addressed reply envelope - 32 were returned (see Table 1).

Table 1

A breakdown of the Responses to the Evaluation Questionnaires		
Position	Number surveyed	Responses
Administrators	4	25%

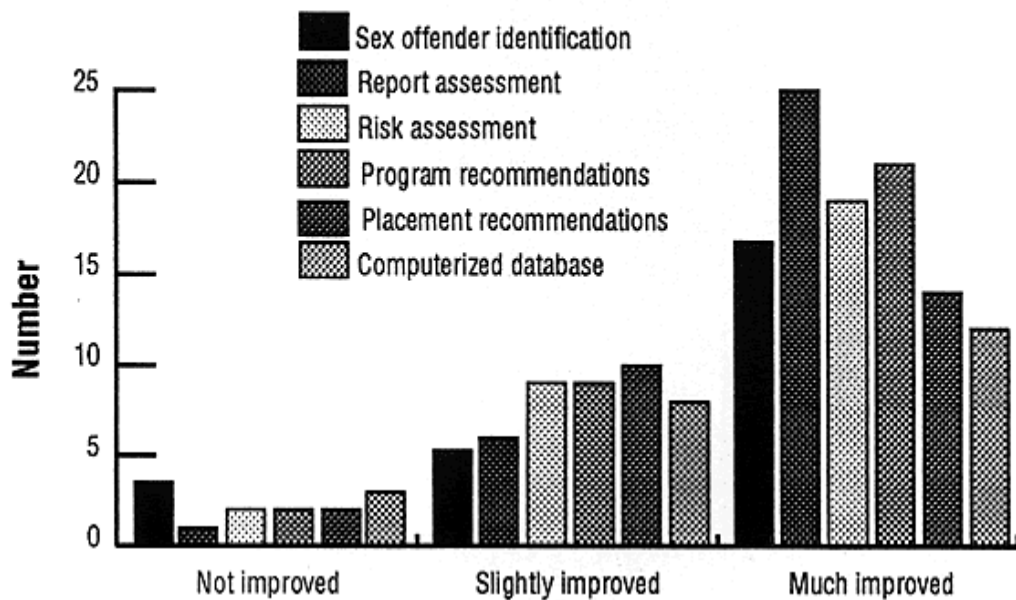
Millhaven case management officers	7	57%
Other institution case management officers	13	92%
Psychologists	10	90%
Treatment staff	11	36%
Total	45	67%

The stakeholders were asked to evaluate the six mentioned services provided by Millhaven's Sex Offender Assessment Service by indicating the degree of improvement over previous procedures, using ratings ranging from worse to much improved. Respondents were also asked to propose improvements. If they were unfamiliar with one of the functions, respondents were to leave that area blank. Few respondents left areas blank and none rated the services as worse.

More than 65% of the respondents rated Millhaven's sex offender identification process as much improved over previous procedures (see Figure 2). Only a few added comments on this topic, with most supporting the rating or praising Millhaven's capacity to identify sex-related offences.

Figure 2

Evaluation of the Millhaven Sex Offender Assessment Service, by Service



Millhaven's assessment reports were viewed as much improved by 78% of respondents. All respondents rated this item, presumably because they had all used the reports. Only one respondent rated the reports as not improved. Most comments on this topic were positive, but there were a few constructive criticisms. For example, three Millhaven case management officers pointed out that the criminal profile reports contain largely the same information as the criminal history section.

Millhaven's risk evaluations were viewed as much improved by 63% of respondents. However, the comments on this item were far more critical - although still constructive. A couple of psychologists

suggested that raw scores be presented, especially for the Psychology Checklist, so that they could apply their own cutoffs. Several case managers also questioned the use of phallometric measures.

Millhaven's treatment recommendations for offenders were viewed as much improved by 66% of respondents. The critical comments came exclusively from case management staff. Virtually all of these comments advocated explaining why a particular program was recommended for a specific offender.

Millhaven's recommendations of particular institutions for offenders were also viewed as much improved by 66% of respondents.

However, Millhaven case managers pointed to instances of duplication, and case managers from other institutions questioned the degree of consultation between the assessment service and Millhaven's case management officers.

The number of blank areas in the computerized information system section indicates that several respondents were either unaware of, or had not come into contact with, this system.

However, the stakeholders who had come into contact with the system tended to rate it as improved. Respondents with computer network access made the most positive comments, but did cite system slowdowns as problematic. Recommendations The results of this preliminary evaluation of Millhaven's Sex Offender Assessment Service are clearly quite positive. The five stakeholder groups rated all of its services as much improved over the sex offender assessment services previously offered.

However, there is always room for improvement, so several changes have been made or recommended.

The duplication of effort in the criminal profile reports (compiled by case management staff) and the criminal histories (compiled by behaviour analysts) is being addressed through a project to combine these two areas of responsibility. Offender intake assessments and specialized sex offender assessments will become the responsibility of Sex Offender Assessment Services.

The computerized tracking and information system has also now been expanded to all institutions and two district offices in Ontario Region. As more people learn to use it, the system will probably further expand.

This preliminary evaluation indicates that the Millhaven Sex Offender Assessment Service could be categorized as a success. With relatively minor changes, it could serve as a model that other Service regions may wish to follow.

(1)Highway 33, P.O. Box 22, Kingston, Ontario K7L 4V7.

(2)V. L. Quinsey, *Strategies for the Assessment, Treatment and Management of Sex Offenders*, Submitted to the Correctional Service of Canada, 1990.

(3)H. E. Barbaree, "Denial and Minimization Among Sex Offenders: Assessment and Treatment Outcome," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 3, 4 (1991): 30-33.

(4)J. Nuffield, "The SIR Scale: Some reflections on its applications," *Forum on Corrections Research*, 1,

1 (1989):19-22.

⁽⁵⁾D. A. Andrews and J. L. Bonta, *Manual for the Level of Service Inventory (Revised)* (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems Inc., 1995).

⁽⁶⁾R. D. Hare, *Manual for the Revised Psychopathy Checklist* (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems Inc., 1991).

⁽⁷⁾R. Serin et al., "Psychopathy and deviant sexual arousal," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (1994).