

Staff commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada (R-21, 1992)

This research report presents a major national research undertaking conducted in 1991. The project was designed to provide a better understanding of the factors which affect staff commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada. It was intended that the knowledge gained from the study would contribute to the Service's ability to enhance the commitment and motivation of staff to pursue the challenging objectives of the Correctional Service of Canada.

This national study follows an earlier pilot project used to test the research measuring instruments and to gauge the receptivity of staff to this type of research. (See "Background to the Staff Commitment Research Project," Research Branch, CSC-1992, No. R-20.)

The random sampling method, use of group-administered rather than mailed questionnaires, the conduct of personal interviews with staff participants and the high rate of consent to participate are the major strengths of this study. Of the total sample selected, over 90% took part.

In past research it has been found that highly committed staff members possess a variety of desirable characteristics -- characteristics which serve to enhance the organization's ability to achieve its goals. For example, highly committed staff members were high performers, were more involved in their jobs, were less likely to want to leave their work organizations for new jobs, exhibited less absenteeism, possessed high motivation to perform at their work and expressed high job satisfaction.

An important finding of this study was that staff members who displayed strong commitment to the Correctional Service of Canada were different from those who expressed less commitment on a number of these characteristics. This was significant in such areas as job seeking, desire to leave the organization, job satisfaction, job involvement and job performance.

The results of the study also provided a measure of levels of commitment within the Service and demonstrated that commitment is a desirable characteristic to encourage in staff. The report also notes the importance of exploring the reasons for varying levels of commitment among staff and identifies the following factors that were significantly related to commitment: type of job, work site, region, length of service, gender, attitudes toward corrections and rehabilitation, human service orientation, openness to change, openness of the organization, career development orientation and job stress. Two demographic factors, age and education, were found to be unrelated to levels of commitment.

The report states that "attitudes towards corrections" was the factor most strongly related to staff commitment. Holding positive views about the field of corrections appeared to be fundamental to being committed to the Correctional Service of Canada.

In brief, the report suggests there are a number of strategies available for enhancing the commitment levels of staff. The results of this study provide a sound knowledge base for selecting the most appropriate commitment enhancement strategies, and suggest that further planning and discussion among

various groups of Service staff will be helpful in generating additional strategies.