

Case needs review: Substance abuse domain (R-75, 1998)

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This report highlights key findings from an extensive review that examined the prevalence of substance abuse among offender populations as well as the various measures that have evolved for substance abuse assessment in offender and non-offender populations. The research indicates that about two thirds of offenders experience substance abuse problems to some degree. This high prevalence, along with data from large surveys and police reports indicates a strong association between substance abuse and crime. Accurate assessment that leads to appropriate treatment is therefore paramount if offenders are to be safely reintegrated into the community.

The authors identify several measures for assessing the severity of substance abuse problems that show strong reliability and validity. Their review showed that the reliability, validity and other qualities of the Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS) and the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST), currently used by the Correctional Service of Canada as part of the Computerized Lifestyle Assessment Instrument (CLAI) are as good as or better than any comparable instrument available.

The authors also present an overview of the many assessment measures currently being used in the corrections environment, as well as recommendations for enhancing the substance abuse domain of the Case Needs Identification Analysis (CNIA) instrument used by the Service as one of the main components of the Offender Intake Assessment (OAI) process. ■