



Mental Health Strategy

QUICK FACTS

Improving the capacity to address the mental health needs of offenders is a corporate priority for the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), as we continue to enhance our contributions to public safety.

The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)* requires CSC to provide essential health care, including mental health care, and reasonable access to non-essential mental health care services to incarcerated federal offenders.

HIGH PREVALENCE

There has been a considerable increase in the number of offenders experiencing mental health problems upon admission to CSC facilities.

- More than one out of ten (13%) male offenders in federal custody have been identified at admission as presenting mental health problems and this proportion has almost doubled since 1996/97 (7% to 13%).
- Twenty-nine percent of women offenders in federal custody were identified at admission as presenting mental health problems and this proportion has also risen more than two fold since 1996/97 (13% to 29%). (Source: CSC Research Branch (2009). *The Changing Federal Offender Population Highlights 2009*. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.)
- The proportion of Aboriginal offenders presenting mental health problems at admission has increased from 5% in 1996/97 to 14% in 2006/07, but has settled at 9% in the 2008/09 fiscal year. (Source: CSC. Research Branch (2009). *The Changing Federal Offender Population Aboriginal Offender Highlights 2009*. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.)

Research has shown that offenders with a mental disorder often may have more than one mental health problem and have concurrent substance abuse issues as well. (Source: Brink, J.H., Doherty, D., & Boer, A. (2001). Mental disorder in federal offenders: A Canadian prevalence study. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 2, 330-356.)

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

CSC has developed a comprehensive strategy to enhance the capacity to address and respond to the mental health needs of offenders in institutions and in the community.

This Mental Health Strategy includes the following components:

- Intake mental health screening and assessment for offenders entering the federal correctional system;
- Implementation of primary mental health care in institutions, including mental health counselling, support, treatment and maintenance;
- Development of intermediate care units for male offenders with mental health issues in institutions (currently unfunded);
- Consistency in standards at CSC's Regional Treatment Centres; and
- Improved community partnerships with other correctional and mental health jurisdictions (transitional care).

CSC's Mental Health Strategy is also supported by various management practices such as training and professional development, research and performance measurement, and tools to support front-line staff.

In 2005, CSC received funding to enhance community mental health services over a five-year period. These funds are being directed towards strengthening the continuum and continuity of specialized mental health support in the community. CSC is currently funding this initiative for fiscal year 2010-11 as it awaits a decision regarding funding. This is called the [Community Mental Health Initiative](#).



In 2007, CSC received interim funding to initiate key components of the [*Institutional Mental Health Initiative*](#). In 2008, CSC received ongoing funding to enhance institutional mental health services. These funds are primarily being directed towards mental health screening at intake and primary mental health care for offenders, forming part of the Institutional Mental Health Initiative.

THE WAY FORWARD

CSC is examining ways to ensure that high-quality mental health services for offenders are sustainable over the long-term. A focus on funding issues, greater recruitment and retention of health professionals, and improved co-ordination with community partners will all help address the future mental health needs of offenders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on CSC's Mental Health Strategy, please visit our Web site at www.csc-scc.gc.ca.