



Research at a glance

Effectiveness of the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program

KEY WORDS: *Aboriginal, substance abuse treatment, offender programs, correctional programs, evidence-based*

Why we did this study

Safe reintegration of Aboriginal offenders to the community through the delivery of effective interventions is one of five CSC priorities. Over 90% of the Aboriginal men in federal custody require substance abuse intervention. In response to this need, CSC introduced the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP), a high intensity program, in 2004. To date, approximately 500 Aboriginal offenders have completed the high intensity program.

What we did

The Addictions Research Centre studied a cohort of 2,685 Aboriginal offenders, who were released to the community on day parole, full parole, or statutory release to evaluate the effects of AOSAP participation on post-release outcomes.

What we found

Of the group of Aboriginal offenders who completed AOSAP¹, 78% remained in the community on release whereas only 46% of Aboriginal offenders who did not participate in a substance abuse program while incarcerated remained in the community (see Figure 1).

During the demonstration phase, AOSAP was not available to all Aboriginal men. As a result, some Aboriginal men completed either the National Substance Abuse Program – High Intensity (NSAP-H) or the NSAP – Moderate Intensity (NSAP-M). When compared to the participants who successfully completed AOSAP, the group of Aboriginal offenders who successfully completed NSAP-H and NSAP-M were revoked at a rate that was 1.6 and 1.7 times higher, respectively.

Offenders who were enrolled, but failed to complete a substance abuse program had over two times the rate of revocation than the group of offenders who successfully completed AOSAP.

Of those Aboriginal offenders who completed AOSAP only 5% were returned to custody because of a new offence or charge.

What it means

The results of this research clearly indicate that delivering substance abuse treatment programs to Aboriginal offenders reduces the likelihood of a return to custody. Moreover, there is strong evidence supporting the delivery of culturally-appropriate interventions like AOSAP to Aboriginal offenders. Stronger treatment effects can be expected through interventions that blend traditional Aboriginal healing with contemporary best-practices. Indeed, the results confirmed that Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be successful on release when they participated in culture-specific programs.

For more information

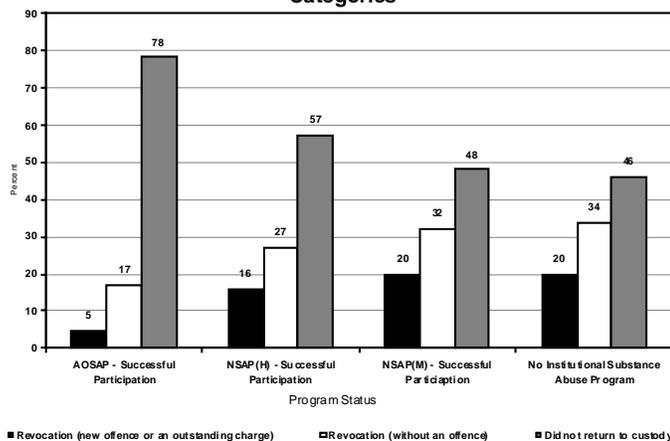
Kunic, D. & Varis, D.D. (2009). *The Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP): Examining the effects of successful completion on post-release outcomes.* Research Report R-217. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, contact the following address: research@csc-scc.gc.ca

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Figure 1. Distribution of Revocations Across Program Status Categories



¹ Combined results from versions 2 & 3 of program, of which the latter is the version that was implemented nationally in 2007.