



Research at a glance

Effective Correctional Programs for Women Offenders

KEY WORDS: *Women offenders, Gender-responsive programming*

What it means

Although the current research is preliminary in nature and needs to be interpreted with caution given small sample sizes, results support Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) ability to target established elements of correctional programming while implementing a gender-responsive approach. Results also suggest that a continued focus on the provision of culturally sensitive programming within a gender-responsive framework is needed. Additionally, in order to facilitate successful program implementation, operational and implementation issues related to staffing and ongoing supervision are other areas that warrant additional attention.

Why we did this study

The provision of effective correctional programming is central to the CSC in achieving its goal of successful offender rehabilitation. Accordingly, the current Program Strategy for Women Offenders holds that the goals of successful rehabilitation for women offenders are best achieved by providing programming that follows empirically supported elements of the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) programming model within a gender-responsive framework. Programs should be women-centered, holistic, and acknowledge the diversity of women offenders within a supportive environment. The purpose of the current study was to assess the extent to which current correctional programming for women offenders successfully integrates the traditional programming aspects of the RNR model and the principles of gender-responsive programming.

What we did

The Women's Violence Prevention Program (WVPP) and the Women Offender Substance Abuse Program (WOSAP) were used in the current analysis as examples of programs developed by CSC following a gender-responsive structure. Data were collected regarding these programs via a series of assessments and reviews with three different groups

of participants. Key informants involved in program development and facilitation participated in the completion of program assessment inventories while 15 staff facilitators completed self-report measures regarding their perceptions of the programs and the importance of traditional and gender-responsive elements. Finally, 15 women offenders who completed WVPP or any phase of WOSAP from two federal institutions, (Grand Valley Institution for Women and Nova Institution for Women), participated in an interview-based questionnaire.

What we found

Overall, participants provided positive feedback regarding the integration of RNR principles within a gender-responsive framework. One area of concern highlighted by both staff and women was limitations in the provision of culturally sensitive programming. Responses also highlighted certain perceived gaps in the provision of ongoing support and booster sessions. Finally, staff pointed out operational issues impacting the provision of programs such as high staff turnover and limited funding.

For more information

Booth, L. (2012). *Effective Correctional Programs for Women Offenders*. Research Report R-279. Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service Canada.

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

Prepared by: Aileen Harris

Contact

Research Branch
(613) 995-3975
research@csc-scc.gc.ca

