

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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The Impact of Post-Program Change in Criminogenic Need on Returns to Federal Custody Among Federally Sentenced Women

Post-program reduction in need level on the DFIA-R is associated with fewer returns to federal custody for women.**Why we did this study**

In 2010, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) began implementation of holistic, gender- and culture-informed models of correctional programming for women offenders. Recent research has provided preliminary evidence linking program participation to improved post-treatment outcomes (Derkzen et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2015), reductions in level of criminogenic need (Wardrop & Pardoel, 2018), and, among Indigenous women, reduced recidivism rates (Derkzen et al., 2017). The current study aimed to build on previous results by examining the association between changes in specific criminogenic need domain ratings post-program and returns to custody.

What we did

Women included in this study were admitted to federal custody for a new warrant of committal between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2018 and had completed at least one correctional program during this period. The final sample included 3,715 program completions, representing a total of 2,030 women offenders (32.6% Indigenous). Level of criminogenic need was assessed within 90 days pre- and post-program using the Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis – Revised (DFIA-R) parole officer ratings.¹ Post-program ratings were coded as either a ‘Positive Outcome’ (reduction in need or maintaining asset to community adjustment/no need for improvement/low need for improvement) or ‘Negative Outcome’ (maintained higher need or increased in need) for the overall and domain ratings.² Rates of returns to federal custody for any reason were calculated while controlling for time at risk. We were unable to examine change on the Generic Program Performance Measure (GPPM) linked to community outcomes as too few women who showed improvement on the GPPM post-program returned to custody.

What we found

Women with reductions in criminogenic need post-program had significantly lower rates of return to custody relative to those who did not improve or remained at moderate or high need. Women with a negative outcome for the DFIA-R overall ratings were almost twice as likely to return to custody (21.9%; [95%CI 18.5 - 25.8]*) relative to those who had positive outcomes (12.4%; 95%CI [8.8 – 17.0]*). As shown in Table 1, lower need and decrease in need on most DFIA-R domains were associated with significantly lower return rates. However, the Personal/Emotional and the Attitudes domains only trended towards statistical significance. Women who maintained a lower need or decreased need level on the Substance Abuse domain saw the greatest reduction in returns to custody, returning at a rate 2.3 times lower than women whose need level was not reduced. Of note, women who maintained a higher need level or increased their need level in the Community Functioning domain had the highest rates of returns to federal custody. When disaggregated by Indigenous ancestry only change on Community Functioning was related to outcome for Indigenous women.

Table 1. Rate of returns to custody by DFIA-R domain

DFIA-R Domain	Outcome	n	Rate of Return to Custody [95% CI]
Associates	Positive	400	14.2 [11.3 – 17.5]
	Negative	329	26.3 [21.3 – 31.9]
Attitudes	Positive	523	16.8 [14.0 – 20.0]
	Negative	205	25.3 [19.2 – 32.7]
Community Functioning	Positive	532	15.3 [12.7 – 18.3]
	Negative	196	31.4 [24.3 – 40.0]
Marital/Family	Positive	402	13.6 [10.7 – 16.9]
	Negative	327	26.6 [21.8 – 32.2]
Personal/Emotional	Positive	334	16.9 [13.4 – 21.0]
	Negative	395	20.7 [16.9 – 25.0]
Substance Abuse	Positive	402	12.4 [9.7 – 15.5]
	Negative	327	29.0 [23.9 – 35.0]

*Note. Rates adjusted for time at risk should not be interpreted as absolute percentages. 95%CI = 95% confidence interval

What it means

Overall, results demonstrated that: 1) The DFIA-R can detect meaningful change post program participation and 2) reduction in need or maintenance of low need is significantly related to lower rates of return to custody. The relationship of change in criminogenic need and returns to federal custody did not reach a level of statistical significance on the Personal/Emotional and Attitudes domains, areas that may require more intensive intervention to produce meaningful gains. The higher rate of returns for women who had higher need levels or increased need level on the Community Functioning domain highlights the importance of reintegration efforts being focused on such issues as identifying stable accommodation and sources of financial stability.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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- Needs on the Employment and Education domain are addressed through specific interventions and not in core correctional programs. Therefore, this domain was not included in these analyses.
- For information on how DFIA-R ratings are determined and how reassessment is conducted see Research Reports R-395, R-422, or CD 705-6.

