



# Research Snippet

## Preliminary Analysis of the Impact of the Restorative Opportunities (RO) Program in CSC

**KEY WORDS:** *correctional initiatives effectiveness, restorative justice outcomes, restorative opportunities, victim-offender mediation*

### What it means

A preliminary examination of the impact of the Restorative Opportunities (RO) program involving victim-offender mediation (VOM) within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) indicates that the program shows some promise in reducing recidivism on release for participating offenders. A longer follow-up period would be required to allow for stronger conclusions.

### What we found

Although the rates of reoffending are too low to detect a reliable difference, the trend suggests that after one year of release, offenders involved in face to face victim-offender mediation had fewer returns to custody with an offence than a matched comparison group, despite having lower Reintegration Potential and lower Motivation ratings.

Table 1: *Offenders' First Return to Custody with an Offence*

	Restorative Justice % (n) <sup>1</sup>	Comparison % (n)
Return within 3 months (n= 97)	0.0 (0)	2.1 (2)
Return within 6 months (n=92)	2.2 (2)	4.4 (4)
Return within 1 year (n=76)	2.6 (2)	9.2 (7)

<sup>1</sup>Note: N = number of offenders who, along with their matched comparison, had a potential follow-up time of at least 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year (respectively). Potential follow-up time is the number of days between release and the earliest date of warrant expiry date, date of death or deportation or the end of study date.

### Impetus

CSC began providing VOM services in 1992 in the Pacific region on a limited basis. In 2004, VOM was provided nationally, and was officially recognized as the RO program in 2006. Evidence-based correctional practice requires initiatives within CSC to demonstrate their impact on reductions in offender

recidivism and their contribution to public safety goals. The RO program has been in place nationally for eight years allowing for an initial analysis of its impact on recidivism for participating offenders.

### What we did

Offenders who had participated in victim-offender mediation through the restorative opportunities initiative were matched on key variables with a group of offenders serving a sentence during the same time period who did not participate in any RO program. Only those offenders released from the target term of incarceration were selected for the analysis. We confirmed that the two groups were equivalent on age, sentence length, gender and current offence categories.

Forty-five percent of offenders in both groups were serving a sentence for homicide and about 30% of both groups had a sexual offence as their major index offence. Both groups had equal ratings on overall risk and need (64% RO and 64% comparison group rated moderate or high risk; 69% and 71% respectively rated moderate or high need). However, the RO group had significantly lower ratings on Reintegration Potential (RP), a rating which assesses offenders' potential to reintegrate safely into the community on release, and on Motivation level. Offenders with lower RP and Motivation ratings generally do more poorly on release than those with higher ratings. Results were compared at 3, 6 and 12 months for initial rates of return to custody with an offence.

### For more information

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