This report examines the assessment/treatment processes used for developing programs for violent and high risk offenders and suggests that current methods and practices of assessment/treatment are not adequate in meeting the needs of persistently violent offenders.

The author suggests that advances in the assessment of violent and high risk offenders have yet to have a significant impact on intervention strategies. In addition, despite increased concern regarding violent criminals, the published literature on their treatment is very meagre. Recent studies which show some improved methodology support the finding that offenders who participate in cognitively based treatment programs with skills practice components show post-treatment gains. However, these gains have yet to be demonstrated to affect recidivism rates significantly. Further, the literature is hindered by the lack of a cohesive theoretical model, problems in defining violent offenders and overreliance on self-report indices of treatment gain. Current programs appear sufficiently contemporary to meet the needs of many violent offenders, although improved methodology and empirical validation are required. These existing programs, however, fail to address, specifically, the needs of persistently violent offenders.

The author suggests that progress in the areas of treatment of sexual offenders and substance abuse has direct application to the treatment of violent offenders. The literature illustrates the importance of matching offenders to the appropriate level of intervention and providing a continuum of intervention from intake to community follow-up and supervision. Additionally, research on persistently aggressive individuals indicates that their cognitive style or aggressive beliefs are important antecedents to violent behaviour and a critical treatment target. Innovation in strategies for the assessment of such deficits and offenders' response to intervention appear to be important in the development of a treatment program for persistently violent offenders. The next requirement is to develop such a program, keeping in mind these conclusions.