The Offender Substance Abuse Prerelease program: Analysis of intermediate and postrelease outcomes
(R-40, 1995)

This study was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the Offender Substance Abuse Prerelease (OSAP) program in improving offenders' postrelease success and in changing their problematic substance abuse behaviour. The study examines both intermediate and postrelease outcomes for 317 offenders who completed the program between January 1990 and August 1992. The analysis focused on four areas:

- the severity of program participants' substance abuse problems;
- pre- to post-program changes on a battery of assessment measures;
- post-program/postrelease outcomes for offenders who completed the program; and
- the relationship between outcome and severity of substance abuse problems, criminal risk and need levels, type of release, offence type, pre- to post-program performance and postrelease substance use for offenders admitted back into the criminal justice system.

Almost 70% of all federal offenders present had substance abuse problems of sufficient severity to warrant formal treatment intervention. An examination of the distribution of substance abuse problems revealed that close to 30% of offenders have low severity problems, approximately 17% intermediate severity problems, 13% have substantial problems and 10% experience severe substance abuse problems.

The severity of offenders' alcohol and drug problems was assessed before the program began using three screening instruments originally developed and standardized on non-offender clinical and non-clinical populations (Alcohol Dependence Scale, Michigan Alcohol Screening Test, Drug Abuse Screening Test).

The findings of this study support OSAP as an effective intervention for developing skills and cognitive abilities that are of critical importance in assisting offenders. From the perspective of the researchers, the most important finding in the study was that OSAP program performance was predictive of offenders' re-admission.