Persistently violent (non-sexual) offenders: A program proposal (R-42, 1995)

This proposal outlines relevant treatment targets and presents a research framework to evaluate a program for persistently violent (non-sexual) offenders. The proposed program is compatible with existing Correctional Service of Canada programs, but more intensive than most. It reflects an alternate conceptual framework which has been employed in other settings and has a rigorous assessment component. The proposal recommends providing intervention over a three-year period at multiple sites, with a matched treatment control (anger management) and untreated groups to permit the evaluation of program effectiveness on institutional violence and postrelease recidivism.

The program incorporates novel and multiple measures of interpersonal style (personality), impulsivity and aggressive beliefs. Responsivity or treatability factors relate to an offender's ability and motivation to respond to both the program content and intervention model. These factors are included in the assessment protocol to investigate which factors may potentially influence an offender's response to treatment, an increasingly important consideration for all programs. The results of these investigations will therefore be applicable to a range of offender programming, including anger control, the treatment of sexual offenders and core programming. Comparisons of types of violent offenders and treatment outcomes will be considered.

This intensive intervention is intended to be more than an educational exercise. It is expected that offenders must demonstrate both skill acquisition and application for successful participation in the proposed program. Targets reflected in the treatment components include aggressive beliefs, anger and arousal, and cognitive distortions regarding violence, impulsivity and self-regulation. Violent offenders are a diverse group whose needs in these areas will vary.

The specific research questions and methodology, a preliminary assessment battery, overview of treatment components and consultation process are described in the proposal.