



# Research at a glance

## Promising Intervention Approaches for Offenders with Cognitive Deficits Related to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Other Neuropsychological Disorders

**KEY WORDS:** *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, offenders with neurological disorders, cognitive deficits, correctional intervention*

### What it means

Offenders with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and other neurological disorders have complex, lifelong disorders that require adapted correctional practices and continued services from multiple providers. Although there is a scarcity of literature on evidence-based practices with this group, this review has identified best practice guidelines.

### What we found

The evidence-base on what works for offenders with FASD and other neurological disorders is very sparse. There is, however, a growing consensus on promising practices that assist offenders with special needs in key aspects of their functioning. Many of these practices are currently in place within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC).

Based on the literature review, recommendations for institutional correctional practices include:

- initial screening for cognitive deficits;
- enhanced assessment for those identified with deficits, including an examination of functional deficits and a comprehensive assessment of criminogenic needs;
- participation in adapted institutional programs (e.g., small groups; teaching only one or two concepts per session; repetition of material; coaching to demonstrate the application of the concepts).
- staff training on strategies for working effectively with this subgroup of offenders;
- provision of continuity of care through detailed pre-release planning; and,
- case management provisions that broker and coordinate services while incarcerated.

Based on the literature review, recommendations for community correctional practices include:

- provision of supportive housing;
- participation in comprehensive programs that include enhanced supportive case management

- and mentoring services;
- access to meaningful and supported employment services; and,
- consolidation of family and/or community support.

### Why we did this study

FASD encompasses a range of conditions caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol which can result in neurophysiological changes to an individual's brain structure and function. Offenders with FASD and other neurological disorders may have difficulty adjusting to the correctional environment and benefiting from conventional programs because of deficits in executive functioning, memory, attention, and adaptive behavior. The purpose of the present study was to provide a comprehensive summary of the existing literature relevant to promising practices for adult offenders with these disorders.

### What we did

A thorough search and review of academic literature, government publications, and websites was conducted.

### For more information

Forrester, P., Nolan, A., Stewart, L., Mullins, P & MacPherson, P. H. (2015). *Promising Intervention Approaches for Offenders with Cognitive Deficits Related to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Other Neuropsychological Disorders* (Research Report R-340). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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