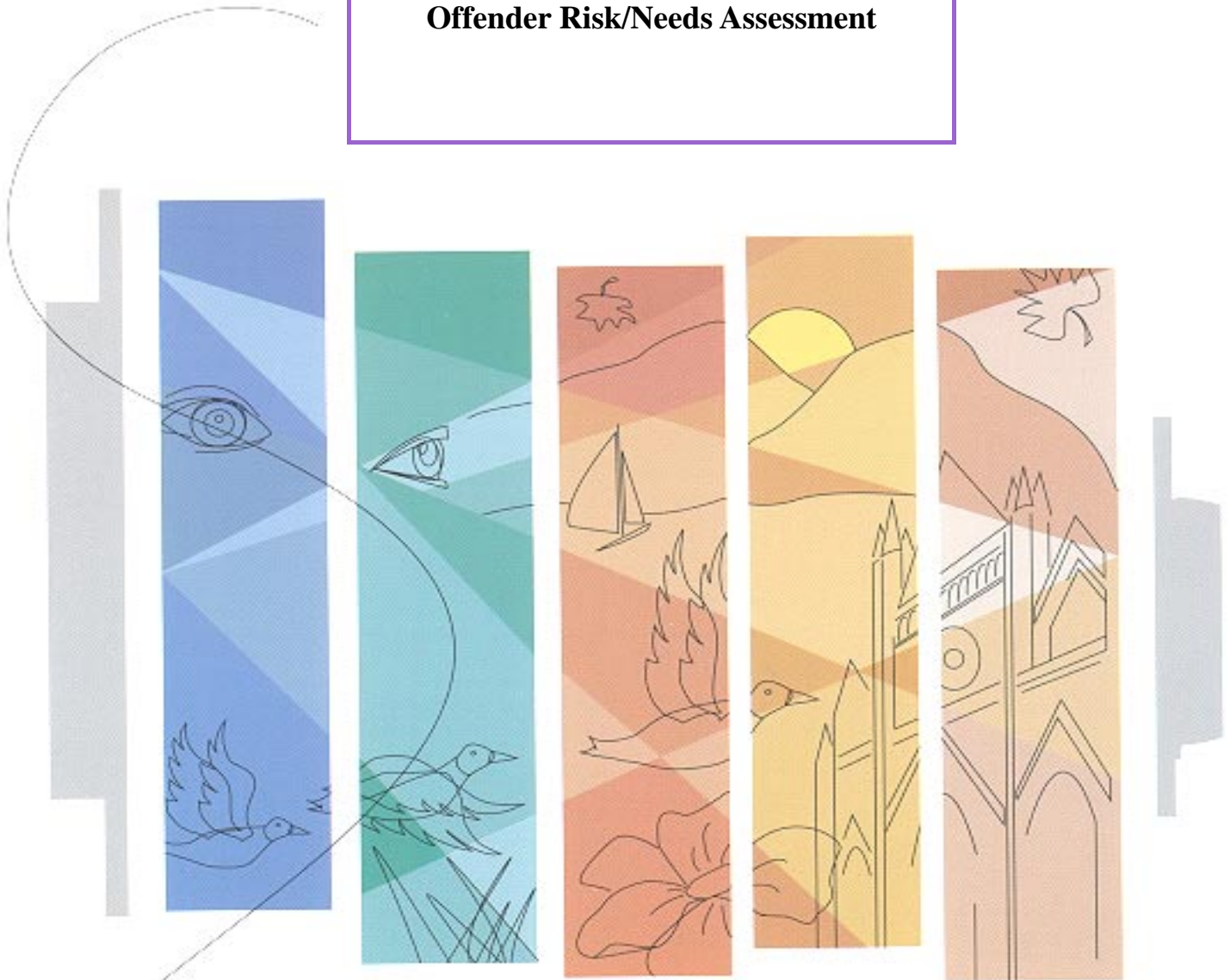




Research Branch  
Direction de la recherche

Corporate Development  
Développement organisationnel

**Conditional Release Supervision  
Standards: An Update on Training for  
Offender Risk/Needs Assessment**



**Conditional Release Supervision Standards:  
An Update on Training for Offender  
Risk/Needs Assessment**

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**BACKGROUND**

In November 1986, a project proposal on standards for conditional release supervision was submitted to the Heads of Corrections at a meeting held in Toronto, Ontario. Subsequently, a project team was assembled in March, 1987 and had representation from both the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the National Parole Board (NPB). In addition, a steering committee was formed which included the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the CSC and the Chairman of the NPB.

A national conference was also held to identify key issues in the area of conditional release supervision. By June 1987, there had been a round of consultations regarding a draft working paper on conditional release supervision. Then, in May 1988, another round of consultations was held with respect to a draft set of standards for conditional release supervision (see below).

### **Standards for Conditional Release Supervision**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Content</b>
1	Agency - Mission statement and services
2	Basic Policy Information
3	Information Sharing
4	Parole Supervisor - Selection, Training and Workload
5	Offender Assessment, Classification, Frequency of Contact
6	Case Planning
7	Case Conferencing and Documentation
8	Initial and Ongoing Contact with the Offender and Others in the Community
9	Violation and Suspension
10	Police Liaison
11	24 Hour Availability
12	Agency Policies
13	Volunteers Who Provide Supervision Services
14	Offender Files
15	Community Services and Resources

Field testing of the new draft standards began across Canada in September 1988. By this time the Research Branch of CSC had become involved with the project team and together had developed a systematic approach to offender risk/needs assessment. This was done in order to fulfil one of the requirements (i.e., Section 5) of the new standards. In March 1989, the Executive Committee of the CSC approved a plan to implement the new standards for conditional release supervision across Canada. However, the implementation of Section 5 was delayed until January 1990 in order to finalize the classification instrument and set frequency of contact guidelines. In January 1990, the Executive Committee of CSC approved a new model of frequency of contact and training sessions on the new standards were held across Canada during March 1990.

### **Training Format**

In order to proceed with the full implementation of the new standards for conditional release supervision, it was decided that a National Headquarters (NHQ) training team would conduct a series of one day professional development workshops across Canada. The training team consisted of representatives from the Division of Community Release Programs and Support Services and the Research Branch at NHQ.

A total of 17 training sessions were held at the following locations: Abbotsford, Vancouver, Victoria in the Pacific region; Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton in the Prairies region; Moncton, Halifax and St. Johns Nfld. in the Atlantic Region; Quebec City and two locations in Montreal; and Toronto, Kingston, London and Ottawa in the Ontario region.

It was estimated that over 550 individuals participated in these professional development workshops. While the majority of those who participated in the training were CSC staff, there were trainees from other organizations such as: the Alberta Solicitor General, the Alberta Seventh Step Society, the Native Counselling Services of Alberta, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the John Howard Society, the Native Clan Organization, the St. Leonard's Society, the Salvation Army, and various halfway house associations.

As mentioned previously, each professional development workshop consisted of a one day long session. The content for the training workshops included the following:

- a) background to the project;
- b) history of frequency of contact;

- c) research findings from the field test of the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (Motiuk & Porporino, 1989);
- d) an overview of the new standards for conditional release supervision;
- e) clarification of exemptions and exceptions to the standards;
- f) Section 5 of the standards;
- g) hands-on training with the risk/needs assessment tool; and
- h) feedback on results of assessment training.

A first objective of the professional development workshops was to ensure that there was a comprehensive understanding across Canada of Section 5 of the new standards for conditional release supervision (i.e., offender classification and frequency of contact). Secondly, we wanted to assist community case managers in meeting the guidelines for administering the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale. This later objective is the focus of the present paper.

### **Section 5 of the Standards**

Section 5 in the supervision standards documents stated the following: "Fundamental to effective classification of offenders for supervision is a systematic method of assessing the needs of the offender, the risk of re-offending, and any other factors which affect the offender's successful reintegration into the community. Effective classification also requires sound exercise of the parole supervisor's professional judgement. The frequency of contact with an offender shall be guided by this assessment and by the periodic reassessment of risk and needs."

### **Hands-on Training Exercises**

In the hands-on training exercises, we were attempting to establish an acceptable level of agreement amongst community case managers for frequency of contact decisions. For each of the workshops, this entailed two types of training exercises or two different approaches. One was an individual assessment of a practice case and the other was a group assessment of a different case. It was expected that the individual practice approach would equip the case managers with a thorough understanding of the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale assessment device. Then, by following this up with a group assessment, there would be not only a reinforcement of prior understanding but also a pooling of the available on-site professional expertise in assessing a particular case.

After the training team had explained the mechanics of completing the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (i.e., rating guidelines and assessment form), a number of practice cases were provided to trainees. These practice cases were drawn from actual case files with all of the personal identifiers carefully removed from the documentation. A total of eight sample cases were chosen at random in English and in French. The only criteria that was applied to the selection of a practice case was completeness of file documentation so as to allow for completion of the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale.

An individual practice case (i.e., Case #1) simply involved the trainee reviewing the file documentation provided, referring to the rating guidelines whenever necessary and completing the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale. A group practice case (i.e., Case #2) basically involved a number of trainees getting together, forming a working group, and after having reviewed the file documentation on a case, coming to a consensus on the various ratings required to formulate a risk/needs assessment

For example, in each of the training sites at least the following information was available in the practice cases: Finger Print Service Sheet, Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale, Forcefield Analysis of Needs, Criminal Profile Report, Progress Summary, National Parole Board Members Comments and Correctional Treatment Plan.

### **Feedback of Results on Risk/Needs Assessments**

An integral component to any effective training exercise is the amount of feedback that participants receive while learning new tasks. While immediate assistance (i.e., clarification) was provided by the trainers whenever requested, another feedback approach used by the trainers was to compile, on site, the individual and group risk/needs ratings and display the results. This later approach served a number of useful training functions. First, it allowed one to establish the level of agreement amongst raters. Second, it provided a platform for discussion with respect to any major disagreements. Third, it gave the trainers a basis upon which to make comparisons across the various training sites. Finally, it provided some data on which a number of tentative conclusions could be drawn with respect to the overall implementation exercise.

A synopsis of the data gathered for all of the training sites is presented in Table 1. Of the 406 individuals who participated in the hands-on training exercises, 31.5% were from the Prairie region, 25.9% were from the Ontario region, 15.8% were from the Atlantic region, 14.5% were from the Pacific region and 12.3% were from the Quebec region. It should be noted that supervisory and support staff attending the workshops were not obliged to participate in the hands-on training exercises. Moreover, trainees were not obliged to give in the results.

**Table 1: Distribution of Trainees by Site**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Training Site</b>	<b># of Trainees</b>	<b># of Groups</b>
<b>Atlantic</b>	Moncton	33	7
	Halifax St. John's Nfld.	20 11	5 2
		64	14
<b>Quebec</b>	Quebec City	33	-
	Montreal A Montreal B	17 -	- -
		50	-
<b>Ontario</b>	Toronto	47	6
	Kingston London Ottawa	18 31 9	6 6 3
		105	21
<b>Prairies</b>	Winnipeg	23	6
	Saskatoon Calgary Edmonton	38 38 29	6 6 6
		128	24
<b>Pacific</b>	Abbotsford	23	-
	Vancouver Victoria	22 14	4 -
		59	4
<b>Total</b>	17	406	63

In order to conduct the hands-on training exercises in both official languages, we sampled practice cases from a pool of available cases that were in English or French. Given the amount of file documentation that was required for completion of the offender risk/needs assessment, it was decided to use different case files that had been compiled in either one or the other official languages. Insofar as majority of risk/needs assessments had been completed on the English case files (88.8%), we will be reporting only this information. With regards to the data obtained in the Quebec region (N=50), it is available upon request.



**Individual Assessments by Trainees:  
Case File #1**

**1. Criminal History Risk Level**

As Table 2 indicates, the vast majority of trainees (94.1%) participating in the hands-on training exercises assessed case file #1 as being 'high' criminal history risk. This finding serves to illustrate that by systematically reviewing file documentation for criminal history information (i.e., criminal record, National Parole decisions, Statistical Information for Recidivism scale scores, etc.), case managers can readily provide a criminal history risk rating on the same case with an acceptable level of agreement.

**Table 2**

<b>Risk Level</b>	<b># of Trainees</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Low</b>	21	5.9
<b>High</b>	335	94.1

## 2. Case Needs Level

In order to arrive at an "overall assessment of the offender's needs level", the trainees participating in the hands-on training exercise were instructed to simply compile their professional judgements of the case's needs (i.e., academic/vocational skills, employment pattern, etc.) into one of the three levels; 'low', 'medium', and 'high'.

Below, we present the manner in which the trainees were distributed according to their "overall" assessments of case needs levels. We note that the majority of trainees assessed the offender as a 'medium' needs level (63.2%). In contrast, 25.3% of trainees assessed the same offender as a 'high' needs level and 11.5% as a 'low' needs level. While the majority of trainees assessed the same offender as 'medium' needs, it is important to consider the 36.8% who provided ratings outside this category. The variability in professional ratings of this initial case serves to illustrate that further clarification of the need dimensions being assessed is critical before applying the scale.

**Table 3**

<b>Needs Level</b>	<b># of Trainees</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Low</b>	41	11.5
<b>Medium</b>	225	63.2
<b>High</b>	90	25.3

### 3. Identified Needs

As previously mentioned, ratings on each need dimension were provided by the trainees with particular emphasis on the most recent contacts with the offender. These ratings (see Appendix A) were re-scored into a binary format (i.e., 0 or 1), indicating simply whether a particular need was either identified or not identified. For example, a need area (i.e., employment pattern) requiring "some need for improvement" or "considerable need for improvement" would be an identified need and scored as "1".

Table 4 shows the percentage of trainees who identified needs for Case File #1 using the Scale. As Table 4 shows, all of the need dimensions covered by the Scale were evidenced in the case. Notably, 86.8% of the trainees assessed the practice case as having a behavioral/emotional stability need, 68.3% of the trainees indicated that the case was experiencing an alcohol usage need, and 55.7% of the trainees noted that the offender has a marital/family relationships need.

**Table 4: Percentage of Trainees Identifying Needs**

<b>Need Dimension</b>	<b># of Trainees</b>	<b>%</b>
Academic/Vocational Skills	32	9.2
Employment Pattern	61	17.5
Financial Management	152	44.1
Marital/Family Relationships	192	55.7
Companions/Significant Others	147	42.6
Accommodation	31	9.2
Behavioral/Emotional Stability	296	86.8
Alcohol Usage	235	68.3
Drug Usage	14	4.1
Mental Ability	76	21.8
Health	6	1.7
Attitude	67	19.5

### 4. Number of Identified Needs

With respect to the total number of identified needs, Table 5 presents the percentage distribution of identified needs total scores (i.e., multi-need case). We note that 95.5% of the trainees assessed the case as having at least one identified need, 87.2% as having at least two identified needs, and 72.4% as having at least three identified needs on conditional release. Interestingly, 4.5% of the trainees assessed the practice case as having no identified needs.

**Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Identified Needs Total Score**

<b># of Identified Needs</b>	<b># of Trainees</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
0	16	4.5	4.5
1	29	8.2	12.8
2	52	14.8	27.6
3	66	18.8	46.3
4	81	23.0	69.3
5	51	14.5	83.8
6	23	6.5	90.3
7	22	6.3	96.6
8	4	1.1	97.7
9	6	1.7	99.4
10	1	0.3	99.7
11	1	0.3	100.0

## 5. Risk/Needs Classification

Table 6 presents the percentage distribution of combined risk/needs levels for each training site. It can be seen from the results that when criminal history risk and case needs are combined, the majority of trainees (59.0%) assessed the sample case as high-risk/medium-need.

**Table 6: Distribution of Trainee Classifications by Site**

Region	Site	Low Risk			High Risk		
		L-Need	M-Need	H-Need	L-Need	M-Need	H-Need
Atlantic	Moncton	0.0	3.0	0.0	6.1	57.6	33.3
	Halifax	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	60.0	30.0
	St. John's	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	81.8	18.2
		0.0	1.6	0.0	6.3	62.5	29.7
Ontario	Toronto	0.0	10.6	0.0	8.5	57.4	23.4
	Kingston	0.0	11.1	0.0	0.0	72.2	16.7
	London	0.0	3.2	0.0	25.8	54.8	16.1
	Ottawa	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	55.6	44.4
		0.0	7.6	0.0	11.4	59.1	21.9
Prairies	Winnipeg	0.0	4.3	0.0	34.8	43.5	17.4
	Saskatoon	0.0	0.0	7.9	13.2	47.4	31.6
	Calgary	0.0	2.6	0.0	10.5	73.7	13.2
	Edmonton	3.4	3.4	0.0	10.3	48.3	34.5
		0.8	2.3	2.3	15.6	54.7	24.2
Pacific	Abbotsford	0.0	4.3	4.3	8.7	56.5	26.1
	Vancouver	0.0	9.1	0.0	4.5	81.8	4.5
	Victoria	0.0	0.0	7.1	7.1	50.0	35.7
		0.0	5.1	3.4	6.8	64.4	20.3
<b>Total</b>	14	0.3	4.2	1.4	11.2	59.0	23.9

Note: L-Need = Low Need; M-Need = Medium Need; H-Need = High Need

## 6. Frequency of Contact

In moving towards the goal of establishing a frequency of contact decision for the practice case, the combined risk/needs ratings were set against the agreed upon minimum contact rates that were approved by the CSC Executive Committee. In Table 7, we show the overall percentage of cases within the three frequency of contact rate groupings (i.e., 1x/month, 2x/month and 4x/month). As expected, the majority of trainees (95.5%) would have the practice case report at least four times monthly.

**Table 7**

<b>Frequency of Contact</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1 x Month</b>	1	0.3
<b>2 x Month</b>	15	4.2
<b>4 x Month</b>	340	95.5

## **Group Assessments by Trainees: Case File #2**

### **1. Criminal History Risk Level**

In Table 8 we present the criminal history risk ratings that were derived from group assessments for a practice case. As Table 8 clearly shows, the majority of groups (95.5%) participating in the hands-on training exercises assessed Case File #2 as being 'high' criminal risk level.

**Table 8**

<b>Risk Level</b>	<b># of Groups</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Low</b>	3	4.8
<b>High</b>	60	95.2

### **2. Case Needs Level**

Table 9 illustrates the manner in which trainee groups were distributed according to assessments of case needs level. We note that the majority of groups assessed the same offender as a 'high' needs level (81.0%). On the other hand, 19.0% of groups assessed the same offender as a 'medium' needs level. Of special note, none of the groups assessed the practice case as a 'low' needs level. It would appear that higher levels of agreement across training sites can be achieved by a consensus approach.

**Table 9**

<b>Needs Level</b>	<b># of Groups</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Low</b>	0	0.0
<b>Medium</b>	12	19.0
<b>High</b>	51	81.0

### 3. Identified Needs

In Table 10, we show the percentage distribution of groups who had identified needs for Case File #2 using the Scale. As before, these ratings (see Appendix B) were re-scored into a binary format (i.e., 0 or 1), indicating simply whether a particular need was either identified or not identified. Again, all of the need dimensions that were covered by the Scale were evidenced in the case. While 98.4% of the groups assessed the practice case as having a behavioral/emotional stability need, nearly 95% of the groups found that the case was experiencing a marital/family relationships need. Interestingly, 84.1% of the groups assessed the practice case as having a financial management need.

**Table 10: Percentage of Groups Identifying Needs**

<b>Need Dimension</b>	<b># of Groups</b>	<b>#</b>
Academic/Vocational Skills	34	54.8
Employment Pattern	32	50.8
Financial Management	53	84.1
Marital/Family Relationships	60	95.2
Companions/Significant Others	16	25.4
Accommodation	11	17.7
Behavioral/Emotional Stability	62	98.4
Alcohol Usage	2	3.2
Drug Usage	13	20.6
Mental Ability	16	25.4
Health	16	26.2
Attitude	27	42.9



#### 4. Number of Identified Needs

For the total number of identified needs, Table 11 presents the percentage distribution of identified needs total scores. We note that 100% of the groups assessed the case as having at least one identified need, 98.4% as having at least two identified needs, and 95.2% as having at least three identified needs on conditional release.

**Table 11: Percentage Distribution of Identified Needs Total Scores**

# of Identified Needs	# of Groups	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	0	0.0	0.0
1	1	1.6	1.6
2	2	3.2	4.8
3	8	12.7	17.5
4	8	12.7	30.2
5	16	25.4	55.6
6	9	14.3	69.8
7	11	17.5	87.3
8	3	4.8	92.1
9	4	6.3	98.4
10	1	1.6	100.0

## 5. Risk/Needs Classification

In Table 12, we present the percentage distribution of the group assessed risk/needs levels for each training site. It can be seen from the results that when risk/needs level are combined, the majority of groups (77.8%) assessed the sample case as high-risk/high-need.

**Table 12: Distribution of Trainee Classifications by Site**

Region	Site	Low Risk			High Risk		
		L-Need	M-Need	H-Need	L-Need	M-Need	H-Need
Atlantic	Moncton	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Halifax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	St. John's	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Ontario	Toronto	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7
	Kingston	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0
	London	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7
	Ottawa	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7
Prairies	Winnipeg	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	83.3
	Saskatoon	0.0	16.7	16.7	0.0	16.7	50.0
	Calgary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Edmonton	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	16.7	66.7
		0.0	4.2	8.3	0.0	12.5	75.0
Pacific	Abbotsford	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Vancouver	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	75.0
	Victoria	-	-	-	-	-	-
		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	75.0
<b>Total</b>	14	0.0	1.6	3.2	0.0	17.5	77.8

Note: L-Need = Low Need; M-Need = Medium Need; H-Need = High Need

## 6. Frequency of Contact

The frequency of contact rates for the group assessments of risk/needs are presented in Table 13. As Table 13 shows, the majority of trainees (98.4%) would have had the practice case report at least four times a month.

**Table 13: Frequency of Contact by Group Assessments**

<b>Frequency of Contact</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1 x Month</b>	0	0.0
<b>2 x Month</b>	1	1.6
<b>4 x Month</b>	62	98.4

## **SUMMARY**

Overall, the results of the hands-on training exercise indicate that systematic assessments has practical utility for case managers working with offenders in the community. The following provides a summary of the major findings:

- 1) The hands-on training exercises confirmed the ability of community case managers to apply the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale as a systematic method for assessing the needs of offenders, the risk of re-offending and any other factor that might affect the successful adjustment of an offender into the community.
- 2) The results of the practice case assessments demonstrated acceptable levels of agreement amongst case managers when assessing the same case for the first time using the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale with respect to frequency of contact considerations.
- 3) The variability in case needs level ratings at the different training sites point to a need for clarification of the various needs dimensions being assessed with training and reference to the guidelines.
- 4) A combination of individual and group practice exercises can result in improved levels of agreement amongst case managers for risk/needs ratings.

Thus, it appears that throughout the hands-on training exercises there was considerable agreement among trainees regarding the supervision requirements of particular cases. More importantly, the training on systematic offender assessment resulted in the implementation of Section 5 of the conditional release supervision standards across federal corrections.

**APPENDIX A:**

**Individualized Trainee Ratings of Need Areas:  
Case File #1**

<b>Need Dimension</b>	<b>Factors seen as an asset to community adjustment</b>	<b>No immediate need for improvement</b>	<b>Some need for improvement</b>	<b>Considerable need for improvement</b>
Academic/ Vocational Skills	-	90.8	8.6	0.6
Employment Pattern	23.0	59.5	17.0	0.6
Financial Management	4.9	51.0	35.4	8.7
Marital/Family Relationships	8.4	35.9	31.6	24.1
Companions/ Significant Others	6.1	51.3	37.7	4.9
Accommodation	11.6	79.2	9.3	0.0
Behavioral/ Emotional Stability	-	13.2	51.9	34.9
Alcohol Usage	-	31.7	7.6	60.8
Drug Usage	-	95.9	2.1	2.1
Mental Ability	-	78.2	20.9	0.9
Health	-	98.3	1.1	0.6
Attitude	15.7	64.8	16.3	3.2

**APPENDIX B:**

**Group Trainee Ratings of Need Areas:  
Case File #2**

<b>Need Dimension</b>	<b>Factors seen as an asset to community adjustment</b>	<b>No immediate need for improvement</b>	<b>Some need for improvement</b>	<b>Considerable need for improvement</b>
Academic/ Vocational Skills	-	45.2	53.2	1.6
Employment Pattern	3.2	46.0	50.8	0.0
Financial Management	0.0	15.9	71.4	12.7
Marital/Family Relationships	1.6	3.2	19.0	76.2
Companions/ Significant Others	14.3	60.3	25.4	0.0
Accommodation	8.1	74.2	16.1	1.6
Behavioral/ Emotional Stability	-	1.6	9.5	88.9
Alcohol Usage	-	96.8	1.6	1.6
Drug Usage	-	79.4	20.6	0.0
Mental Ability	-	74.6	25.4	0.0
Health	-	0.0	73.8	26.2
Attitude	3.2	54.0	25.4	17.5