

Profile of the Community Residential Facility Resident

The Northern-Interior Parole District, based in Prince George, British Columbia, is responsible for parole supervision for Yukon and British Columbia, except the lower mainland area and Vancouver Island. An average of 265 federal offenders are under district supervision, and a total of 93 community residential facility (CRF) beds are available. Community residential services are provided by seven associations located in Prince George, Kelowna, Vernon and Whitehorse.

Correctional Service of Canada and CRF staff frequently make subjective observations about the general characteristics of parolees residing in these facilities. The development of programs and services based on these assumptions occasionally results in a service or program that does not adequately address the needs of the residents. More objective data would be helpful in the decision-making process.

A research project initiated in January of 1992 was established to determine the client profile of each CRF. A variety of indicators were reported for each resident in an attempt to determine the "typical" client.

The following demographic characteristics are recorded for each resident upon arrival at a CRF: age, racial origin, level of education, employable skills, identifiable problem areas (criminogenic factors detailed in the program-planning model), release type, releasing institution, reason for conviction and area of sentencing. As well, residents are asked why they chose this particular CRF.

Upon leaving the CRF, further information is obtained, primarily concerning problems addressed while the offender was a resident at the facility, the reason for departure and, if suspended, the reason for suspension.

The data are recorded by each CRF, compiled by the district office and reported quarterly to the community residential facilities. The CRF operators, who have close and co-operative working relationships, share all research findings. As a result, this graphic reporting format provides a clear representation of each facility's parolee population and allows for easy comparison of all indicators between CRFs.

The data are used in several ways. Research results provide an additional tool when determining programming needs from a district perspective. For example, the first reporting period identified a significant difference in educational levels between those residents in the Prince George area (24% with less than Grade 8) and those in the Kelowna/Vernon area (5% with less than Grade 8). Although the data do not provide reasons for such differences, they do indicate areas for further examination.

The CRF operator can determine if services and programs offered at the facility are meeting the needs of the clients. Comparison with other CRF data is an excellent method to identify problems and plan accordingly. For example, if a CRF finds that a disproportionate number of its residents have become unlawfully at large as compared with other facilities, this can prompt an analysis of why. Or, a facility having difficulty keeping its beds occupied may compare its strategy for soliciting clients with more successful houses and may consider changing its marketing strategy accordingly.

This is a continuing research project, and the CRF resident profile will be refined as data are collected over a longer period of time. It is anticipated that this will be an invaluable tool to both the Correctional Service of Canada and CRF operators in the district.