

## **Section 6: Partners in Good Corrections**

Returning to the community is a vital and challenging time in an offender's rehabilitation process. This transition can be made easier with community support, but community support can be a difficult thing to come by.

The role and responsibility of the community in helping to safely reintegrate offenders is one of the most significant challenges in the field of corrections. Community programming reduces the risk of recidivism and is a fundamental component of the overall correctional strategy, as specified in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) relies on service providers in the community and actively encourages and seeks innovative approaches to community corrections.

Many parole offices employ full time correctional program officers who provide programs to offenders on conditional release. In addition, since the late 1960s, CSC has contracted with non-profit, voluntary agencies such as the John Howard Society, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, St. Leonard's House and the Salvation Army to provide services to released offenders. Some of these agencies also provide community supervision in remote areas or residential facilities and programming to offenders with specialized needs.

To complement its affiliations with community-based organizations, CSC also maintains a [volunteer program](#) and also works with [Aboriginal](#) and [faith communities](#).

### **1. The John Howard Society**

The [John Howard Society](#) is part of an international movement dedicated to understanding and responding to problems of crime and the criminal justice system.

They work with people who have come into conflict with the law and advocate for change in the criminal justice process. They are very active in educating the public on matters relating to criminal law and its application. They promote crime prevention through community and social activities.

### **2. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies**

[Elizabeth Fry Societies](#) provide a variety of programs and services designed to meet the needs of women offenders. This support starts from the time a woman is arrested through to her discharge from prison and return to the community. Services include life skills; counselling (issues such as abuse, employment, and financial assistance); dispute resolution; accommodation; drop in centres; court assistance and emotional support. They also monitor impending changes in the law and in government policies that may have an effect on the status of women.

### **3. The Salvation Army**

All members of the [Salvation Army](#) are called soldiers and must uphold the Army's beliefs and moral standards such as abstaining from alcohol and tobacco. Most members already have a job or profession and offer their services in prison ministry or community corrections as volunteers. They have a wide range of social, medical, educational and community services such as programs that help support and rehabilitate offenders. These include support during police court cases and help on discharge, visiting offenders, providing anti-suicide, drug and alcoholism counselling, accommodation for the homeless, food for the hungry and care for the elderly.

#### **4. The St. Leonard's Society of Canada**

[St. Leonard's](#) is a national ecumenical, voluntary organization with the goal of preventing crime and promoting responsible community living and safer communities. They assist people who have come into conflict with the law and prevent recidivism by providing educational programs, workshops, community residential facilities and other programs.

#### **5. L'Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec**

[L'Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec's](#) mission is to collectively support the members and volunteers in its network and to promote the participation of citizens and community organizations in the areas of crime prevention, reintegration and rehabilitation of adult offenders, while working to improve the criminal justice system.

The Association believes that the active participation of citizens in the community in resolving the problems associated with crime contributes to the social development and well-being of our communities.

#### **6. The Canadian Training Institute**

The [Canadian Training Institute](#) (CTI) is a national voluntary organization which provides training, consulting assistance, promotes collaborative action and undertakes applied research projects in contributing to the effectiveness of services delivered by criminal justice and related human service agencies in Canada.

CTI assists in the development of knowledge, skills and services that reduce crime, promote active participation, and ultimately, contribute to healthy individuals, agencies and communities.

#### **7. The Canadian Criminal Justice Association**

The [Canadian Criminal Justice Association](#) (CCJA) is an independent national voluntary organization working for an improved criminal justice system in Canada.

Recognizing that the criminal justice system must serve the needs of all people, the CCJA is an umbrella organization representing all elements of the criminal justice system, including the public. It exists to promote rational, informed, and responsible debate in order to develop a more humane, equitable, and effective justice system.

## **8. The National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ)**

The [National Associations Active in Criminal Justice](#) (NAACJ) is a member organization with a mission to enhance its members' capacity to contribute to a just, fair, equitable and effective justice system.

NAACJ members:

- [Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec](#)
- [Block Parent Program of Canada Inc.](#)
- [Canadian Association for Community Living](#)
- [Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies](#)
- [Canadian Bar Association](#)
- [Canadian Criminal Justice Association](#)
- [Canadian Families and Corrections Network](#)
- [Canadian Psychological Association](#)
- [Canadian Training Institute](#)
- [Church Council on Justice and Corrections](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Network Canada](#)
- [John Howard Society of Canada](#)
- [National Association of Friendship Centres](#)
- [Native Counselling Services of Alberta](#)
- [Prison Arts Foundation](#)
- [St. Leonard's Society of Canada](#)
- [Salvation Army](#)
- [The Seventh Step Society of Canada](#)
- [YouCAN! \(Youth Canada Association\)](#)

## **9. Volunteers**

CSC's volunteer program is one way of ensuring citizens' involvement in corrections. Volunteers provide a link between a correctional facility and the local community in which it operates, thus helping CSC to maintain a positive presence.

Over 9,000 citizens across Canada participate in programs and activities for offenders - ranging from one-time activities to regular involvement. Volunteers come from all walks of life and include military personnel, students, homemakers, trades people, teachers, accountants, nurses and retirees.

For more information, please visit the [Volunteers](#) section of the CSC website.

## **10. Citizen Advisory Committees**

CSC recognizes that a supportive community makes it easier for offenders to become responsible citizens. [Citizen Advisory Committees](#) (CAC) provide an important link between CSC, offenders, and communities as they help to inform communities about the correctional process and contribute to the overall development of correctional facilities and programs.

CAC members are local citizens who volunteer their time. They are appointed for a two year period and CSC is responsible for their training. Members are independent from the management of CSC and are not paid for their services.

Members represent various social, cultural, and demographic backgrounds and occupations, and usually reside in proximity to the operational unit which the committee serves.

As independent, impartial observers, CAC members monitor and evaluate the day-to-day operations of CSC, including the provision of adequate care, supervision and programs for offenders. CACs also liaise between CSC and the public to build understanding and support for the correctional process.

Ultimately, local CACs should reflect the needs and characteristics (e.g., social, cultural and ethnic composition) of the community. There are over 500 citizens involved in 97 CACs across Canada.

## **11. Aboriginal Communities**

Many offender reintegration initiatives involve members of [Canada's Aboriginal communities](#). They teach Aboriginal culture, traditions and spirituality, as well as provide advice to offenders, CSC staff and members of the National Parole Board.

Aboriginal community members are also involved in visiting programs, social and recreational activities and many other programs and services offered to offenders.

## **12. Faith-based Communities**

Prison ministry programs enlist the resources of a broad range of faith communities in partnership with CSC to promote spiritual healing and ensure the safe reintegration of offenders. The clientele includes both offenders in custody and on release, offenders' partners, families, the community, and victims of crime.

Community chaplains work with institutional chaplains to build relationships with offenders prior to their release, and with the local parole office to participate in the supervision strategy. In addition to meeting to the spiritual needs of the offender, community chaplains are engaged in community development work and public education, and in helping offenders link with local resources.

### **Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA)**

Through the community chaplaincy, approximately 75 [Circles of Support and Accountability](#) are in place for high-profile sexual offenders throughout Canada. These circles, organized primarily by faith groups, form a "covenant" with a released sexual offender to accept the circle's help and advice, to stick to their treatment plan, and to act responsibly in the community.

In the absence of these circles, there would be very limited support for released sexual offenders who have served their full sentence, thus leaving them at risk of re-offending. For its part, the circle helps released sexual offenders by advocating on their behalf, holding discussions with

them about their attitudes and behaviours, mediating community concerns and developing meaningful relationships.

### **13. National Ethnocultural Advisory Committee (NEAC)**

CSC acknowledges the importance of the contribution of external community resources in the application of programs for offenders from diverse ethnic groups. The involvement of fellow ethnic group offenders in the application of programs enables a better response to the specific needs of these inmate clientele.

CSC thus regularly consults with Ethnocultural community leaders and organizations with knowledge of Ethnocultural matters in order to gain advice on the provision of correctional services and programs to Ethnocultural offenders. This is done through the National Ethnocultural Advisory Committee (NEAC) and the Regional Ethnocultural Advisory Committees (REAC) who help CSC establish links with our community partner organizations that will assist members of various ethno-cultural backgrounds to be better equipped for the release of an ex-offender.

The NEAC and REAC are composed of professionals from ethnocultural and ethno-racial communities. They also inform the ethnocultural community groups about CSC's Mission and Ethnocultural issues related to CSC. These Committees, in co-operation with ethnocultural communities and organizations, endorses race relations and cross-cultural awareness training for staff and offenders of CSC.

Consequently, seminars, conferences and cultural festivals are organized; the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is celebrated; multicultural groups and diversity committees have been created; there are visits to ethnic communities. Inmates also have their associations, like the Black Inmates and Friends Association, as well as Italian, Chinese, Greek or Jewish groups contributing to affirm and strengthen their cultural identity. Such inmates may be Canadian citizens, but they can also happen to be foreign nationals incarcerated in federal institutions. These offenders have the same rights and privileges as the other inmates.

### **14. LifeLine**

[LifeLine](#) is a social program designed for the men and women serving life sentences in federal institutions or in the community. This program is delivered through a partnership between CSC, National Parole Board and community-based sponsoring agencies. Through this program, paroled lifers who have been successfully living in the community for at least five years return to institutions to offer support to incarcerated lifers throughout their sentence. LifeLine's mission is to help offenders make a successful, supervised, gradual reintegration into the community.

### **15. Restorative Justice**

[Restorative justice](#) provides opportunities that are not otherwise available in the criminal justice system. The philosophy is a holistic approach to promote accountability, understanding, reparation and healing for those affected by crime. This approach strengthens the capacity of local communities to resolve conflict and build local solutions to local challenges. It is a way to encourage greater involvement of citizens by breaking the cycles of violence and victimization

among all people. CSC works with experts from across the country to provide high quality victim offender mediation services to help respond to serious crime. CSC has also been applying these principles to help deal with conflict inside institutions. A strong network of volunteers working with CSC supports much of this work.