

# REVEALING RESEARCH & EVALUATION (RREV)

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CORRECTIONS BRANCH  
PERFORMANCE, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION (PREV) UNIT

January 2010

## Advancing Offender Programs (AOP)

Offender programming has been staff-delivered for about a decade. In that space of time, we have learned a great deal about evidence based programs, criminal behaviour, and factors such as risk, needs and responsiveness.

Program evaluations have indicated that the branch's cognitive behavioural programming is associated with significant decreases in reoffending when delivered in the community. Many elements of a correctional centre environment, however, appear to impede successful results.

It is also understood that if there is little to no intervention, recidivism rates can increase.

Consequently, the continued evolution of offender programs is necessary to ensure that we are responding to best practice research; this includes assessing individuals' needs and risks and responding with appropriate programming at appropriate levels.

The Corrections Branch initiated the Advancing Offender Programs (AOP) project, approved by the Senior Management Committee in October 2008. The purpose of the project is to build on the success in of the community division and facilitate the design, development, implementation, and/or evaluation of effective offender programs in both custody and community divisions.

The project is organized into four separate but dependent components:

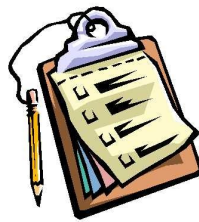
1. Essential Skills to Success (see back page of this report for an introduction),
2. Cognitive Behavioural Programming,
3. Pro-Social Modelling, and
4. Skill Building.

## Gathering Baselines: Client Satisfaction Surveys

Essential to the success of the AOP project is research and evaluation. To assess any changes made in (a) offender knowledge and perceptions of various aspects within BC Corrections and (b) staff knowledge and practice, initial baselines (start points) are required.

The focus of this issue of the RREV is one of the recent set of surveys designed to inform the AOP project and day to day operations.

The *Offender Surveys for Adult Custody and Community Corrections* were administered by R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. from January to March 2008.



### Contact us!

If you have comments, questions, or ideas about this publication, contact:

Carmen Gress, Ph.D.  
Director of Research,  
Planning and Offender Programs

Community Corrections and  
Corporate Programs Division  
Corrections Branch  
Ministry of Public Safety and  
Solicitor General

PO Box 9278 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9J7  
Tel: (250) 387-1565  
Fax: (250) 387-5039  
Email: [Carmen.Gress@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Carmen.Gress@gov.bc.ca)

### Offender Survey: Community Corrections

The Community Corrections and Corporate Programs division was interested in offenders' perceptions of Community Corrections, including:

- *Clarity of information and fair treatment at intake,*
- *Service delivery and programs,*
- *The relationship with the probation officer and overall satisfaction.*

#### Survey FAQs

- 4,837 Community Corrections clients were interviewed over the phone from January to March 2008. 1,121 surveys were completed.
- Most respondents were male aged 18 to 44.
- 15% were female and almost 62% were employed.
- 20% were Aboriginal.
- 49% were on probation, 22% serving conditional sentences, and the rest were bail.
- Almost 75% of those surveyed had served less than twelve months of their order.
- 56% reported once per month, 24% twice per month.

### Survey Highlights

#### Relationship with Probation Officers

The majority of clients agreed that the probation officer treated them with respect and confidentiality, and provided clear expectations. They also stated that the majority of probation officers were knowledgeable about programs and services, assisted with setting life goals, and included the client when developing their supervision plans.

The majority of clients who participated in various Core programming considered the programs beneficial.

Approximately 20% of the clients stated their probation officer referred them to an outside agency for programming and services. Of those, 72% stated they found the referral useful.



#### Intake

More than 90% of the clients surveyed agreed that the probation officer reviewed the court order at intake and explained the consequences of breaking that order.

#### Service Delivery

The majority of clients surveyed agreed that the staff members were courteous and respectful, they responded to questions in a timely manner, and that the locations were safe. For those who did experience barriers to the probation office or officer, the main reasons included conflicts with working hours, distance to the reporting office, and transportation issues.

**81% of the clients surveyed were satisfied with service delivery**

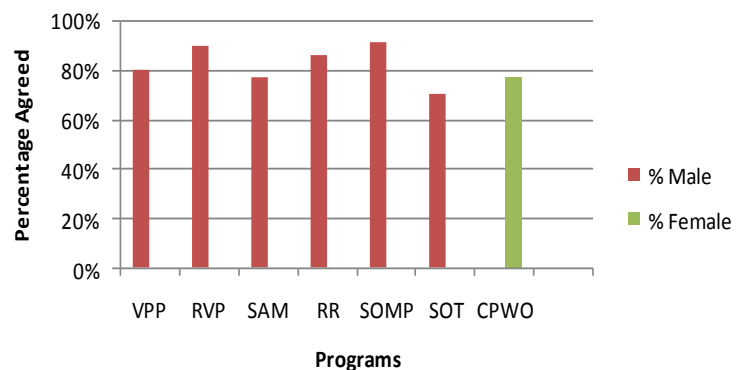
#### Client Satisfaction

Eighty-one percent of the clients surveyed were satisfied with the service provided by Community Corrections, and these results were equal when reviewed by client gender, location, or Aboriginal status.

#### Programs

The majority of inmates who participated in various CORE or educational programming considered the programs beneficial.

### Are Core Programs beneficial? YES!



### Offender Survey: Adult Custody

The Adult Custody division was interested in offenders' perceptions of various events within the Custody Centres. This included inmate perceptions of

- *Clarity of information and fair treatment at intake,*
- *Centre life and discipline,*
- *Satisfaction with service access and personal safety, and*
- *Benefits of various programs, release planning.*

#### Survey FAQs

- 1704 inmates were surveyed in groups at the centres between January and March 2008.
- The majority of inmates surveyed were male aged 18 to 44, 13% were female.
- 39% were Aboriginal.
- 50% were sentenced, 44% remand, 6% dual.
- Inmates self-reported that 49% were convicted and/or remanded due to crimes against property, 31% against persons, and 31% involving drugs or alcohol.

### Survey Highlights

#### Intake

Overall, almost 40% of inmates agreed that they were treated with dignity and respect when they arrived at the centre, 24% were neutral, 34% disagreed. Two percent did not answer.

Just under half the inmates expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided at arrival. The other half were satisfied (30%) or they indicated they were neutral or didn't know (22%).

#### Centre life

Inmates rated their agreement to twelve statements describing life at a Custody Centre. These included items such as "I am provided with work opportunities" or "I am given the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns."

The results suggest that the Custody Centres perform well in some areas while other areas have room for improvement.

For example, 69% of inmates agreed that they received up-to-date information about their trust account. Fifty-three percent agreed that they were able to maintain contact with the important people in their life.



Areas for improvement were highlighted by lower rates of agreement to questions such as "I was given information about the complaint process" (24%) and "I was given information about the services and programs that are available to me" (27%).

#### Satisfaction

When it comes to accessing services (health, food) and personal safety, opinions varied. Nearly 28% of inmates were satisfied with health services, 50% were not, and 32% were neutral or did not know. Only 16.8% of inmates were satisfied with the food services, while almost 50% were not and nearly 19% were neutral or did not know.

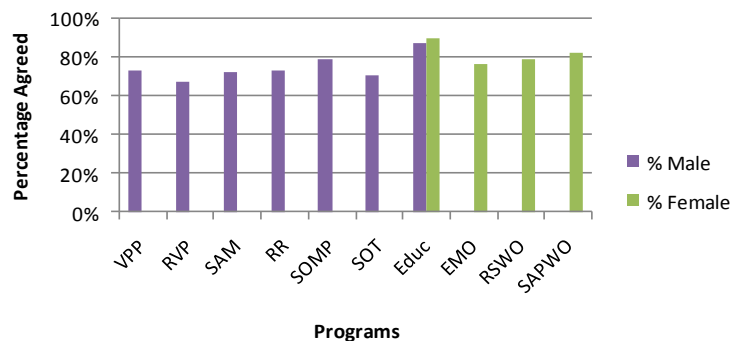
***51% did not have high school and 59% served prior jail time***

About 45% of inmates felt safe in the centres, 24% had concerns, and 31% were neutral or did not know.

#### Programs

The majority of inmates who participated in various CORE or educational programming considered the programs beneficial.

### Are Core and Educational Programs beneficial? YES!



### Questions from the field

#### Q: Why do a survey?

**A:** A survey is a way to collect information about people's perceptions, opinions and attitudes. Good surveys are difficult to design because questions need to contain clear definable terms and be as limited as possible in bias.

#### Q: What are (and why are there) common survey questions?

**A:** There are some questions that are common to almost every survey. This includes date of birth, gender, employment, education, and location. These are common questions be-

cause they allow the survey designers to see if the average answer changes depending on these and other variables. For example, public opinion polls on politicians may indicate a 60% satisfaction rating for the current leader, but it may turn out that women rate him or her at 80% while men agreed only 40% of the time.

#### Q: Why is research and evaluation so important to AOP?

**A:** Research and evaluation is a core component of the AOP project for a variety of reasons. Our goal is to have an evidence-based set of practices

and programs that help offenders get on their feet and live better lives. This helps reduce recidivism.

To get the evidence, we need to evaluate our services and programs before and after implementation. To ensure we are on the right track, we consult all the latest research.

***Did you know that the PREv Unit has a CorrPoint site dedicated to these topics and interesting facts? Check us out!***

### Essential Skills To Success

One of the components of AOP is to research and develop essential skills programming to be implemented in the adult custody division.

Essential skills help people perform the tasks required by their occupations, in their interactions with others, and in other activities of daily life.

An inability to get and/or keep a job may be important need for offenders. However, according to the 2003 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 42% of working age Canadians (close to 9 million people) do not have the necessary literacy and essential skills levels to work in a

knowledge-based economy and society.

The Government of Canada lists nine essential skills common to all Canadian occupational groups.

*The nine essential skills are:*

1. Reading text
2. Document Use
3. Numeracy
4. Writing
5. Oral Communication
6. Working with Others
7. Thinking Skills
8. Computer Use
9. Continuous Learning

The *Essential Skills To Success (ESS)* initiative will incorporate these nine skills within a variety of stand alone modules to be delivered in custody, and where possible, ESS principles will be integrated into existing programming.

ESS topics in development include:

1. Orientation
2. Health
3. Employability
4. Money Management
5. Learning
6. Housing
7. Communications

