



Revealing Research & Evaluation Newsletter

RREv Issue #18

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This issue provides an overview of research partnerships with BC Corrections. It summarizes the research application process, highlights the vision and pillars guiding our research, and spotlights external researchers using BC Corrections data.

A publication of the BC Corrections Performance, Research & Evaluation (PREv) Unit, Strategic Operations Division

Research at BC Corrections

The Performance, Research and Evaluation (PREv) unit supports evidence-based decision making to advance BC Corrections' priorities. By way of research expertise and data analytic support, the unit leads program evaluations and forecasting, generates business intelligence, and facilitates client and staff feedback to improve service delivery and ongoing initiatives.

BC Corrections also partners with academics from institutions across Canada to share data for the purpose of research. External researchers bring unique perspectives, using our data in innovative ways that extend beyond our in-house scope and capacity. These collaborative research initiatives unite our extensive data resources and commitment to evidence-based practices with talented external researchers leading to new scientific insights.

What is Correctional Data?

BC Corrections data encompasses information from case management systems like CORNET, Microsoft Dynamics, and ICON. The data available include, though are not limited to, the following for individuals in custody and those under community supervision:

- **Demographics** (e.g., age, gender, race)
- **Movements** (e.g., admissions/releases /transfers, length of stay)
- **Offence data** (e.g., charge types, sentence type, sentence length)
- **Legal Hold Status** (e.g., sentenced, remand)
- **Risk assessment data** (e.g., Community, Risk, Needs Assessment)



Youth & Federal Data

Records on individuals 18 years or younger (Youth Justice), and Federal Corrections' data are not available via BC Corrections. Youth Justice data can be requested by contacting the [Youth Justice division](#) within the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), while requests for data on individuals within the Federal Corrections system can be made to [Correctional Services Canada](#).

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If you have comments, questions, or ideas about this publication, please contact the PREv unit.

sgcorrectionsresearch@gov.bc.ca

The Research Process

Research Application Committee

The BC Corrections' Research Application Committee (RAC) meets quarterly and is responsible for the review, approval and administrative oversight of all research projects undertaken with BC Corrections across both Adult Custody and Community Corrections Divisions.

The application process applies to the following types of research and research-related activities:

- Requests to survey/interview or recruit research participants (i.e., individuals in custody or under community supervision, or BC Corrections staff)
- Requests for BC Corrections' administrative data
- Requests for research partners, including individuals under BC Corrections' supervision or BC Corrections staff
- Requests to conduct information seeking projects, program evaluations, and quality assurance projects

“Are there any situations where a research agreement with BC Corrections is not required?”

Yes. In situations where a formal research agreement is not needed, BC Corrections may provide a *Letter of Support* to facilitate research activities. A common example of this occurs when a researcher is not seeking access to BC Corrections data, but instead wishes to recruit research participants for their own data collection (e.g., via an approved poster displayed in Community Corrections offices, or a survey link distributed to staff).

More information about the BC Corrections research application process can be found at following the link: [Conducting Research with BC Corrections](#)

“Enabling evidence-based decision making to advance BC Corrections' priorities by providing research expertise and data analytic support.”

Research Agenda (2022-2025)

When reviewing research proposals, consideration is given for alignment with both the **Strategic Vision** of BC Corrections and the **PREv Research Agenda**. The Strategic Vision (*pictured right*) reflects the current priorities of the branch (i.e., support all staff, lead successful change, focus on complex needs, and support Indigenous reconciliation). The Research Agenda is described below.



BC Corrections Research Agenda

The PREv Research Agenda has five pillars focused on addressing areas that align with BC Corrections' organizational vision and strategic objectives. These priorities reflect both immediate operational needs and broader knowledge gaps within the field.



Improve Our Tools

Evaluate and improve new and existing risk assessment instruments and procedures to a) ensure continued relevancy and validity and b) address potential racial and cultural biases.

Understand Our Population

Better understand the profile and unique needs of individuals in custody and under community supervision, in order to tailor programs and services accordingly



Generate Evidence to Support Service Delivery

Generate empirical evidence to support continued delivery of core programs and expansion of best practices and demonstrate effectiveness of existing and new initiatives that include measures of desistance.

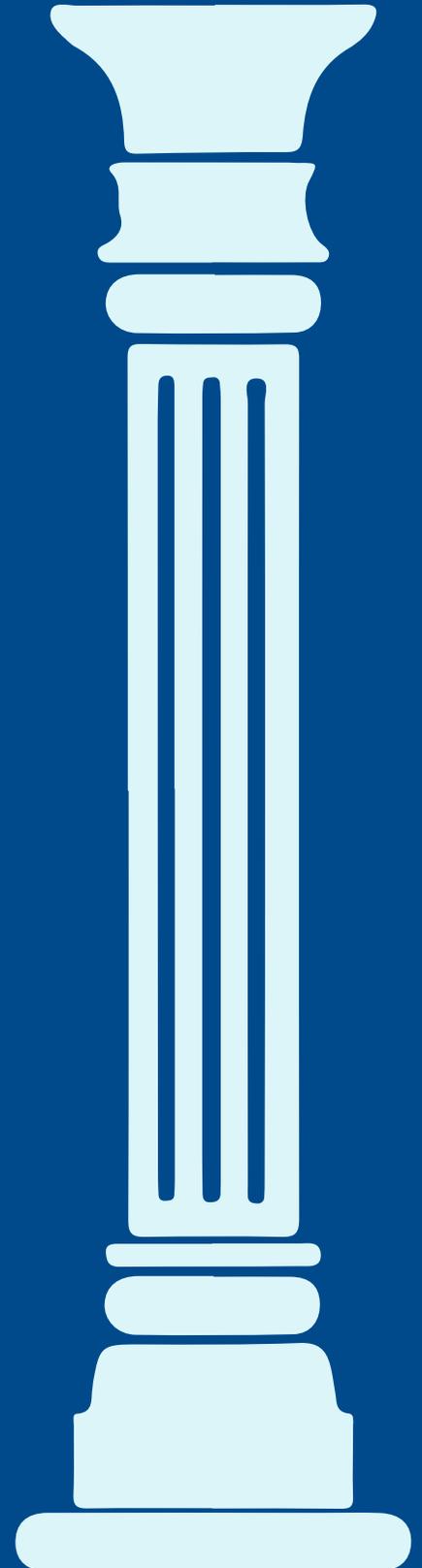
Support Efforts to Reduce Over-Representation

Support new and existing research initiatives that include efforts to support Indigenous individuals and reduce their over-representation within Corrections.



Generate Evidence to Support Staff

Identify ways to improve front line correctional practice and staff wellness.



Spotlight: Research Partnerships

On average there are 15 to 20 active research agreements between BC Corrections and external researchers. We support academics by providing data for analysis, and facilitating primary data collection (e.g., surveys, interviews) with BC Corrections' clients and staff across the Adult Custody and Community Corrections Divisions. Our research partners contribute specialized expertise across multiple disciplines, driving forward critical research that informs policy and practice in the corrections field.

Below are four examples of ongoing research projects supported by BC Corrections.

Exploring Risk Assessment Data



Associate Professor,
School of Criminology,
Simon Fraser University (SFU)

Photo courtesy of SFU

Dr. L. Maaïke Helmus' research focuses on enhancing risk assessment to improve the accuracy, fairness, reliability, and transparency of case management decisions in the criminal legal system.

Drawing on anonymized client and criminal record data from BC Corrections, Dr. Helmus leads two projects focused on tool validation amongst diverse populations.

- The first project examines predictive validity of several risk assessment tools (i.e., Static 99/R, STABLE-2007, and ACUTE-2007) for individuals who have committed sexually motivated offences, and explores whether these tools work equally across different groups (e.g., based on race/ethnicity, age, offence type), and across different types of recidivism (e.g., contact vs. non contact, child sexual abuse material).
- The second project examined whether the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA), a tool designed to measure the risk of intimate partner violence, predicts recidivism similarly for Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals.

Young People and Firearm Offences



Associate Professor,
School of Criminology,
SFU

Photo courtesy of SFU

Dr. Evan McCuish's research focuses on desistance, developmental criminology, and psychopathy.

Using client and criminal history data from BC Corrections, this project explores pathways to and consequences of firearm offending among young individuals (18-29 years old) on probation in the Lower Mainland.

- This work highlights the prevalence of firearm related offences alongside risk and protective factors related to firearm offending in Vancouver and Burnaby.
- Findings from this study will provide an understanding of trajectories leading to firearm-related offending among young people.
- The research is supported by Public Safety Canada's Building Safer Communities Grant to support a broader strategy of improving community safety by reducing firearm offences.

Dr. Jessica Liauw's research areas include fetal growth restriction, preterm birth, medical decision-making, and reproductive health needs of marginalized populations.

This project links BC Corrections' client and criminal record data to health data provided by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), to explore reproductive healthcare access among women who experience provincial incarceration in BC.

- This research assesses whether the 2017 transfer of healthcare responsibilities within BC Corrections to the PHSA has improved access to reproductive healthcare (e.g., cervical cancer screening, prenatal care) for women during and post-release from provincial incarceration.
- Findings will offer evidence for policymakers aiming to enhance care for women affected by incarceration. Improved care for this population is crucial given their unique needs and challenges, including experiences of trauma, primary childcare responsibilities, and gender-specific health needs.

Health Disparities Among Women Experiencing Incarceration



Maternal Fetal Medicine clinician-scientist, BC Women's Hospital; Clinical Assistant Professor, University of British Columbia (UBC)

Photo courtesy of UBC

Drs. Tonia Nicholls (left) and **Amanda Butler's** (right) research lies at the intersections of health and the criminal justice system, with a focus on improving outcomes for justice-involved individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.

- In partnership with BC Corrections, this CIHR-funded two-phase research study is an evaluation of the Guthrie Therapeutic Community (GTC) at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre.
 - **Phase 1** draws on linked data from BC's Data Innovation Program to understand the impacts of GTC participation on a range of outcomes including: new charges, reincarceration, hospitalization, mortality, drug poisoning and access to primary care.
 - **Phase 2** will investigate change mechanisms and the impact of GTC involvement through surveys and interviews with both GTC participants (during and post-release) and correctional staff.
- This evaluation will guide program improvements and support program expansion of prison-based therapeutic communities to other centres, and jurisdictions outside of BC, with an ultimate goal of fostering healing and healthy transitions from custody to community.

Guthrie Therapeutic Community (GTC) Evaluation



Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UBC; Scientific Director, Forensic Research, Mental Health and Substance Use Services



Assistant Professor, School of Criminology, SFU

Photos courtesy of UBC and SFU

Connect With Us

To learn more about establishing a research partnership with BC Corrections, please contact our Research Application Committee Chair at sgcorrectionsresearch@gov.bc.ca.