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Research at a glance

Assessment of the Women's Violence Prevention Program

KEY WORDS: *violent offending, violence prevention, program assessment, women offenders*

What it means

Results show that the Women's Violence Prevention Program (WVPP) was successfully implemented and that participants benefited in a number of areas. However, institutional adjustment did not appear to improve after program participation.

Release outcomes were also examined; however, low-base rates of reoffending and limited follow-up precluded our ability to draw conclusive findings regarding the impact of WVPP on release outcomes at this time.

In fiscal year 2010-2011, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) began implementing a new continuum of correctional programming for women. Given this new direction in program offerings, WVPP is no longer offered to women as it has been replaced by the *High Intensity* streams of the Women Offender Correctional Program (WOCP) and Aboriginal Women Offender Correctional Program (AWOCP). However, many of the skills, program material, and framework in the High Intensity Program are based upon and are similar to the WVPP; therefore, results continue to be relevant. Despite the similarities, the High Intensity Program is lengthier and of greater intensity, which may be better suited to the needs of violent women offenders than the WVPP.

What we found

Results of the pre- and post-program assessment battery and participant feedback reflected positively on the program. These results revealed significant differences in women's scores before and after completing WVPP. Specifically, upon completing the program, there was a decrease in women's expression of anger, hostility, and aggression; an increase in problem-solving and decision-making ability; and a decrease in criminal values and attitudes. Participants' feedback reflected positively on aspects relating to the program content, delivery, and program facilitators.

Less favourable results emerged concerning women's involvement in minor and major institutional misconduct before and after programming. There were increases seen in the rate of minor institutional misconducts from six months before the program to six months after completing the program.

The less favourable results in this area may be attributed to issues of offenders' responsibility (i.e. motivation) or program intensity (violent behavior may be best targeted through high intensity programs). Similarly, the program did not appear to impact release outcomes, although this could be attributable to the length of follow-up and low overall rates of reoffending rather than program efficacy.

Why we did this study

Acknowledging a need for programming that would target the needs of repeatedly violent women offenders, the CSC developed WVPP. The goal of WVPP was to help women develop lifestyles that would be incompatible with violence and would therefore reduce their risk to re-offend violently. The current study is an assessment of the pilot phase of the WVPP.

What we did

The study sample included 83 women who completed WVPP between February 2008 and November 2010. A matched group of violent women offenders who did not participate in the program was identified for comparison purposes. The assessment included a pre- and post-program battery of psychometric measures, participant feedback questionnaires, and an examination of immediate (e.g., institutional misconduct) and intermediate (e.g., release type) outcome measures.

For more information

Rubinfeld, S., Trinneer, A., Derksen, D. & Allenby, K. (2014). *Assessment of the Women's Violence Prevention Program* (Research Report R-330). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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