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Research at a glance

Use of the Custody Rating Scale with Male Offenders

KEY WORDS: *Custody Rating Scale, initial security classification*

Why we did this study

Security classifications influence offenders' penitentiary placement, their access to interventions, and decisions regarding temporary absences and discretionary release. Given these important impacts, security classifications must be determined in a manner that is valid, equitable, and transparent. To meet this goal, CSC uses the Custody Rating Scale (CRS), together with the professional judgment of specialized staff and psychological assessments, if applicable.

The CRS is an evidence-based actuarial measure of institutional adjustment and security risk. Given that it was developed in 1987, a revalidation of the CRS was undertaken to ensure that it continues to be a valid measure in the determination of security classifications.

What we did

The study comprised three parts: (1) a revalidation aiming to measure if the CRS continues to be valid for use in the determination of offenders' initial security classifications; (2) an examination of the CRS classification recommendations produced for Aboriginal offenders; and, (3) an exploration of whether factors other than those already in the CRS might also be predictive of institutional adjustment and risk.

The study focused on male offenders. Analyses were based on 11,438 CRSs completed in 2008 and 2009.

What we found

Offenders who received higher CRS security classifications tended to be higher risk and less well adjusted than those with lower classifications.

Specifically, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders with higher CRS classifications also tended to have higher assessed levels of risk and to be less likely to be granted parole. They were also rated as having higher levels of need, being less motivated,

having lower reintegration potential, and were more frequently involved in institutional misconduct.

Though Aboriginal offenders were more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to receive higher CRS security classification recommendations, the CRS was similarly predictive of institutional misconduct and the granting of parole for offenders of both ethnicities. In other words, though Aboriginal offenders may be over-represented at higher levels of security, results from this study do not suggest that they are inappropriately classified.

Finally, measures of antisocial attitudes and of antisocial associates were also related to involvement in institutional misconducts and the granting of parole. Though the predictive strength of the CRS indicates that there is currently no need to change the approach to the initial security classification of male offenders, if such changes are eventually made, these measures may merit further consideration.

What it means

Results demonstrate that the CRS continues to be appropriate for use in the determination of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders' initial security classifications. Results do not support the claim that Aboriginal offenders are overclassified.

For more information

Gobeil, R. (2011). *Use of the Custody Rating Scale with Male Offenders*. Research Report R 257. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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