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Research Snippet

Women Offenders' Access to Community Maintenance Programs

KEY WORDS: *community supervision, parole, federal women offenders, community maintenance accessibility*

What it means

Parole Officers reported that a small number of women who reside in rural areas or on reserves have difficulty accessing the community maintenance components of correctional programs. It is possible that, for these women, creative solutions such as support in obtaining transportation and childcare may be helpful in ensuring program attendance is possible. This may contribute to public safety given that the completion of the community component of correctional programs has been found to be associated with lower rates of recidivism.

What we found

Surveyed Parole Officers reported that nearly all of the women they supervised lived in urban areas (92%). An additional 7% lived in rural areas and 1% on reserves. Of the women living in rural areas and on reserves, 52% were reported to have difficulties accessing a community maintenance program because of their location. When extrapolating this number to the population of women offenders, we could expect that about 20 women residing in rural areas or on reserves may have difficulties accessing community maintenance programs.

Though community maintenance programs can be offered in a variety of locations, difficulties accessing these programs could be related to travel time to Parole Offices, which begins to increase when rural and reserve locations are compared to urban areas (see Table). On average, women in rural locations and reserves were reported to have approximately 11 and 42 minutes more travel time to Parole Offices, respectively, than women living in urban areas. In conjunction with longer travel times, difficulty accessing transportation may further contribute to challenges in accessing community maintenance programs for women living in rural and reserve locations. In fact, Parole Officers cited access to transportation as a barrier to resources several times in the survey.

Travel time to Parole Office by Area of Residence

Area of Residence	n	Mean Minutes	Standard Deviation
Urban	244	26	18
Rural	18	37	21
Reserve	3	68	32

Impetus

CSC's *Revised National Community Strategy for Women Offenders* (2010) notes that all women under community supervision identified as requiring community maintenance programs should be provided access to these. Given this commitment, the extent to which women are able to access community maintenance programs was examined.

What we did

As part of a larger project examining the needs of women offenders under community supervision, 57 Community and Institutional Parole Officers completed an online survey answering questions regarding the women in the community or soon to be released from an institution to the community that they currently supervise. The Community Parole Officers ($n = 45$), whose responses are presented here, provided information regarding approximately half the women under supervision in the community ($n = 264$). Surveys were completed between January 14 and February 5, 2013.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

Prepared by: Michael-Anthony Lutfy & Jennie Thompson