

Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

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Main points

The Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing (Ministry) is responsible to deliver programs and services to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. If offenders do not receive rehabilitation services that meet their needs at the right time, they are more likely to commit further offences.

Our audit focused on the Ministry's rehabilitation processes in the Regina Qu'Appelle Region. The Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing had designed many good processes to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. However, it did not consistently implement its processes for all high-risk adult offenders. The Ministry needs to make improvements. As such, we concluded that during 2010, the Ministry had adequate processes to rehabilitate adult offenders likely to repeat crimes (including serious or violent crimes) who were serving a community sentence in the Regina Qu'Appelle Region with the following exceptions:

- ◆ Policies were not consistently followed for the timely completion of risk assessments and integrated case management plans, sufficient contact between high-risk adult offenders and probation officers or alternates, and preparation of regular progress reports for adult offenders
- ◆ Management did not monitor whether high-risk adult offenders have timely access to priority community rehabilitation programs
- ◆ A policy was not in place to evaluate rehabilitation programs for high-risk adult offenders
- ◆ Criteria were not in place to select rehabilitation services provided by other agencies and evaluate if high-risk adult offenders benefit from these services

Introduction—Rehabilitating adult offenders in the community

The Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing (Ministry) operates under *The Correctional Services Act* and *The Correctional Services Administration, Discipline and Security Regulations, 2003*. The mandate of the Ministry is to promote safe and secure communities in Saskatchewan.¹ Its responsibilities include delivering programs for individuals in conflict with the law. The Ministry uses a variety of programs and services to rehabilitate offenders in correctional centres and in the community.

In our 2008 Report – Volume 1, we reported on the Ministry's processes to rehabilitate sentenced adult inmates in provincial correctional centres. This audit examined the Ministry's processes to rehabilitate offenders in the community. The Ministry spent approximately \$105 million on adult corrections services in 2009-10, including approximately \$13 million on community operations.²

Background

Saskatchewan has the highest per capita crime rate in Canada.³ Community rehabilitation of adult offenders aims to reduce re-offending by helping offenders return to work and contribute to their community. If offenders do not receive rehabilitation services that meet their needs at the right time, they are more likely to commit further offences.⁴ The Ministry reports that, in 2009-10, 47% of sentenced offenders were re-admitted to a correctional program within 24 months. This percentage has remained relatively stable since 2001-02.⁵

Since the 1980s, international research has shown that correctional centres and other sanctions do not reduce crime if used alone. Factors found to reduce criminal behaviour include assessment of risk and needs, timely and effective services, and community supervision.⁶

¹ Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, *09-10 Annual Report*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³ QED Information Systems. (July 2010). *Sask Trends Monitor*, p. 5.

⁴ Canadian Criminal Justice Association. *Prison overcrowding and the reintegration of offenders*.

⁵ Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, *09-10 Annual Report*, p. 17.

⁶ Solomon, et al. *Putting public safety first: 13 parole supervision strategies to enhance re-entry outcomes*.

While enforcing sanctions, the Ministry aims to keep communities safe by rehabilitating offenders with various services. The Ministry works directly with offenders serving community sentences to reduce pro-criminal thinking and promote positive social behaviours. It refers offenders to other agencies for treatment programs (e.g., addictions, mental illness) or for further education and employment skills. In combination, these services help reduce crime and keep communities safe.

Services to rehabilitate offenders vary in response to offender needs (e.g., pro-criminal attitudes, significant drug abuse) and the resources available in each of the Ministry's seven regions. During 2009-10, the Ministry was responsible for supervising about 6,200 offenders per day in community correctional programs across its seven regions.⁷ The Regina-Qu'Appelle Region is responsible for about 1,700 of these offenders.⁸

The Ministry employs about 130 probation officers, including about 30 in the Regina Qu'Appelle Region. Probation officers administer court orders (e.g., monitor electronic surveillance, curfews, attendance at programs). The probation officers gather information for the courts, refer offenders for rehabilitation services provided by others, and deliver services (e.g., anger management, problem solving, interaction skills).

Exhibit 1 sets out key terms used by the Ministry and throughout this report.

Exhibit 1—Definition of key terms

<p>High-risk adult offender - adult offender likely to repeat crime</p> <p>Integrated case management – a collaborative and co-ordinated team approach to managing an offender's sentence. It involves all internal personnel actively engaged with an offender, as well as partners outside of the Ministry.⁹</p> <p>Rehabilitate – to target and reduce those factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. These factors include pro-criminal attitudes, significant drug and alcohol abuse, inadequate education, lack of consistent employment and family supports, involvement with pro-criminal companions, and anti-social behaviour patterns.¹⁰</p>
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⁷ Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, *09-10 Annual Report*, p. 13.

⁸ Adult Corrections Information Management System, 2009 data.

⁹ Integrated case management policy (2005), p. 1.

¹⁰ Auditor General New South Wales. (May 2006). *Prisoner Rehabilitation*: Department of Corrective Services. New South Wales.

Rehabilitation practices – skills and actions used by corrections staff to rehabilitate offenders (e.g., interaction skills, effective reinforcement or disapproval, problem solving).

Rehabilitation programs – services, activities, or training provided for offenders to reduce criminogenic needs or risk factors identified in risk assessment (e.g., addiction services, anger management, abuse prevention, revising thinking patterns).

Rehabilitation strategies – processes designed to help corrections staff rehabilitate offenders effectively (e.g., risk assessment, integrated case management, staff training, core correctional practices).

Serious violent offender – an offender who has committed a violent crime. The offenses include assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, abduction, robbery with firearms, robbery with other weapons, robbery with no weapons and offenses of kidnapping or any sexual offenses involving child victims. Source: Statistics Canada Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (Juristat Report Crime Statistics in Canada 2005).

Audit objective, criteria, and conclusion

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing had adequate processes for the 12 months ended December 31, 2010 to rehabilitate adult offenders serving a community sentence. We focused on the delivery of the Ministry's processes in the Regina Qu'Appelle Region to rehabilitate convicted offenders likely to repeat crimes (including serious or violent crimes).

Exhibit 2—Audit criteria for community rehabilitation

To rehabilitate adult offenders serving a community sentence, the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing should:

- 1. Identify evidence-based practices to rehabilitate offenders**
 - 1.1. Assess external research to identify evidence-based practices
 - 1.2. Partner with external experts to validate selected practices
 - 1.3. Evaluate community rehabilitation strategies used in Saskatchewan
- 2. Use rehabilitation strategies relevant to offender needs**
 - 2.1. Assess offenders' rehabilitation needs consistently
 - 2.2. Use case management processes
 - 2.3. Allocate resources to priority rehabilitation strategies
 - 2.4. Train staff to use relevant strategies
 - 2.5. Partner with other agencies

- 3. Deliver rehabilitation programs at the right time**
- 3.1. Identify priority programs for offender target groups
 - 3.2. Monitor timely access to priority programming
 - 3.3. Revise program delivery based on offenders' progress

To conduct this audit, we followed the *Standards for Assurance Engagements* published in the *CICA Handbook - Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's processes, we used criteria based on the work of other auditors and current literature listed in the selected references. Management agreed with the criteria in Exhibit 2.

The Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing had designed many good processes to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. However, it did not consistently implement its processes for all high-risk adult offenders. The Ministry needs to make improvements. As such, we concluded that during 2010, the Ministry had adequate processes to rehabilitate adult offenders likely to repeat crimes (including serious or violent crimes) who were serving a community sentence in the Regina Qu'Appelle Region with the following exceptions:

- ◆ **Policies were not consistently followed for the timely completion of risk assessments and integrated case management plans, sufficient contact between high-risk adult offenders and probation officers or alternates, and preparation of regular progress reports for adult offenders**
- ◆ **Management did not monitor whether high-risk adult offenders have timely access to priority community rehabilitation programs**
- ◆ **A policy was not in place to evaluate rehabilitation programs for high-risk adult offenders**
- ◆ **Criteria were not in place to select rehabilitation services provided by other agencies and evaluate if high-risk adult offenders benefit from these services**

Key findings and recommendations

We describe below what we expected (in italics) and our key findings for each of our three criteria, together with our recommendations.

Identifying evidence-based practices to rehabilitate offenders

We expected the Ministry to use research to decide how to rehabilitate offenders and partner with external experts to validate the selected rehabilitation practices. We expected the Ministry to evaluate the community rehabilitation strategies it uses.

The Ministry identified and validated evidence-based practices to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community, and evaluated how to effectively apply community rehabilitation strategies.

To identify effective rehabilitation practices, the Ministry assessed research from a variety of sources. The Ministry assigned experienced program directors to assess the research and select practices to use in Saskatchewan. The Ministry contracted with experts (e.g., from universities and other jurisdictions) to validate practices most likely to rehabilitate offenders effectively in Saskatchewan (e.g., interaction skills, problem solving).

A standardized program evaluation tool (Correctional Program Assessment Inventory) guided the Ministry when selecting new correctional strategies. The Ministry also evaluated community rehabilitation strategies periodically. In 2006 and 2008, the Ministry reviewed a sample of case files to assess if its staff adequately applied rehabilitation strategies such as case management. The Ministry took action on its findings.

Using relevant rehabilitation strategies

We expected the Ministry to use relevant rehabilitation strategies by assessing offenders' needs and applying case management processes. We expected the Ministry to allocate resources to priority rehabilitation strategies. To provide effective rehabilitation, we expected the Ministry to

train its staff appropriately or partner with appropriate community agencies.

The Ministry identified relevant rehabilitation strategies based on assessed offender needs, but did not use its strategies effectively.

The Ministry had adequate provincial policies guiding the rehabilitation strategies of risk assessment, case management, and community supervision of adult offenders. The policies expected corrections staff to use standardized assessment tools. The Ministry validated that these tools would correctly identify offenders' needs and risks. These tools helped probation officers consistently identify offenders' needs related to offending behaviour (e.g., theft, violence) and estimate the risk that offenders would commit further crimes. Probation officers created case management plans (case plans) based on these assessments of offenders' needs and risks.

The Ministry's policies required probation officers to complete risk assessments and case plans within six weeks of an offender starting a community sentence. Completing assessments and case plans promptly was essential as an average community sentence for offenders likely to repeat crimes (i.e., high risk) was about 50 weeks in the Ministry's Regina Qu'Appelle Region (Region).¹¹ Based on our file review, we found the Region often did not achieve the timely assessments and case planning required by the Ministry. Within the required six weeks, probation officers completed risk assessments for 50% of offenders and case plans for 30% of offenders. Within ten weeks from the start of the sentence, probation officers completed risk assessments for 60% of offenders and case plans for 50% of offenders. Within 26 weeks from the start of the sentence, risk assessments and case plans were completed for 90% of offenders.

To be relevant to addressing offenders' rehabilitation needs, assessments and case planning must be timely. If the Ministry does not complete risk assessments and case plans for offenders within six weeks as its policies require, offender rehabilitation may not be effective.

¹¹ Adult Corrections Information Management System – high risk offenders completing a community sentence in 2010.

- 1. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing consistently follow its policy requiring risk assessments and case plans for adult offenders to be completed within six weeks of starting community sentences.**

To maximize rehabilitation efforts, the Ministry's case management policy required integrated case plans for offenders. Integrated case plans would address offenders' court orders including both provincial correctional centre and community sentences. The Ministry's policy required ongoing consultation between probation officers and caseworkers from provincial correctional centres. The Ministry expected this consultation would result in efficient case plans and would help smooth the transition of offenders into the community.

We found little evidence of consultation between the Region's probation officers in the community and caseworkers in correctional centres. Probation officers had access to case plans prepared in correctional centres but prepared new case plans for the community sentence. The new case plans did not recognize rehabilitation progress achieved in the correctional centre.

Many offenders move back and forth between the community and correctional centres (e.g., due to breached court orders or further offences). Using integrated case plans for offenders would make the content of the plans more comprehensive and support a more effective and efficient rehabilitation process.

- 2. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing consistently follow its policy to use integrated case plans for adult offenders that coordinate rehabilitation strategies between the community and provincial correctional centres.**

The Ministry allocated some resources to priority strategies such as remedial contact with a probation officer. The Ministry's provincial supervision policy required high-risk offenders to have weekly contact

with a probation officer or an alternate.¹² The policy required that probation officers verify with alternates that the offender contacted them.

In the Region, offenders' case files often did not document weekly contact with the probation officer or alternates. Some offenders moved out of the Region or spent most of their time in a correctional centre. Of the high-risk adult offenders remaining in the community, our file review indicated a high percentage (83%) of offenders did not have sufficient contact with a probation officer or alternate. This is consistent with the Ministry's own review which showed that probation officers reported a significant proportion of offenders did not receive the amount of contact required by the Ministry's supervision policy.¹³ The extent of planned contact missed by the offender or not recorded by the probation officer varied. Contact with a skilled probation officer reduces reoffending.¹⁴

Regional managers used reports to monitor whether high risk and serious violent offenders received the contact required by the supervision policy. These reports indicated that the Region was not meeting the Ministry's supervision policy for high risk and serious violent offenders. The Region directed its probation officers to focus their efforts on the highest risk and most serious violent offenders. A regional directive should not weaken a provincial policy.

We recognize that not all high risk offenders will co-operate fully with probation officers. In accordance with the provincial supervision policy, the Ministry needs sufficient contact with offenders for effective rehabilitation and evaluation of offenders' progress in response to rehabilitation strategies.

3. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing consistently follow its supervision policy for high-risk adult offenders in the community to have required contacts with probation officers or alternates.

¹² An alternate is an informed designate (e.g., treatment provider, employer, police officer). The designate must know the supervision conditions and be considered reliable to provide the information required for supervision. Source: Ministry policy on Community Supervision Standards.

¹³ June 2010 Ministry review.

¹⁴ Solomon, et al. *Putting public safety first: 13 parole supervision strategies to enhance re-entry outcomes.*

Probation officers completed a mandatory training program and periodic refresher courses. This training helps them acquire and maintain the required knowledge and skills to interact with offenders effectively. For example, the Ministry trained probation officers to use the Ministry's risk assessment tools, case management processes, and relapse prevention tools. The Region also trained probation officers that it contracted through a Tribal Council to provide rehabilitation services to First Nations band members in a specific area. The Region reviewed files managed by the Tribal Council to monitor the supervision of offenders.

The Region worked with various community agencies to rehabilitate offenders. It did not have criteria (e.g., available when needed, effective) to select services from other agencies or periodically assess whether offenders benefited from those services. Criteria would help to clarify what the Ministry expects offenders should gain from those services and could facilitate relationships with other agencies over the long term. The Region used various processes to manage relationships with other agencies (e.g., involvement on committees). The Region monitored attendance to assess if offenders received planned services. It did not have processes to evaluate if the services provided met the Ministry's objectives and effectively contributed to offender rehabilitation.

- 4. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing use criteria to select rehabilitation services provided by other agencies and evaluate if high-risk adult offenders in the community benefit from these services.**

Delivering rehabilitation at the right time

We expected the Ministry to identify priority rehabilitation programs for offender target groups and monitor whether offenders had timely access to these programs. We expected the Ministry to revise the rehabilitation programs it delivers based on the progress of offenders in the community.

The Ministry did not identify all priority programs for rehabilitating offender target groups or whether offenders had timely access to these programs. The Ministry revised some programs in response to offender progress.

The Ministry identified that high risk and serious violent offenders are important target groups for rehabilitation. The Ministry has begun using

relapse prevention planning which research suggests is important to rehabilitate high risk offenders.¹⁵ The Ministry had not identified which other types of programs are most critical for these offenders during the time of their community sentence. Monitoring access to the most critical programs to rehabilitate high risk offenders serving community sentences would help the Ministry deliver the right programs in a timely way.

5. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing monitor whether high-risk adult offenders have timely access to priority community rehabilitation programs.

An offender's case plan ranks the individual offender's needs and planned rehabilitation. Case plans expected offenders' needs would lead to multiple priorities and concurrent services. Case plans did not identify the amount or type of progress (e.g., behaviour change) probation officers expected offenders to achieve during their sentences. This lack of clear objectives makes it difficult for the Ministry to measure offenders' progress.

Probation officers monitored whether individual offenders received the programs listed in their case plans. Policies required probation officers to prepare progress reports at least every 120 days to document offender progress and show significant changes to case plans.¹⁶ Based on our file review, we found for 67% of offenders, probation officers did not complete progress reports as frequently as required by policy. We found 10% of completed progress reports did not document significant changes in the case plan that were highlighted elsewhere in the file. Also, another 10% of completed progress reports stated that offender behaviour had deteriorated but did not update the case plan or change rehabilitation strategies.

6. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing consistently follow its case management policy to prepare regular progress reports for adult offenders in the community.

¹⁵ Relapse prevention is a cognitive-behavioural approach to self-management that focuses on teaching individuals alternate responses to high-risk situations. Source: Dowden, et al. *The effectiveness of relapse prevention with offenders: A meta-analysis*.

¹⁶ The Ministry drafted an update to its case management policy to require progress reports at least every 120 days (formerly 60 days) to reflect its current practice.

The Ministry needs information about which programs are most successful in rehabilitating high risk offenders. This information would help it revise its programs so that it delivers the right programs at the right time. The Ministry monitored how many offenders started various programs, and how many successfully completed the programs. The Ministry did not examine how many offenders should have taken the programs to determine if sufficient program capacity existed. The Ministry did not report sufficient information to allow senior management to identify program delivery issues.

The Ministry had processes to evaluate programs before adopting them to rehabilitate adult offenders in the community. The Ministry did not have a policy or process for evaluating if these rehabilitation programs were effective over time (e.g., which programs, when). In addition, the Ministry did not use comparisons to benchmarks or targets to assess the effectiveness of its rehabilitation programs. The Ministry participated in evaluating joint projects with other agencies (e.g., Saskatoon crime reduction strategy). The Ministry told us it is considering ways to identify and evaluate program suitability across cultural groups.

- 7. We recommend that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing establish a policy to evaluate rehabilitation programs for high-risk adult offenders in the community.**

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