

IACFP Bulletin

RESEARCH
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from The International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology

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A letter from the IACFP President



Greetings and welcome to the new look of the International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP) Bulletin!

My name is Dr. Melvin Hinton, and I am honored to be the current president of IACFP. I am thrilled to usher in a new era for this publication that is filled with thought-provoking content that supports the Association's primary goals to:

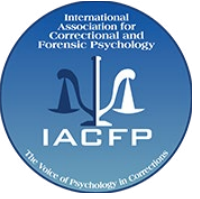
- Promote the development of psychological practice in criminal justice and law enforcement settings.
- Contribute to appropriate teaching practices of the psychology of crime, delinquency, and criminal justice.
- Support the application of effective treatment approaches for individuals under the care of the criminal justice system.
- Stimulate research into the nature of criminal behavior, exchange scientific information, and publish the reports of scholarly studies of criminal behavior.
- Concern ourselves with relevant public, professional, and institutional issues that affect or are affected by the practice of psychology in the criminal justice system.

The updated redesign of this bulletin is intended to hold the attention of the reader and stimulate the reader's intellectual curiosity while presenting relevant information that will be useful for those in the criminal justice and law enforcement spaces. When the *IACFP Bulletin* is presented on our Association's website (<https://www.myiacfp.org>), it will be in a digital e-magazine format. This will allow our readers the continued ability to translate content into multiple languages using their preferred browser translation tools. The *IACFP Bulletin* will feature updated cover graphics, news/information regarding IACFP opportunities/events, and links to our website and directions on how to become an IACFP member. We are also looking forward to welcoming new authors.



Melvin Hinton, Psy.D.
President, IACFP, United States

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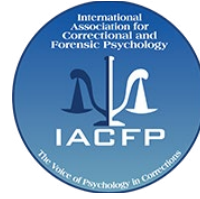


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WHO WE ARE

The International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP)



The International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP) is an organization of behavioral scientists and practitioners who are concerned with the delivery of high-quality mental health services to justice-involved individuals, and with promoting and disseminating research on the etiology, prevention, assessment, and treatment of criminal behavior.

IACFP members are not all psychologists and are not all active in the practice of forensic evaluations or correctional mental health. However, they typically have advanced degrees in behavioral sciences and engage in the administration, practice, teaching or research relating to incarcerated populations and those under community supervision. We have been promoting evidence-based and practitioner-informed practices and research to support correctional and forensic psychologists and other helping professionals who work with justice-involved individuals since 1954. Our goals are to:

- Promote the development of psychological practice in criminal justice and law enforcement settings.
- Contribute toward appropriate teaching of the psychology of crime, delinquency and criminal justice.
- Support the development and application of effective treatment approaches for individuals in the care of the criminal justice system.
- Stimulate research into the nature of criminal behavior, to exchange such scientific information, and to publish the reports of scholarly studies of criminal behavior.
- Concern ourselves with relevant public, professional and institutional issues which affect or are affected by the practice of psychology in the criminal justice system.

Our current areas of focus for funded projects are:

- Professional development
- International practice and an international leadership network, and
- Community corrections.

We are now accepting submissions.

The *IACFP Bulletin* has six issues per year, and is now accepting submissions. To inquire how to submit, please email executivedirectoriacfp@gmail.com with your thesis topic.

Assessing Prison Support for Desistance: The Macquarie Assisted Desistance Instrument (MADI)

KAYLA KIRSHENBAUM / OCT 2023

Background

The criminal justice system has long relied on punitive measures, including incarceration, as a means of deterring criminal behavior. However, mounting evidence suggests that these harsh approaches may not effectively facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society.

In light of this, a recent study conducted in New South Wales, Australia, has taken a significant step towards understanding how prisons can actively support individuals in their journey towards desisting from criminal activities. The study introduces the Macquarie Assisted Desistance Instrument (MADI), a self-report measure designed to assess the extent to which prisons contribute to the desistance process. This [article](#) delves into the key findings and implications of the study, shedding light on the potential for positive change within correctional facilities.

The Concept of Assisted Desistance

A fundamental premise of the study is the concept of “assisted desistance.” This concept acknowledges that prisons should play a crucial role in reducing reliance on antisocial peers, alleviating strain, reducing stigma, and strengthening social bonds to promote desistance from criminal behavior. It recognizes that assisted desistance is not a linear process but rather involves primary (cessation of crime), secondary (change in self-identity), and tertiary (sense of belonging in prosocial communities)

dimensions. Secondary desistance, which involves the transformation of self-identity from an offender to a changed person with prosocial values and goals, takes center stage in the study.

The Importance of Social Support

The study underscores the significance of social-relational factors in the desistance process. Recognition, encouragement, trust, and support from law-abiding citizens and key institutions are identified as critical in facilitating desistance. The concept of generativity and retroflexive reformation, wherein individuals help others to do good, is also linked to successful desistance.

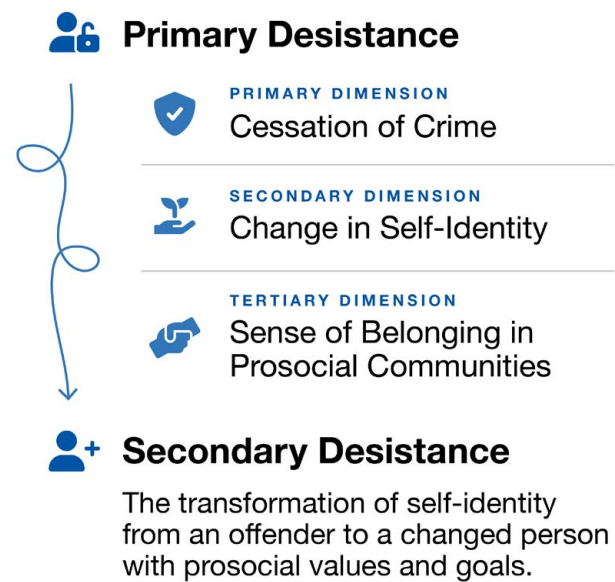
Development and Validation of MADI

To measure the extent to which prisons support desistance processes, the researchers developed the MADI. This instrument underwent rigorous psychometric testing, including exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The results indicated that the MADI, with its 18 items, consistently measured the intended construct of assisted desistance. It demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability and showed strong associations with measures of hope and self-efficacy, confirming its convergent validity. Furthermore, the instrument was able to maintain its factor structure across different populations, allowing for meaningful comparisons between groups.

What is Assisted Desistance?

This concept acknowledges that prisons should play a crucial role in reducing reliance on antisocial peers, alleviating strain, reducing stigma, and strengthening social bonds to promote desistance from criminal behavior.

This is not a linear process.



Perceptions of Assisted Desistance

The study revealed intriguing differences in perceptions of assisted desistance between different groups within the prison setting. Staff members perceived themselves to be providing more assistance than residents reported. Moreover, differences were observed between First Nations and non-First Nations participants, particularly at one of the correctional centers studied. These disparities underline the need for a nuanced understanding of the dynamics within prisons and suggest that tailored approaches may be required to address specific groups' needs.

Factors Predicting Assisted Desistance

Regression analysis showed that age and prison site significantly predicted assisted desistance scores for staff, with older staff members and those at a

particular correctional center perceiving lower levels of assisted desistance. However, for residents, none of the demographic variables significantly predicted assisted desistance scores. These findings emphasize the complexity of perceptions regarding assisted desistance and hint at the importance of context-specific interventions.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The MADl holds promise as a tool to assess the extent to which prisons contribute to assisted desistance. It can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve rehabilitative practices within correctional facilities. The study's findings also underscore the importance of considering individual and group differences in perceptions of assisted desistance and addressing potential disparities within the prison system.

“By emphasizing the importance of social support, recognizing disparities in perceptions, and highlighting the need for tailored interventions, this study paves the way for more effective, rehabilitative practices within correctional facilities.”

Limitations and Future Directions

While the study represents a significant step forward in understanding assisted desistance within the prison context, it acknowledges certain limitations. Future research should aim to link assisted desistance scores with post-release outcomes to determine the instrument's predictive validity. Additionally, the MADl should be validated with diverse populations, including women in prison, to ensure its applicability across different settings.

Conclusion

In a criminal justice landscape marked by concerns about the efficacy of punitive measures, the Macquarie Assisted Desistance Instrument (MADl) offers hope. This innovative tool provides a means to assess and improve the extent to which prisons actively contribute to the desistance process. By emphasizing the importance of

social support, recognizing disparities in perceptions, and highlighting the need for tailored interventions, this study paves the way for more effective, rehabilitative practices within correctional facilities. Ultimately, it is a call to action for a criminal justice system that seeks to promote lasting positive change among justice-involved individuals.

Read the study online [here](#).

Sources

de Vel-Palumbo, M., Halsey, M., & Day, A. (2023). Assisted Desistance in Correctional Centers: From Theory to Practice. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548231193313>

A Comparative Study: Incarcerated Young Men, Masculinity in Prison, and Trauma

KAYLA KIRSHENBAUM / OCT 2023

Incarceration represents a complex and challenging environment, particularly for young men. Prison culture often demands the adoption of certain masculine ideals, specifically masculinity in prison, that can hinder the process of trauma recovery.

Background

This article presents the key findings from a comparative study conducted on a cross-national sample of young Canadian and Scottish men from six different prisons in Canada and Scotland. The aim of the study was to explore the adjustment and experiences of young men ages 18–24 in two different systems for young adults: Canada, where young adults are housed in adult institutions with no specific young-adult regime, and Scotland, where a specific facility and regime for young adults are present. The analysis and results in this article, published in *Men and Masculinities*, Volume 26, Issue 2, 2023, arose from findings that were not the focus of the main research project but subsequently became an area of interest.

The study sheds light on the prevalence of trauma, the role of masculinity in prison, and the need for gender-responsive, trauma-informed care within correctional facilities.

Trauma and Incarceration

Many of the incarcerated young men in this study had already endured multiple traumas and losses before entering prison. Trauma was a common thread among participants, with rates ranging from 62% to 98% reporting at least one traumatic experience before

incarceration. This is a strikingly high prevalence of trauma among incarcerated populations.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was also prevalent, affecting as many as 48% of the participants. The consequences of untreated trauma can be dire, leading to anxiety, depression, self-harm, substance abuse, and a higher risk of recidivism. Recognizing the impact of trauma on incarcerated individuals is essential for improving mental health outcomes and reducing reoffending rates.

The Role of Masculinity in Prison

Masculinity plays a significant role in the prison environment. The concept of “hegemonic masculinity,” characterized by dominance, violence, and emotional restraint, prevails in many correctional facilities. Young men often use violence as a means to establish their identity as adults and men, and this behavior is influenced by the prison setting.

Interestingly, trauma experiences can be linked to the performance of masculinity. Some individuals may adopt exaggerated masculine behaviors, such as physical dominance, to compensate for their perceived vulnerability. This highlights the complex interplay between trauma, masculinity, and the prison culture.

Discouraging Help-Seeking Behavior

One significant finding from the study is that prison masculinities often discourage help-seeking behavior among incarcerated young men. The need to project an image of toughness and resilience is paramount for

Trauma and Incarceration

The relationship between trauma and incarceration among incarcerated young men.

62–98%

reported **at least one traumatic experience** before incarceration.

48%

were affected by **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.



Untreated trauma can lead to anxiety, depression, self-harm, substance abuse, and a higher risk of recidivism.

survival in prison and earning respect among peers. Participants emphasized the importance of not showing weakness, both to other inmates and prison staff.

The Need for Gender-Responsive Trauma-Informed Care

The article argues that understanding the impact of masculinity on incarcerated men who have experienced trauma is crucial for providing effective trauma-informed care within prison settings. Trauma-informed care should be sensitive to the prevailing organizational culture and masculine ideals in prisons. It must prioritize privacy, confidentiality, and safety while also supporting the development of positive and alternate masculine identities.

Conclusion

Incarcerated young men often carry a heavy burden of trauma. The environment in prison can exacerbate their symptoms and hinder their recovery. Recognizing the influence of masculinity on their experiences is vital for creating gender-responsive trauma-informed care programs. By addressing trauma and challenging rigid notions of masculinity in the rehabilitation and support of incarcerated young men, society can work towards better mental health outcomes and reduced recidivism rates.

Read the study online [here](#).

Reprint: An International Exploration into the World of Mental Health in Community Corrections

SONYA A. MCLAREN, TERESA BRASIO-MCLAUGHLIN, AND EMILIE GOSSYE / 2023

This article has been reprinted from [Advancing Corrections, Issue 15 \(2023\)](#) with permission from the International Association of Corrections and Prison Association and the authors.

The world of mental health in community corrections is a complex and dynamic one. Individuals with justice involvement and mental health issues face a number of barriers as they seek to reintegrate into society and pursue desistance from criminal behavior. Through qualitative analysis, this research uncovers seven pivotal themes that not only showcase the barriers but also highlight the essential building blocks necessary for the well-being of these individuals as they navigate their journey back to society.

This research underscores the interconnectedness of mental health, community integration, and successful reentry. It emphasizes the importance of person-centered approaches that meet individuals where they are on their path to desistance. By shining a light on the complexities and nuances of mental health in community corrections, this study provides a foundation for future research and offers valuable insights that can inform policies and practices aimed at supporting justice-involved individuals with mental health needs.

Introduction

The importance of continuity of care and support for people transitioning from prison back into the community

is widely understood, yet many individuals leave prison without the support of pre-release or throughcare programs (Clear & Byrne, 1993; Horn, 2004; Sirdifield, 2012). While organizing these programs is beneficial to the person going through the re-entry process, it is also in the best interest of the broader society to ensure an individual's health needs are met, the causes of re-offending are addressed, and that they are adequately prepared for this transition. Given that most persons in custody do return to the community, as outlined in the Trencin Statement, this is imperative (WHO, 2008, p. 5). To better understand the range of programs offered in community corrections, the International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP) launched a project to map practices from around the world. Based upon the IACFP report on this project, "Mental Health in Community Corrections: International Perspectives", this paper will delve into the role of mental health services in community corrections and discuss the thematic findings of the project.

For many individuals with mental health issues, prisons tend to be the default "final stop on the institutional circuit that includes homeless shelters, psychiatric institutions, and substance abuse residences" (Lurigio, 2011, p. 75). As a result, this specific population is overrepresented within prisons; incidents of self-harm and suicide are increasing alongside rates of imprisonment, and there is evidence that imprisonment exacerbates poor mental health (Bradley, 2009; Brooker & Gojkavic, 2009; Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2009; Senior, 2015; Singleton et al., 1998; Torrey et al., 2010). Mental health issues are also likely to be widespread among previously



imprisoned people now living in the community (Beck & Maruschak, 2001; Lurigio et al., 2003; Roesch et al., 1995; Skeem & Eno Loudon, 2006). Existing research suggests that people whose imprisonment has ended are likely to experience significant challenges related to release and reintegration (Durnescu 2011, 2019; Hayes, 2015). While the pains of imprisonment have been much researched and discussed (Crewe, 2007, 2011, 2015; Sykes, 1958), those of release and re-entry are, as of yet, less visible. Some of these are linked to the shock of release and the sudden change of lifestyle (Martin, 2018), while other areas of concern come from the intersection of the criminal justice system and the social welfare system (Hudson, 1993). Justice involved individuals encounter both external and structural barriers (e.g., difficulties in acquiring housing), cultural and interpersonal barriers (e.g., associated with stigma and social rejection), as well as internal barriers and challenges (e.g., stress and anxiety) (McKendy & Ricciardelli, 2020).

It has been noted that "rehabilitation is a social project as well as a personal one" (McNeill, 2012, p. 17), where reintegration goes beyond the personal level whereby the individual goes through a profound identity change and a process of re-socialization. It also raises questions on how this could ever be achieved in a societal sphere

without considering the very nature of society, including public perceptions of someone with an experience of imprisonment and willingness to welcome them back to the community (social) (Van Zyl Smit & Snacken, 2009), questions of citizenship (moral) (Duff, 2001; McNeill & Maruna, 2010), and the limits of legitimate state power (legal) (Maruna, 2011; McNeill, 2012). While the personal dimension solely focuses on the individual, its success requires the social, moral, and legal levels to work in tandem (McNeill & Maruna, 2010). For example, mental health appears to be associated with non-compliance with supervision probation and re-offending (Slate et al., 2004). However, mental health is not the sole factor resulting in non-compliance. For instance, it could also be argued that as they are monitored more closely than others, there is an increased chance that non-compliance will be spotted more frequently (Skeem & Eno Loudon, 2006).

The need to improve mental health support for this population has been justified not just as a pathway out of re-offending but also on economic, public health, and moral grounds (Brooker et al., 2009b). In this context, despite their heterogeneity, specific factors have been identified as common characteristics of this population: experiencing more than one health problem at any given time (Brooker et al., 2020); experiencing issues of comorbidity (Brooker & Glyn, 2012; Geelan et al., 2000; Lynch et al., 2017; Melnick et al., 2008; Sirdifield, 2012); often socially excluded and have been found to have higher levels of deprivation than that of the general population and their mental health is also worse than that of those from severely deprived areas in the community (Binswanger et al., 2016; Brooker et al., 2009a; Brooker et al., 2012; Pari et al., 2012); experiencing the deleterious effects associated with stigma for both criminal behaviour and mental health issues (Tremelin & Beazley, 2022); more likely to experience a technical parole/supervision violation, resulting in its revocation (Ostermann & Matejkowski, 2014), partially explained by their exact positioning at the intersection of multiple

kinds of vulnerabilities (Porporino & Motiuk, 1995). It is crucial to remember that upon release, and during their supervision, people will be at different adaptation stages to their surrounding circumstances. As such, support plans need to be tailored to the individual and their needs, and the support services need to be stable and accessible (King et al., 2018).

Ultimately, mental health does not exist in isolation. The environment in which a person's mental health issues present is both a factor and an outcome that cannot be discounted. Most individuals have multi-layered complex issues and do not stop at labels such as mental illness or addiction. Addressing someone's mental health issues is a necessary, yet insufficient ingredient in approaching re-entry comprehensively. These challenges must be addressed within the broader context of crime, punishment, and welfare (Fraser et al., 2009). For this reason, as a focus of the current study, a mixed method approach was adopted to explore the different services that multiple jurisdictions provide to individuals under community supervision who experience mental health issues.

Current Study

The current study was a mixed-method explorative study into mental health in community corrections. As previously mentioned, there is a report on the entirety of the project¹ though the focus of this paper is the qualitative portion of the research. There were three components to the qualitative exploration: surveys, semi-structured interviews, and one mini focus group. All the activities took place over the internet. The interviews and focus group were conducted on Zoom or Google Hangouts and a virtual conference platform, respectively, and took approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

1. Available at www.myiacfp.org.

Sample

There were 63 respondents to the survey across 18 countries. The participants for the survey were recruited using a snowball sampling method, where the board of directors at IACFP recruited from their professional networks. Participants were recruited across three disciplines: community corrections officers, program administrators, and mental health practitioners. Informed consent was sought before participation, and participants could withdraw at any time. Participants received no compensation nor direct benefits for participation. Twelve individuals participated in the semi-structured interviews, 11 of whom were from the same three disciplines as the survey respondents, and one was a former justice-involved individual. The former client was recruited through convenience sampling. Finally, there was one mini-focus group with community corrections personnel.

Procedure

The first component of this research study was the survey. The number of questions on the survey depended on the respondent group (i.e., ranged from 28 to 46). The three respondent groups were community corrections officers, program administrators, and mental health practitioners. The survey was available through Qualtrics and took participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. Following the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 individuals across the three respondent groups and one former justice-involved individual. The interviews included questions about their work in the community corrections department or agency to understand their personal experience of conducting assessments and applying models of supervision and support for people experiencing mental health challenges. The semi-structured interview guides had 6 to 11 questions depending on the respondent type. Finally,



there was one mini focus group with a ten-question guide to learn about the breadth of the programs and services provided to clients with mental health challenges. The label “mini” highlights the informal nature of the focus group that occurred early in the research process. The focus group participants included community corrections administrators, staff officers, and practitioners.

Data Analysis Plan

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Six phases were followed as proposed by Nowell and colleagues (2017) to produce reliable and valid qualitative findings. The six phases included being familiar with the data, creating codes, searching, reviewing, defining, and naming themes, and creating a report on the findings. Throughout the process, everything was documented (all meetings, reflexive journaling, documentation of work) and peer debriefings regularly took place.

Results

The thematic analysis revealed seven distinct themes that are closely linked to the primary objective of the research project, which is to enhance research by examining

2. All names of participants provided in this paper are pseudonyms.

the range of community corrections services available internationally for people with mental health issues. In the subsequent sections, a comprehensive discussion of these seven themes is presented.

Complex Nature of Mental Health Service Provision

Participants noted that providing services to individuals in community corrections with mental health issues is a complex task that involves different levels, from the individual to the practitioner/probation officer and the department or organization. The challenges of assisting individuals with comorbidities (e.g., substance abuse, trauma) within the prison context while maintaining a positive therapeutic relationship were also highlighted. Therefore, this umbrella theme emphasizes the complexity associated with delivering appropriate services, including the mode of delivery and necessary accommodations for clients with mental health difficulties. Scott², a former justice-involved individual from the U.S., captures the dynamic and complex nature of his experience in the community following his release from an institution:

Kids are begging for food, you're struggling to keep a roof over your head, lack of education, the stigma of the

mental health impact and the impact of the illness, the felony conviction stigma and impact, and the way society has looked upon that. So all these challenges, and it's like, I still got to feed my children.

Practices

This theme focuses on different aspects of providing services to individuals in community corrections with mental health issues. It includes current models and training for staff, self-care and wellness practices, rapport and therapeutic alliance building, and unique and/or specific practices and best practices. Participants emphasized the importance of self-care and wellness practices for staff, including a holistic approach that prioritizes family first:

...if you're not well, how are you going to take care of the ones that need you effectively...when we talk about self-care, we're talking about a holistic approach...

The models for treatment identified across interviews were the Risk-Need-Responsivity model, the Desistance Model, and the Good Lives Model. Concerning training, there was a dichotomy where participants either reported a profusion or an absence. Most participants identified the importance of rapport, alliance, and trust with their clients to allow for open communication and to best support them. The participants reported both informal and formal practices (e.g., employee assistance programs, technology, etc.), and noted the importance of these to reduce burnout and to help their clients without conceding their own health and well-being. Finally, some of the unique and best practices identified included accountability courts in the United States and Hogoshi in Japan.

Practitioner-Informed and Client-Informed Practices and Realities

The above-mentioned theme includes the distinction between community corrections practice in theory

compared to reality. For example, success is defined in a strict, binary manner in theory. That is, the client is either following all the rules and staying crime-free or is not. For example, Diana, a parole officer from Canada, mentions that:

“It's [compliance] different to me than it is to the department. So to the department, it is following all your conditions, reporting as directed, showing up for your appointments, doing programs, doing counseling, regardless of what your personal situation might be. There's a pretty narrow definition. For me, compliance at its most basic level, stay in contact with me... For certain clients, that's the best that they can do is staying in contact.”

In reality, success may be better viewed as meeting the client where they are, according to the present circumstances of their life in the community. For instance, one participant identified that for some of their clients, merely showing up is their level of success/should be considered a success. This was also expressed by Teresa, a supervisor from Canada:

It can be very informal. It can be something as simple as med [medication] compliance, something as simple as getting them to their doctor for their next injection. It can be something as simple as finding an individual housing. I would just measure success by turning a corner, because we know there's going to be ups and downs. We know that there's going to be successes and disappointments, but as long as we can try and move this individual forward. Typically, as a service, our measure of success is by failure. The noncompliance, the breach allegations,

the re-involvement with the criminal justice system. I try not to focus on that because that's not a measure. That's just a statistic.

Hurdles

The Hurdles theme encompasses four types: organizational, community-level, treatment, and political. These hurdles are dynamic, meaning they can be lowered, eliminated, or elevated. Participants identified various hurdles at each level, such as the need for stable housing to access certain services for individuals with mental health issues. Bureaucracy and politics were also identified as hurdles. Overall, many participants identified that meaningful collaboration is one way to lower hurdles and lead to the best outcomes for the clients.

Interdisciplinary

The interdisciplinary theme emphasizes the need for collaboration between service providers at both the individual and organizational/departmental levels. Participants identified the negative impact of silos and emphasized the importance of working collaboratively across disciplines of services (e.g., health, employment, etc.) to achieve the best outcomes for clients and service providers. A Canadian supervisor mentioned how “...frequent contact with the individuals, and the collaboration between all of the agencies. That is where we see the success.” This interdisciplinary approach goes beyond the formal service providers that are available, but also incorporates the informal support providers, such as family members, who play crucial roles in helping an individual reintegrate and successfully desist.

COVID-19

This theme focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community corrections. Initially, the service providers had difficulty adapting to the changes and helping their clients. The loss of face-to-face contact had

a particularly negative effect on clients with mental health issues. However, as the pandemic progressed, some jurisdictions provided devices to maintain communication with clients who did not have access to technology. The impact of the pandemic for both service providers and clients were heterogeneous and depended on factors such as the client's age and mental health status.

Protective Factors

Finally, the Protective Factors theme involves the two factors participants identified as imperative to success: employment and accommodation. Though these factors are well-known to impact clients' success, the participants considered the quality of employment and stability of the accommodation as the biggest determinants of success. Additionally, many participants noted that intervention for these two factors is the easiest and most common to implement. For instance, a mental health specialist from the U.S. mentioned:

“I think it's the resources that help the most because if a person is homeless, how do we expect them to come to programming or come to a counseling session when they're trying to find housing or food, just those basic needs.”

Discussion

There are ample examples of studies on obstacles that preclude an efficient criminal justice system; however, much less information is available on pragmatic solutions to address those hurdles. Given the complex nature of the work involved, there is no straightforward one-size-fits-all approach. Yet, some recommendations can be made, and opportunities for improvement are available. This

section aims to outline some of the study's implications in three broader clusters as well as limitations and opportunities for future research.

The Complex Nature of Mental Health

This work does not aim to eliminate the complexities within the system but to understand the dynamic and complex nature characterizing individuals, especially those facing mental health issues. Despite this population's higher prevalence of comorbidities, many correctional services address issues separately. Interventions should be designed based on the complex reality of mental health and its impact on all aspects of an individual's life. Therefore, it is vital to promote a broad and proactive approach among staff working in community corrections to holistically engage with mental health challenges and their influence on all aspects of an individual's life. Although the value of the evidence-based lens is well known, it can complicate collaboration, as it requires clients to fit within specific parameters before support is provided. However, staff must meet clients where they are, which requires a well-working continuum of care and a whole-systems approach. For example, one participant recounted the circumstances and challenges with one of their clients with substance abuse issues and cognitive delays. Despite his effort to show up on the day of the appointments, he failed to do so at the agreed-upon time. While some argue that addressing these issues is not a core duty of probation services, others believe that ignoring them will inevitably lead to unsuccessful interventions. However, it is clear that successful re-entry necessitates solid intra-organizational collaboration and a focus on the individual's needs.

Best Practices

The pandemic highlighted and deepened the weaknesses within the criminal justice system that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. It showed that some

of those effects were mitigated where telehealth and collaboration were embedded. However, besides the pandemic, probation services dealt with additional bureaucratic hurdles. Isolated responses failed to address these issues promptly, while cooperation did. This suggests that in crises, including the pandemic, collaboration helps to improve agencies' reactions to disruptions and should prompt organizations to reassess their current safeguards.

The "research-practice gap" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 256) is a persisting obstacle, but specific tools or best practices have shown the value of comprehensive, evidence-based intervention plans. One example is the Good Lives Model as developed by Ward and Durrant based on their idea of practice frameworks (Ward, 2010; Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Maruna, 2007). Plans should be evidence-based, with an additional focus on implementation fidelity and integrity. An in-house evaluation team or partnerships with research institutes can ensure same. They can also monitor and evaluate the program's development and outcome over time.

Participants from different regions identified specific best practices, including trauma-informed care. However, this approach can and should be continued beyond counseling sessions to remedy stigma and bias about mental health. It means moving from the "what is wrong with you" paradigm to a "what happened to you?" mindset. This creates space to process trauma-based experiences and feelings and to adopt coping mechanisms (Turanovic & Pratt, 2012). A good relationship between provider and client is necessary to address issues constructively. However, a range of approaches to supervision exist, and they all fall on the spectrum of accountability versus trust and counseling versus supervising. Wherever they fall, this study emphasizes the need for continuous staff training and professional development that is developed through both bottom-up and top-down approaches. Concretely, that means challenges or requests from staff should inform the topics in combination with what is necessary

to achieve long-term policy and practice goals.

Working in community corrections is inherently challenging, yet caring for staff is often overlooked. The fear of being embarrassed or losing their job was mentioned as a direct barrier to care, resulting in increased stress. Organizations have different ways of supporting their staff, and while emphasizing self-care is vital, it must also be made possible. This could include access to reimbursed counseling sessions or the ability to take personal and sick days without a doctor's note. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of ensuring there is support for the mental health of service providers who are helping individuals with mental health issues.

Culture, Community and Collaboration

Individualized approaches are worthwhile as someone reintegrating into the community can be supported through needs and risk management. However, a highly individualistic climate, as found amongst some of this study's explored regions, can increase stigma and outright rejection of justice involved-individuals. Thus, strong community support and engagement are crucial. Shifting from an individualized to a collective approach within communities takes effort, time, and courage. It includes breaking down silos, flexibility in policy and practice, and considering a client-centered approach as a community-focused approach.

A first step is to engage stakeholders and engage them with the work of probation services and community corrections. This must include strengthening the direct and indirect ties between individuals and the community, including those with family members and professional relationships. A whole-systems approach that provides multi-layered support across all stakeholders gives individuals the best chance to reintegrate and successfully desist. Public education campaigns,

seminars, and presentations targeting specific stakeholders can help increase, improve, and embrace connections with justice-involved individuals. A good example from one jurisdiction was the habit of inviting the judge who sentenced clients to speak at the program's graduation. Visibility-increasing initiatives, such as book drives or delivering meals, can also amplify the process.

The study highlights two best practices for community involvement in probation services. The first is the Hogoshi program in Japan, where citizens aid professional probation officers by providing support and serving as liaisons between justice-involved individuals and the community. This program demystifies probation practices and represents a caring community. The second practice is the forensic peer mentor program in the state of Georgia. Individuals with lived experience in the justice system serve as role models and peers for justice-involved individuals with mental health or substance abuse issues. This program engages clients in a person-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive way and provides a better understanding for probation officers and counselors. Based on the success of these programs other jurisdictions should consider implementing programs that utilize citizens or individuals with lived experience in the justice system to best support individuals reintegrating and to provide support for mental health in community corrections.

It is well-established that stable employment and housing are key in community-oriented personal rehabilitation, as it provides structure and purpose. However, individuals with a criminal record often face discrimination, making it difficult to obtain employment and stable accommodation. "Fair-chance policies", individualized assessments and a housing-first approach can help address this issue. The latter approach can significantly decrease homelessness and improve housing retention rates. This approach requires long-term, strategic planning and partnerships with local organizations to support justice-involved

“...some themes seemed to be widely recognized as necessary building blocks for success. These include meaningful collaboration, rapport, trust, and an emphasis on housing and employment. Much depends on meeting the client where they are, as reintegration and rehabilitation is a unique and non-linear process.”

individuals. Making support available to individuals facing issues once housed, such as discussions with landlords, is also necessary.

Future Research

As this was an initial examination of mental health in community corrections globally, there are several avenues for future research. Research on mental health in community corrections should explore the housing-first approach. Meeting an individual's basic needs is a prerequisite for the case management team, allowing them to focus on providing person-centred care. Conducting a community needs assessment can help identify the concerns and needs of stakeholders for better cooperation. However, housing must be provided systematically and coherently by investing in a widespread, locally embedded policy decision rather than a temporary solution.

Further research is required to identify the needs of community corrections staff, including those concerning professional development or staff welfare. It requires an understanding of the intersection of client and staff needs, and the necessary training to achieve long-term policy goals, without failing to prioritize the well-being of those who care for this population.

Finally, research should continue to identify what works in community corrections and how to implement those methods effectively. In this study, examples such as the Hogoshi or the forensic peer mentors stand out, and programs such as these should be piloted in other jurisdictions. Researchers should focus on enabling local success by analyzing how these approaches can be applied in different contexts while paying attention

to local practices. Research should include ways to ensure program adherence and staff competency in implementing and utilizing those methods.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore, from an international perspective, the multitude and variety of services that are offered for people experiencing mental health issues in community corrections. This exploration emphasized that despite the inevitable influence of the local context and its specificities, some complexities are not limited to a specific jurisdiction. These include a siloed landscape of services, a strict understanding of success, and a lack of sustainable investments in employee selfcare. On the other hand, some themes seemed to be widely recognized as necessary building blocks for success. These include meaningful collaboration, rapport, trust, and an emphasis on housing and employment. Much depends on meeting the client where they are, as reintegration and rehabilitation is a unique and non-linear process. This exploratory research emphasizes the value of exchanging best practices. Ultimately, despite their differences, the jurisdictions who participated in this study agree on the value of person-centered, community-integrated approaches.

To read the original publication and to see a full list of references, click [here](#).

About the Authors

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IACFP International News, Research, and Resources for Sep/Oct 2023

CHERYLN TOWNSEND / APRIL 2023

We've compiled top highlights from recent research, policy, and practice resources across the world for our latest IACFP International News summary. Our topics for September and October, 2023 include recent research; policy updates; considerations for practice; and upcoming conferences.

Coming Soon...

The IACFP Board is making changes in the way it communicates with its members. The first step will be the integration of Higher Logic, a member and customer engagement platform, into the website. This will provide an updated member portal, add the ability for members to engage with one another through the IACFP Connected Community (if they choose to do so), and create a foundation for future additions. If you would like to be part of the beta testing for this, please contact Cherie Townsend at executivedirectoriacfp@gmail.com.

1 Research

“Prison Life and Nordic Exceptionalism”

The Criminology Academy has posted [episode 81](#) of their podcast, “Prison Life and Nordic Exceptionalism with Ben Crewe”. The three areas covered in the podcast are to:

- Compare prison systems in Norway, England, and Wales
- Present the Nordic Exceptionalism Thesis
- Provide a systematic comparative analysis of prison life.

The podcast is hosted by Jose Sanchez and Jennifer Tostlebe, who release new episodes every two weeks.

Corrections Services Canada Research Report

Corrections Services Canada recently published a research report entitled “Qualitative Examination of Specific Responsivity Factors of Correctional Program Participants with Mental Health Symptoms, Cognitive Impairment, or Learning Disabilities”. A summary of the research report and instructions on how to obtain the full report can be found [here](#). The purpose of the study was to identify how Correctional Program Officers and Indigenous Correctional Program Officers address the various specific responsivity factors that may interfere with offenders’ participation in correctional programs.

The study found the following:

“Participants often had multiple responsivity factors, which CPOs and ICPOs observed as interfering with their program participation. Responsivity factors were most commonly observed as interfering with participants’ abilities to understand, learn, or apply program content.”

In the majority of cases, CPOs and ICPOs provided various accommodations, tools, and support to address responsivity needs, although adaptations were more common in the adapted program streams. CPOs and ICPOs commonly simplified program concepts and materials, prompted participants to use program skills, and worked one-on-one with the participants to review material and/or complete work. Notably, there were also many instances of the participants taking the initiative to address their own responsivity factors by asking for extra support and assistance.”



2 Practice

Thailand Institute of Justice

The United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network (PNI) consists of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and 18 institutes and entities around the world. The mission of PNI is to assist the international community in strengthening cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice on the global, regional and sub-regional levels, within the framework of the United Nations Crime Program. One of the ways they share information is through the “PNI Newsletter”.

The most recent [PNI Newsletter](#) highlights the role of PNI in organizing the 32nd workshop session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. This workshop was held in May 2023 and focused on access to justice and realizing a secure society. As outlined in the posting regarding this issue, they stated:

“...this issue also focuses on the PNI contribution to the UN Crime Programme and includes updates on activities undertaken during 2022 and early 2023 in the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration. With an aim to share information and knowledge, this issue contains three short articles: on Comparing the Negotiations on the Proposed UN Cybercrime Convention with Earlier Conventions, by Dr. Matti Joutsen, on restorative justice

for sexual offences, by Dr. Siobhan Lawler and on the topic of the collaborative and people-centred approach to justice reform by Dr. Kittipong Kittayarak. To provide a closer look at individual Institutes, this issue features interviews with directors of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI).

Also, of interest to readers of the *IACFP Bulletin* is a summary and thumbnail presentation of all recent PNI publications. This is an excellent resource!

National Institute of Justice Research Conference

After twelve years, the National Institute of Justice recently hosted the National Research Conference, which focused on promoting evidence to action. A summary of the conference and recordings of plenary sessions can be found at [this link](#).

While this conference attracted an audience from the United States, the topics have global application. As noted in the conference summary, a common theme of the conference was the need to bring researchers and practitioners together as early as possible—ideally, during the design and implementation phases of a new program, when dialogue can have the most impact in shaping the direction of both the research and the program.

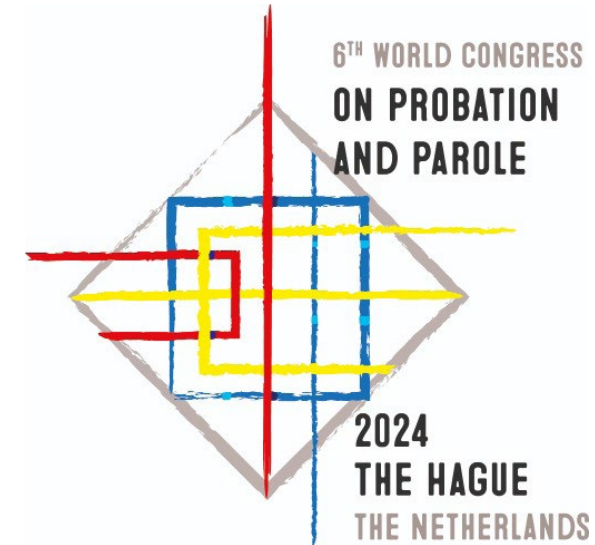
The session, titled “The Importance of Inclusive Research—How Engaging People Closest to the Issue Makes for Better Science and Greater Impact”, may be of particular interest to readers of the *IACFP Bulletin*. As noted in the summary, “Inclusive research demands mixed-method approaches to answering research questions... without engaging with people who are closest to the problem, we don’t understand the full context of an issue nor the full implications of our research findings.” This is certainly true for justice-involved individuals experiencing serious mental illness and mental health challenges.

3 Upcoming Conferences



ICPA 2023 Conference, October 22-27, 2023

Registration is open for the ICPA 2023 Conference; additional information is available [here](#). IACFP will be sponsoring the 2023 Distinguished Scholar Lecture, which will be announced in the next *IACFP Bulletin*.



6th World Congress on Probation and Parole, April 16-18, 2024

The Netherlands will host the 6th World Congress on Probation and Parole in The Hague. Reclassering NL invite interested parties to a varied and inspiring congress on the theme 'The future of probation and parole': how do we see and utilize probation and parole in different settings and developments? What can we learn from the past? And what can we learn from each other? More information can be found [here](#).



American Correctional Association (ACA) Winter Conference, January 4-7, 2024

Additional information on ACA's winter conference can be found at www.aca.org.



International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP)

Promoting evidence-based and practitioner-informed practices and research to support correctional and forensic psychologists and other helping professionals who work with justice-involved individuals since 1954.

Learn more about IACFP or become a member at www.myiacfp.org.