

Soumission par : / Submission by :

Five Star Consultants

**AN INTENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM
IN A CORRECTIONAL CENTRE:

REVIEW & FEEDBACK ON
EVALUATION ACTIVITIES TO DATE**

Report prepared for: *Burnaby Correctional Centre for
Women*

Report prepared by: *Five Star Consultants*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intensive Treatment Program (ITP) was established at the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women. The ITP offers 20 weeks of interventions for participants with a history of aggressive, dysfunctional and/or self-destructive acts in an institutional or community setting. The ITP encourages participants to develop insight and understanding to their behaviors through active participation in a group setting. An external evaluation was initiated, but not completed, to determine the effectiveness of the program with respect to its goals and outcomes.

The evaluation report highlights the evaluation activities and findings that have been completed to date. Interviews have been completed with two program facilitators and the warden, a guide for participant interviews has been developed, and data from psychological tests has been collected. The evaluation issues address the program rationale, available resources, implementation, program effectiveness, and unintended effects of the program.

We were asked to provide advice for this evening's board meeting addressing the five evaluation issues. Overall, we recommend the following:

- Address inconsistencies between evaluation design and evaluation framework;
- Conduct a needs assessment to address questions regarding program rationale;
- Create a participant profile;
- Implement a long-term tracking program of ITP participants;
- Complete data collection methods listed in the matrix; and
- Ensure stakeholders (staff and inmates external to ITP) are represented.

In conclusion, we feel that the initial evaluation provides a solid starting point for demonstrating program effectiveness. Our suggestions can be used to further this evaluation. We hope this information provides valuable information to prison officials and the board of directors.

OVERVIEW

The Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW) established the Intensive Treatment Program (ITP) in 1998, based on the Correctional Service of Canada's *Mental Health Strategy* goals for mental health programs (December 1997). The ITP is a treatment program aimed at women that have a history of aggressive, dysfunctional and/or self-destructive acts in an institutional or community setting. The program is a 20-week (five month) active, group-based intervention that encourages participants to develop and exercise "self-help" skills to understand and prevent their own aggressive, violent or self-destructive behaviours. Appendix 1 outlines program activities and impacts.

The ITP addresses two populations of women – those classified as maximum security and those women classified as medium or minimum security "whose mental health needs require more intensive support to successfully manage them at these security levels". Women may volunteer for the program, but must be referred by a judge, sentence manager, or case manager in order to participate. Participation criteria are specific and consider factors such as unique individual characteristics, motivation to change, willingness to cooperate, and treatment priority.

As implementation of this program is recent (only 3 sessions had occurred since inception), an evaluation was undertaken "to determine the effectiveness of the program with respect to its goals and outcomes", and secondarily, to pilot test the success of the program with women sentenced at all federal security levels. As the original evaluation team is no longer able to complete the evaluation, our group was asked to provide advice on the program based on the existing evaluation framework and evaluation activities completed thus far. Our tasks were to:

- i) Identify and respond to the evaluation questions that you are able to answer with the information that has already been collected;
- ii) Identify steps to address questions that remain;
- iii) Describe aspects of the evaluation that have not been sufficiently completed; and,

- iv) Identify possible long-range effects of the program and how they may be assessed.

This report, intended for officials at BCCW, addresses these tasks on an issue-by-issue basis using the five evaluation issues identified by the original evaluation team. Our team has taken into consideration the range of stakeholders in this evaluation (i.e., staff and inmates at BCCW who are and are not involved with ITP, and outside groups such as community agencies and the general public). Sensitive issues such as power climates within the institution and ethical issues concerning inmate involvement in the evaluation were also considered. We have identified the issues and responded to the evaluation questions when possible and indicated steps to address the questions that remain and provided suggestions for further evaluation.

SUMMARY & CRITIQUE OF EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Issue #1 – Program Rationale: Is there a need for the Program?

Three evaluation questions were used to explore the rationale of the program.

- 1) Are the program's activities and outputs linked to achieving its effects in a valid and logical way?*

In our opinion, the logic model has clearly shown the linkages between activities and outputs. However, from the interviews with the warden and facilitators, the links between the activities and outputs were not clear. For example, in many cases the responses of the warden differed from those of the facilitators. The warden seemed to have a more positive impression of the program. One of the data sources selected to answer this question was a literature review, although it was unclear whether this has been completed or what role it played in the evaluation activities to date (e.g., whether it was used to design the program activities and the interview questions).

To continue to address this question, we believe that the participants' opinions should be obtained via survey and interviews. We recommend a review of the participant files to ensure that the program activities are achieving its desired activities (i.e. number of negative behaviors engaged in during and following program participation).

2) Does the program have its own place and function at the facility?

This question was only partially answered by the present evaluation. Through the facilitator interviews there appear to be links with ITP and other mental health services, however these were the only staff interviews conducted. We are unsure of the buy-in regarding the ITP by psychologists, case managers, and other staff. In order to use the indicator in the matrix (clarity of links) we need to interview or conduct focus groups with non- ITP staff.

3) Does the ITP serve the targeted population?

The data sources listed should be completed to answer this evaluation question. This question could also have been asked in the interviews with the facilitators. The number of women volunteering to participate and/or using ITP services may not be the best indicator of achieving the target population. By looking at the case files and participant records a more complete profile of program users could be developed. This could be used to ensure that the targeted population is the actual users of the program.

Overall, additional work is needed to address the issues surrounding program rationale. We question whether a needs assessment was conducted before program implementation. This would inform the facility whether the clients and facility needed this type of program and avoid program duplication.

Issue #2 – Resources: Are there adequate resources and support for establishing the ITP?

- 1) *Do the Facilitators have sufficient time, acknowledgement, and support for activities regarding the program?*

The Facilitator interviews are the best source of information to answer this question however, they were not directly asked questions regarding their time, acknowledgement and support. Question #18 in the interview addressed this evaluation question somewhat, however, the responses revolved around program content, staff awareness, and ethical considerations. The interview questions could be more specific to the indicator used.

- 2) *Do the institutional staff support the program?*

From the Facilitator interview we learned that some of the facility staff support the ITP while others did not. For example, the sentence managers were more supportive of the program than the case managers. Meanwhile, the three psychologists differed in their level of support. We recommend that interviews or focus groups be conducted with non-ITP staff to evaluate first-hand the support of other personnel.

Overall, this issue was only partially answered. The methods were adequate but more direct and specific questions need to be included in the facilitator interviews. Additional information needs to be collected from non-ITP staff to address the issue of support.

Issue #3 – Implementation: Are activities of the program organized in a way that its goals can be achieved?

- 1) *Is the prison community familiar with the program and its facilities?*
- 2) *Is the program meeting the needs of the participants?*

Regarding question #1, we agree with the suggested data sources and support the implementation of these activities. For question #2, the facilitators indicated that the

program meets the needs of the participants if it is tailored to their individual needs or if the group is cohesive. Because this program is delivered in a group format, we suggest the use of focus groups to address this question. If needed, follow-up interviews could be completed after the focus groups to further address this issue. Regarding the participant survey, the method of delivery required special consideration to account for varying literacy levels among participants.

Overall, this issue neglects the individual activities completed in the group session (i.e., anger management, effective communication, etc.). It is also necessary to examine individual attendance rates/patterns and the organization and delivery of these activities.

Issue # 4 - Effectiveness: Is the program effective?

Four questions were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the ITP:

- 1. To what extent does the program help in teaching the participants skills in order to help identify, understand, and modify their behaviour?*

Although, not listed on the original matrix as a data source, the scores on psychometric/social tests for ITP participants display the effectiveness of the ITP on measures of anger, guilt, stress, judgement, emotional vulnerability, and social skills. Improvement in these measures indicates that the ITP participants are understanding and modifying their behaviour. However, these findings would be strengthened with the completion of the other indicated data sources (i.e. interviews with participants and participant survey). Further, several indicators are not addressed by the listed data sources. For instance, staff's assessment of effectiveness needs to be addressed through contact with the staff (i.e. interviews or surveys) and pre-and post-number of incidents and change in security level could be addressed through client files or incident reports.

2. *Did the environment at the facility change after the implementation of the ITP?*

As determined by the facilitator interview, most ITP participants are released shortly after program completion and thus there has not been sufficient opportunity to affect the atmosphere or other inmates. Further, the relatively small number of participants may not significantly impact the inmate population at large. Interviews or surveys of inmates and staff (both involved and not involved with ITP) could determine any change in environment provided by the existence of the ITP. Review of the overall incidents of self-destructive behaviour or violent occurrences by inmates may indicate a change in the facility environment.

3. *Are the inmates involved in the ITP empowered by it, or showing any changes in their insight or understanding or their behaviour?*

Scores on psychometric/social tests for ITP participants display the effectiveness of the ITP on measures of anger, guilt, stress, judgement, emotional vulnerability, and social skills. Improvement in these measures indicate that the ITP participants are understanding and modifying their behaviour. According to facilitator interviews, participants in the first two ITP groups had fewer incidents after the program was completed. Focus groups with participants may provide valuable information surrounding participants perception of empowerment and insight as these women have likely become comfortable sharing within a group setting. However, individual interviews may be important to clarify or elicit sensitive issues that may be avoided within the group setting. Continuing the evaluation through completing the additional data sources (i.e. interview/survey/focus groups with participants, and review of participant assessment by facilitators) listed in the matrix could further strengthen this data. Further, extending the data sources to include incidence reports and client files to measure incidence occurrence may be beneficial.

4. *Are there any changes in the physical and psychosocial aspects of the inmate's life?*

At this time, no data has been collected to address this question. Interviews with participants, facilitators, and non-ITP staff (i.e. psychologists, guards) could collect information surrounding any changes in the inmate's lives. Focus groups with participants may also be an effective tool to gather perception of changes within their lives.

The evaluation has begun to demonstrate the short-term effectiveness of the ITP. Overall, we suggest completion of uncollected data through methods listed in the matrix. Several stakeholder groups have not been included within the data sources (i.e. non-participant inmates, non-ITP staff) who can provide valuable information related to this evaluation.

Issue # 5 – Unintended effects: Does the program create any positive or negative unintended effects?

Two questions were used to evaluate the unintended effects:

1. *Does training for the ITP reinforce effects of other programs that the participants are taking part in and help determine their interests?*

At this time, no data has been collected to address this question. In order to determine whether participation in ITP strengthens the effects of other programs, interviews with other program facilitators, to assess their perception of ITP participants within their programs, is essential. Completion of the listed data sources in the matrix (i.e. interviews with participants, facilitator and participant surveys) would provide valuable information related to this question.

2. *Does the program create any positive unintended effects?*

The evaluation report indicates a potential positive unintended effect as the positive influence an ITP participant may exert over her peers. However, this has yet to be determined from the completed evaluation activities. Interview or survey of non-participant inmates and staff and completion of the data sources listed within the matrix may provide information on positive unintended effects of the ITP.

This question does not address negative unintended effects of the ITP. Potential negative unintended effects outlined in the evaluation report include: power struggle between inmates and guards, issues related to sharing of experiences and feelings between participants, feeling of loss upon completion of the program, and animosity between participants and non-participants. Therefore, we suggest using the above data collection methods used in evaluating positive unintended effects to also elicit information on the negative unintended effects of the ITP.

Overall, we believe the unintended effects of the ITP have not been measured. Data collection needs to be completed (i.e. interview of participants, non-participants, and staff) to address this issue. *A summary of the evaluation components that need to be addressed further are outlined in Appendix 2. This appendix provides a bulleted list of the recommendations detailed above and provides action steps for those recommendations.*

LONG-RANGE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAM

As clearly outlined in the original report, it is vital to consider both the intended and unintended impacts/effects of the program. Both positive and negative effects must be assessed whether the participant remains incarcerated in BCCW post-program, or whether she is released. Issues such as scape-goating and power climates could be assessed using a post-program survey within BCCW. Long-term tracking of participants would be useful to examine recidivism rates, substance abuse, social support, employment success, and other behaviours relevant to the ITP goals. These individuals could be accessed through their parole/probation officers for the first year after release. Furthermore, participants' interaction with community agencies such as mental health

counsellors, employment agencies, law enforcement agencies, and the general public should be assessed as part of this follow-up.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we felt the evaluation framework, intended indicators and data sources have great potential for addressing the program issues and questions if implemented appropriately. Based on evaluation activities reported thus far, the program seems to be effective in meeting its goals. This could be confirmed by continuing with evaluation activities, and by considering the recommendations outlined in this report.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES & IMPACTS

ACTIVITIES:

Group Therapy:

- Cognitive and didactic
- Interpersonal psychodynamic
- Anger management
- Effective communication
- Sharing autobiographies
- Intimacy and relationships
- Relapse prevention techniques
- Victim empathy and personal responsibility
- Overcoming violence

Peer Assessment:

- Share personal experiences
- Reflect on each other's performance in the group
- Offer constructive feedback to peers

IMPACTS:

Immediate:

- Participants gain insight and awareness into own their behaviour
- Support of women in crisis

Long-term:

- Changes in offender attitude
- Develop self-help skills for the prevention of aggressive and dysfunctional behaviour

APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION COMPONENTS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED FURTHER

As described in the report, the following aspects of the evaluation framework and activities completed thus far must be addressed more comprehensively:

- Inconsistencies between the evaluation design and evaluation framework (matrix) must be addressed. Some questions listed in the evaluation design (report p. 15-16) do not appear in the evaluation matrix (p. 17-19) or are placed under a different issue than what was listed in the design. These must be consistent to ensure that all goals of the evaluation are achieved. *ACTION: Include all questions from the evaluation design in the matrix and check that they fall under the correct issue in the matrix to ensure that they are answered.*
- It is unclear whether a needs assessment was completed to assess the program activities and outputs prior to implementation. It may be useful to conduct one in order to determine whether the program is reaching its intended target population, identify barriers to use, and providing appropriate activities to intended participants. *ACTION: Conduct a needs assessment as part of evaluation activities to address questions regarding Program Rationale.*
- In order to better understand the outcomes of the program, it may be useful to create a profile of participants to determine who is/is not benefiting from the program and identify types of participants that the program may not be reaching. *ACTION: Create a participant profile based on participation criteria and participant feedback and case files.*
- Instituting a long-term tracking component to the evaluation may help officials assess the intended and unintended long-term impacts of the program, by following participants after completion of the program whether they remain in BCCW or are released. *ACTION: Implement a long-term tracking program that follows ITP*

participants at 6 and 12 months post-program to assess program impacts on behaviour, empowerment and attitudes.

- It is unclear whether the literature review was completed. Some citations appear in the report, but it is unknown whether literature was used to develop interview or survey questions. *ACTION: Conduct literature review, or use results of existing literature review if possible, to inform further evaluation activities based on the success of other, related evaluations.*
- Focus groups seemed to be an alternative data source for the evaluation. It could be a useful source of first-hand information on group dynamics as they would occur in the intervention and thus would be useful in the evaluation. *ACTION: Use focus groups with ITP participants to gain rich data on the outputs and effectiveness of the program.*
- The survey component of the methodologies does not describe the ITP non-staff and non-participant surveys that are listed in the evaluation matrix. This could be a very important source of data regarding perceptions and impacts of the program in the broader environment. *ACTION: Ensure that staff and inmates external to the ITP program are included in the evaluation activities.*
- Ethical issues such as inmate confidentiality, power climate, and sensitivity must be considered when selecting and training interviewers and focus group facilitators. *ACTION: Select and train interviewers/facilitators to be aware of inmate confidentiality, power climates, and other sensitive issues such as abuse or past behaviours.*