

May 2016



PROGRESS AUDIT REPORT: EFFECTIVENESS OF
B.C. COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

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Auditor General
of British Columbia

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The Honourable Linda Reid
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
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Dear Madame Speaker:

As mandated under Section 11 of the *Auditor General Act*, I have the honour to transmit to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia my follow-up report on our 2011 audit of Community Corrections.

We conducted this work in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook - Assurance.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, B.C.
May 2016

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

IN 2011, WE PUBLISHED the *Effectiveness of B.C. Community Corrections* report with eight recommendations to help the Community Corrections Division (division) address key risk areas that were seen to be negatively impacting its performance. This report captures the follow-up work my Office has done to examine the division's progress in addressing these.

The follow-up phase plays an important role in the audit process. It provides audited organizations with an opportunity to demonstrate the progress they have made in implementing our recommendations. In June 2015, this process was strengthened when the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) adopted a new approach to following-up on our reports. Organizations must now submit a detailed action plan that identifies the work it plans to undertake for each of our recommendations, and a timeline for doing so. My Office then selects a sample of action plans to audit based on a number of factors, including risk, dollar value and impact. This report is the first to come out under the new process with PAC.

My office carried out this audit to see if the division's action plan accurately presents its progress in implementing six of the eight recommendations from our 2011 report. We found that the division has made progress in addressing all but one of our recommendations, but its action plan did not accurately reflect the degree of progress made. The division reported that it had fully or substantially implemented all six recommendations and we found that only one meets this standard. Of the remaining five recommendations, four are partially implemented and one has seen no action taken.

The variation between the division's action plan and our audit findings is due in part to our different understandings of the self-assessment process. The division reported its progress based on all the effort it put in



CAROL BELLRINGER, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General

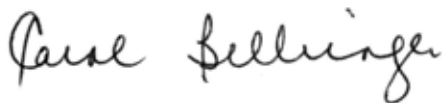
AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

to addressing each recommendation, where the audit looked at whether the recommendation had been achieved. We will coordinate with PAC on future action plan requests to ensure that our expectations are clear.

Of the five recommendations that are not yet implemented, the division has committed to further work on three of these by strengthening its quality assurance processes and ensuring that its new tools are actually working. We are concerned that the other two recommendations - recommendations 2 and 3 - will not be implemented based on the division's response that suggests there is nothing more they can do. Not implementing these recommendations means the division will have an incomplete understanding of the impact its programs and resources have on its success.

Ensuring that the division performs optimally is in everyone's best interests. Of all adult offenders that are awaiting trial or are sentenced in B.C., 90% are supervised in the community. Only 10% are sent to jail. When done right, community supervision can reduce re-offending - enhancing public safety and saving the justice system money. Community supervision also allows offenders to stay connected with their families, remain employed and keep their housing - lessening the disruption a period of jail time can have on an offender's life. It is clear that rehabilitation is a key element of community supervision.

I would like to thank the division for their continued work with our Office and their dedication to improving the effectiveness of community supervision.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, B.C.
May 2016

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM 2011 REPORT

WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS AND CORPORATE PROGRAMS DIVISION:¹

- 1** publically reports its performance in reducing the overall rate of re-offending with a discussion of the role the CCCP plays, as well as the impact a performance measure that can change over time has on confirming program effectiveness.
- 2** extends its evaluation framework to understand the effectiveness of contracted service providers and community programs in reducing re-offending.
- 3** completes a comprehensive impact assessment to determine if there are any gaps between its staff capacity and caseload level currently and in the future.
- 4** confirms the courses required to supervise each case type and then update its policies to ensure probation officers complete the appropriate training before supervising offenders.
- 5** strengthens its quality assurance model to ensure it is consistently applied and provides accurate and complete information on the quality of probation officers' work.
- 6** ensures that probation officers thoroughly document their rationale for risk/needs assessment ratings and how offenders' risks and needs will be effectively addressed.
- 7** ensures offenders receive and complete the interventions required in their case management plans.
- 8** ensures that enforcement guidelines are consistently applied, and that all breaches are documented in compliance with policy.

¹ The Community Corrections and Corporate Programs Division is now called the Community Corrections Division.

PROGRESS AUDIT

AN AUDIT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF B.C. COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS REPORT 2011

Report Released: [December 2011](#)

First Self-Assessment: [April 2013](#)

Second Self-Assessment: [October 2013](#)

Third Self-Assessment: [June 2014](#)

Action Plan: September 2015 [[see Appendix A](#)]

Discussed by the Public Accounts Committee: [April 24, 2012](#) and [February 4, 2015](#)

Exhibit 1: The Community Corrections Division's progress in implementing our recommendations

	Rec. 1	Rec. 2	Rec. 3	Rec. 4	Rec. 5	Rec. 6	Rec. 7	Rec. 8
Division Assessment	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
OAG Assessment	●	●	●	●	Excluded from progress audit	●	●	Excluded from progress audit

● Fully/substantially implemented ● Partially implemented ● No action taken

Recommendations 5 and 8 were excluded from our progress audit as they were considered lower risk and would be assessed, to some extent, through our work on the other recommendations.

Background

In British Columbia, the Community Corrections Division² (CCD) within the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is responsible for supervising all adult offenders completing a community sentence - either a conditional sentence, probation order or a recognizance order. The division also supervises

individuals awaiting trial on bail and those who are diverted from the justice system through the alternative measures program. In 2015, the division supervised an approximate average of 21,500 people each day.

² The Community Corrections Division was formerly called the Community Corrections and Corporate Programs Division.

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Exhibit 2: Number of community orders by supervision type in B.C. (2011 and 2015)

Supervision type	Description	Number of individuals supervised	
		2011 (audit report)	2015 (progress audit)
Conditional sentence	A jail sentence that is served in the community instead of in jail.	2,131	1,257
Probation order	A court order that requires an offender to follow certain conditions in the community for a set amount of time, not exceeding three years.	12,324	10,882
Recognizance order	A court order (referred to as a peace bond) requiring the defendant to keep the peace and be on good behaviour. Additional conditions may be attached to ensure good conduct. Often these orders require the defendant to avoid contact with the person for whose protection the order is issued.	1,157	1,308
Bail	A court order issued to an individual accused (but not yet convicted) of an offence, requiring that he or she appear in court at a designated time and abide by certain conditions.	8,074	7,880
Alternative measure	A program that diverts individuals who commit less serious crimes away from the courts.	234	152
Total		23,920	21,479

Source: B.C. Community Corrections Division, 2011 and 2015 (CORNET data). Note: Figures have not been audited.

Case management

The goal of community supervision is to “reduce reoffending and enhance public protection by encouraging and enabling behavioural change.” This is achieved, in part, through the division’s case management model that identifies and targets an individual’s criminal behaviour through interventions that are proven to reduce re-offending.

Having qualified, trained staff and a strong performance monitoring system helps ensure that the model is well supported and that any deficiencies are identified and corrected early on.

Benefits and risks of community supervision

When an offender is rehabilitated and goes on to lead a crime-free life, everyone benefits. There is a reduced threat to community safety and fewer economic and social costs to government and the public.

However, if an individual is not successfully rehabilitated, they are at an increased risk of becoming a repeat offender. This increases the costs of crime. A report by the federal Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated criminal justice costs (i.e., police, courts and corrections) to be \$20.3 billion in

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2012 – an increase of 66% since 2002. These costs are even greater when the intangible elements of crime, such as victim suffering, are factored in.

Successful supervision and rehabilitation are therefore in everyone's best interests.

An Audit of the Effectiveness of B.C. Community Corrections

In 2011, we carried out an audit to: 1) determine whether the division was achieving its goal of reducing rates of re-offending for offenders serving community sentences; and 2) identify specific areas that may be impacting the program's effectiveness.

We found that we were unable to conclude on our first objective and determine whether the division had achieved its goal of reducing the rate of re-offending for offenders under community supervision. The lack of long-term data, coupled with the dynamic way the rate is measured, made it difficult to confirm a trend (increasing or decreasing).

Although we could not conclude on the overall rate of re-offending, we were able to identify areas that might be negatively impacting the division's effectiveness. We found risks in the division's performance monitoring and evaluation framework, its approach to establishing resource capacity, and its case management model. Our audit made eight recommendations to mitigate these risks and help the division better understand its success in reducing re-offending.

Progress audit scope and objective

We carried out this progress audit to determine whether the Community Corrections Division's Action Plan (September 2015) accurately represents its progress in implementing six of the eight recommendations from our 2011 report, [*An Audit of the Effectiveness of BC Community Corrections*](#). We excluded recommendations 5 and 8 from our assessment as they were considered lower risk and would be assessed, to some degree, through our work on the other recommendations.

CHANGES TO OUR FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

In June 2015, the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) adopted a new follow-up process to provide greater transparency and accountability to PAC for the progress organizations make on our recommendations.

The new process requires organizations to submit a detailed action plan that identifies planned work and a timeline for implementing our recommendations. We then use this information to determine which plans will undergo a progress audit – an assessment of the organization's action plan to confirm that it accurately represents their progress in implementing our recommendations.

Progress audits are not selected at random. We choose them based on a variety of factors, including the potential impact that recommendations have on the public, the perceived accuracy of an auditee's assessment, the length of time that has passed since the recommendation was made, and requests or questions from PAC.

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We reviewed a number of documents, including program evaluations, service plan reports, new training tools and quality assurance material. We carried out a walk-through of the division's quality management framework and resource assessment tool, and spoke with staff to gain insight on the work undertaken since our report was published.

The audit covered the period from the date our original audit report was published, on December 7, 2011, to May 31, 2016. We also considered work that was done prior to our original audit report if it had implications on the progress audit. Our audit work was substantially completed on March 11, 2016.

We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook – Assurance, and under the authority of Section 11 of the *Auditor General Act*.

We did not assess the effectiveness of the division's actions in addressing our original audit findings, as the outcomes may not be fully evident for years to come.

Progress audit conclusion

The Community Corrections Division has taken steps to address all but one of the six recommendations that we examined in our progress audit. However, while the Division reported that it had fully or substantially implemented all six of the recommendations, we concluded that this was not an accurate representation of the division's progress in five of these. Instead, we found that the division has achieved only partial implementation in recommendations 3, 4, 6 and 7 and taken no action on recommendation 2.

The discrepancy between our assessment and the division's is due in part to a difference in interpretation about what constitutes “fully or substantially implemented” and “partially implemented.” The division reported that it had assessed its progress as fully/substantially implemented given all the work it put in to addressing each recommendation, where the audit focussed on the achievement of the recommendation. This is especially true for recommendations 4, 6 and 7 where the division undertook considerable planning, introduced new templates, and updated its policies, but did not fully implement the recommendations and ensure that its new processes are operating as intended.

In other instances, the division explained that it had reported its progress as fully or substantially implemented because it felt that it had implemented all of the actions within its control – notably recommendations 2 and 3.

Key observations

RECOMMENDATION 1: *We recommend that the division publically report its performance in reducing the overall rate of re-offending with a discussion of the role the CCCP plays, as well as the impact a performance measure that can change over time has on confirming program effectiveness.*

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

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Observations:

In our 2011 audit, we were unable to conclude on the division's effectiveness in reducing rates of re-offending among offenders under community supervision. The limited year-over-year data that was available at the time of our report, coupled with the dynamic method used to track re-offending, made it difficult to confirm a trend. As a result, we recommended that the division enhance its public reporting of re-offending to more clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of its work.

Our progress audit found that the division has substantially implemented recommendation 1. The division now publically reports the role that it plays in influencing re-offending, with a discussion on the use of interventions that probation officers can apply to target offending behaviour (<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/corrections/about-us/>).

Still, we found that additional clarity is needed to help readers better understand the methodology used to measure re-offending, including its limitations. Because re-offending is recorded when an accused is sentenced, the annual rate may be influenced by trends in the broader justice system rather than the work of the division. For example, if the court system becomes more efficient in processing cases, more offenders could be sentenced in a given year, pushing the rate of re-offending up. Likewise, if the court system slows down, fewer offenders could be sentenced, pushing the rate down. These nuances, as well as the division's practice of not refreshing previous years' results with current rates, should be conveyed to readers.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

We recommend that the division extend its evaluation framework to understand the effectiveness of contracted service providers and community programs in reducing re-offending.

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- No action taken

Observations:

The division provides offenders with a variety of programming options to address their behaviour and reduce their risk of re-offending. These include: core programs, administered by corrections staff; partnership programs, run by community corrections staff and other government organizations; and external programs, such as those provided by contracted service providers and community agencies. Examples of these latter programs include counselling, substance detoxification, and housing and employment services.

In our 2011 audit, we found that the division did not evaluate the work of its contracted service providers or seek assurance on the effectiveness of the community programs it refers offenders to. Our progress audit found that this is still the case. Although the division committed to developing key performance indicators (KPIs) to track the performance of its contracted service providers, this work has not materialized. The division informed us that re-offending is best measured through program evaluations, rather than

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KPIs on contracts. We found, however, that it has not evaluated any of its contracted service providers since our report was issued in 2011.

In addition, the division has not evaluated, or sought assurance on, the effectiveness of the community programs it refers offenders to. Although the division continues to evaluate its own programs, it maintains that the evaluation of community programs remain outside the scope of its responsibilities as these are accessed by several entities, not just their own. As a result, it has taken no action to address either component of recommendation 2.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

We recommend that the division complete a comprehensive impact assessment to determine if there are any gaps between its staff capacity and caseload level currently and in the future.

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- Partially implemented

Observations:

In our 2011 audit, the division reported that it was under-resourced. It stated that caseloads had reached an unmanageable level and that public safety was at risk. While we expected the division's assessment to have been based on a comprehensive analysis of its resource capacity, we found that it was instead informed by a high-level benchmarking of provincial caseloads. We concluded that the approach did not establish the province's true capacity,

and recommended that the division complete a comprehensive impact assessment to determine whether there are gaps between its staff capacity and caseload level, currently and projected in the future.

Since our audit, the division has made partial progress in implementing recommendation 3. Most notably, it has developed a tool to measure the average workload of a probation officer and used it to gauge the year-to-year change in clients per full-time equivalent (FTE). This is a good first step, however, to fully implement this recommendation, the division needs to understand what the true capacity of a probation officer is if he or she is to be effective in supervising and rehabilitating offenders. Doing so will allow the division to determine if there are any gaps between probation officers' current workload and their capacity.

The division reports that it cannot fully implement this recommendation and establish if there are gaps between its staff capacity and caseload level because valid tools are not available to complete such a detailed assessment. The division also maintains that workload capacity requires ongoing monitoring and response to too wide a variety of factors to quantify.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *We recommend that the division confirm the courses required to supervise each case type and then update its policies to ensure probation officers complete the appropriate training before supervising offenders.*

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- Partially implemented

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Observations:

Probation officers are a key resource in effecting positive change among offenders. They work with offenders under the case management model to identify and address their offending behaviour and motivate them to participate in rehabilitation programs. While there are tools in place to assist probation officers in their work, the model applied in B.C. relies extensively on the professional judgment of its staff. Models of this nature are known to be effective when staff are well trained and a strong quality assurance system is in place to monitor their performance.

Our 2011 audit found that probation officers did not consistently complete the appropriate training before supervising offenders. We therefore recommended that the division clarify its expectations, and update its policies, to ensure that training is completed before probation officers supervise offenders.

In response, the division has made several positive strides. These include:

- ◆ confirming the courses required to supervise each case type
- ◆ updating its policies to reflect new course requirements
- ◆ introducing new tracking tools to help managers monitor the completion of staff training

However, despite these enhancements, we found that one of the division's new tracking tools - that monitors training completion and caseload assignments in local

offices - is not being used consistently. Our request for evidence of its application revealed that only 13 of 20 sampled offices have this tool in place.

The division should ensure that its new tools are being applied consistently across the province in order to fully implement this recommendation. It should also consider additional assurance work to confirm that the changes it has made are working as intended and training is completed before cases are assigned.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *We recommend that the Division ensure that probation officers thoroughly document their rationale for risk/needs assessment ratings and how offenders' risks and needs will be effectively addressed.*

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- Partially implemented

Observations:

The division applies a case management model to supervise and rehabilitate offenders. This begins with an assessment of an offender's risks and needs, which probation officers then use to develop and implement a case management plan. While our 2011 audit found that, in the majority of files that we reviewed, probation officers correctly identified an offender's overall risks and needs, our subject matter expert was unable to reach a conclusion in certain instances because of a lack of information. For this reason, we recommended that the division enhance

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its documentation of the assessment and planning process to ensure that offenders' risks and needs are effectively addressed.

Our progress audit found that the division has partially implemented recommendation 6. In response to our recommendation, the division has introduced a new case management form that more clearly captures the assessment and intervention approach being used by a probation officer. Despite this, the division is not ensuring effective application of the form through its quality assurance work. Only 733 of 1,570 expected file reviews (47%) were completed by local managers between September 2014 and August 2015.

To fully implement this recommendation, we expect local managers to review a minimum of four case plans per probation officer per year, as established through division policy.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *We recommend that the division ensure offenders receive and complete the interventions required in their case management plans.*

CCD assessment:

- Fully or substantially implemented

OAG assessment:

- Partially implemented

Observations:

In addition to rendering a proper assessment and outlining how an offender's risks and needs will be addressed, probation officers must ensure that offenders receive, and reasonably complete, their assigned interventions. In our 2011 audit, we found low levels of referral and completion rates among interventions outlined in offenders' case plans, and we recommended that the division address these.

Since then, the division has made partial progress in implementing recommendation 7. Its new case management form more clearly tracks an offender's progress against each intervention, making it easier for probation officers and local managers to identify and respond to those where progress is lacking. We are also pleased to report that the division has updated its policy to reflect that interventions should be prioritized based on an offender's corresponding needs. This was identified as a potential cause for the low level of referral and completion rates in our 2011 audit.

However, as we note for recommendation 6, the division is not ensuring offenders receive and complete assigned interventions through its quality assurance work. The quality assurance form that is used to monitor a probation officer's risk/needs assessment also tracks case plan implementation and follow-through. As previously noted, only 47% of expected reviews were completed between September 2014 and August 2015.

APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN

An Audit of the Effectiveness of B.C. Community Corrections

Report Released: [December 2011](#)

First Self-Assessment: [April 2013](#)

Second Self-Assessment: [October 2013](#)

Third Self-Assessment: [June 2014](#)

Discussed by the Public Accounts Committee: [April 24, 2012](#) and [February 4, 2015](#)

Rec#	2
OAG Recommendations ¹	Community Corrections and Corporate Programs division extend its evaluation framework to understand the effectiveness of contracted service providers and community programs in reducing re-offending.
Action Planned	
Target Date	
Assessment of Progress by Entity ²	Fully or substantially implemented
Action Taken	<p>The BC Corrections Branch's Performance, Research and Evaluation Unit (PREv) conducts evaluation and research activities to support the Branch in assessing the effectiveness of our own programs and programs in which we utilize contractors or partner with other agencies.</p> <p>Since 2012, the PREv Unit has completed the following evaluations of BC Corrections Programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The effectiveness of the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver. 2. The effectiveness of Downtown Community Court 3. The impact of the Violence Prevention Program 4. An analysis of the impact of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Program on offender recidivism rates. 5. A broader evaluation of the IOM program's partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation-led Homelessness Intervention Project. <p>The PREv Unit also has following evaluations are underway:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The impact of Strategic Training In Correctional Supervision (STICS) 2. The impact of The Substance Abuse Management Program <p>In addition to internal evaluations, BC Corrections collaborates with academic institutions, non-profit organizations and other ministries to assess the effectiveness of a variety of shared programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Where appropriate and/or requested we assist and support in the analysis of external programs for their host agency where measures of success are related to corrections clients, programs and policy. Those evaluations remain the responsibility and property of the host agency.</p>

(continued next page)

APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN

- ¹ This should include all the recommendations listed in the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) report unless previously assessed as fully or substantially implemented. (i.e. only outstanding recommendations need to be reported).
- ² The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) will request an update (i.e., Assessment of Progress and Actions Taken column completed) on a yearly basis from the audited organization until all recommendations are fully implemented or otherwise addressed to the satisfaction of the PAC. After the first action plan update only outstanding recommendations (i.e., those not fully or substantially implemented) need to be reported.

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