



Research at a glance

Assessing the Impact of Enhanced Drug Interdiction Activities at Kingston Penitentiary: A Pilot Study

KEY WORDS: *drug interdiction, drug seizures, urinalysis*

Why we did this study

Eliminating drugs from prisons through interdiction efforts is a key theme of CSC's Transformation Agenda. A small-scale, single-site study was conducted recently at a maximum security institution in the Ontario region (Kingston Penitentiary) to explore the effectiveness of a number of strategic interdiction initiatives undertaken by the institution under a three-phased Drug Interdiction and Contraband Eradication (DICE) initiative implemented by the region and Kingston Penitentiary.

What we did

The operational impact of the DICE activities was examined by conducting pre-DICE (January 1-September 30, 2008) to post-DICE (January 1-September 30, 2009) comparisons on a variety of measures such as contraband/unauthorized items seized, urinalysis results, institutional incidents, visits and community gatherings. The findings were compared with another maximum security institution in the Ontario region (Millhaven Institution) that was not subjected to the enhanced interdiction activities.

What we found

Seizures of opiates and prescription drugs increased pre- to post-DICE at Kingston Penitentiary. However, no major differences in the seizures of brew/alcohol, cannabis, or tobacco were found. At Millhaven no differences in any contraband seized were observed between the pre- and post-DICE periods.

The overall positive rate of random urinalysis tests decreased slightly pre- to post-DICE; however, a large decrease was observed for the refusal rate from 24.2% prior to DICE to 11.0% post-DICE implementation. The refusal rate at Millhaven Institution followed a similar pattern but was smaller in magnitude while the positive rate showed a slight increase.

An increase in the monthly average number of drug-related¹ and violent incidents² at Kingston Penitentiary was observed pre- to post-DICE. In comparison, at Millhaven Institution, there was no change in the number of drug-related incidents and a small increase in the number of violent incidents. There was also a substantial decrease in institutional incidents related to disciplinary problems pre- to

post-DICE at Kingston Penitentiary, from a monthly average of 37.4 incidents to 16.6 incidents. A decrease at Millhaven Institution was also noted but was smaller in magnitude.

Visiting practices also changed pre- to post-DICE with fewer visitors cancelling their scheduled visits, but the overall visiting rate remained similar. There was a decrease in participation in community gatherings following DICE implementation.

What it means

The results suggest some positive impacts of the DICE initiative in relation to drug trafficking and drug use, as well as additional positive operational impacts such as an increase in the seizures of weapons and a decrease in institutional incidents involving disciplinary problems.

It should be noted that many of the results also occurred at the comparison site, Millhaven Institution, but often to a lesser degree. This suggests that system-wide initiatives with respect to drug interdiction and visiting practices were impacting institutions but differences observed at Kingston Penitentiary pre- to post-DICE remained larger. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to methodological shortcomings of the study (i.e. lack of a controlled research design, inconsistent recording of information etc.).

Future research will examine the impact of drug interdiction activities using a controlled and monitored design at multiple sites.

For more information

Johnson, S., Cheverie, M., & Moser, A. (2010). *Assessing the Impact of Enhanced Drug Interdiction Activities at Kingston Penitentiary: A Pilot Study*. Research Report R-232. Ottawa: Correctional Service Canada.

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¹ Includes possess contraband/unauthorized item – drugs, possess contraband/unauthorized item – drug paraphernalia, under the influence.

² Includes fights/assaults, possess contraband/unauthorized item – weapon.

