



Research at a glance

Criminal Organizations: An Examination of Gang Management Practices inside Canadian Institutions

Interviews with CSC staff members assisted in identifying 10 best practices in the management of gang-affiliated offenders.

Why we did this study

The Correctional of Service Canada (CSC) continues to address issues of safety within its institutions driven by the presence of gangs and criminal organizations. While CSC has policies in place to address the risks posed by these groups in Canada's federal institutions, an examination of the practices used to manage these populations had not been undertaken.

This study aimed to better understand the management practices implemented with gang populations and to allow for the compilation of national best practices in gang management.

What we did

Telephone interviews were conducted with 55 staff members from a sample of 13 medium, maximum, and women's institutions across Canada. Participants included security intelligence officers, parole officers, correctional managers, correctional officers, managers of assessment and intervention, primary workers, and a programs manager.

What we found

A number of management strategies were discussed, some focusing on suppressing the gang and their activity and others targeting individual members to either reduce their influence or assist with their disaffiliation. Ten best practices were submitted by correctional staff as being particularly effective in assisting them in managing their site-level gang populations:

1. Collecting information on gang affiliations
2. Ensuring high quality security information
3. Sharing information with institutional staff
4. Sharing information with external partners
5. Gang separation from general population
6. Specialized transition unit for disaffiliating gang members
7. Transfers to disrupt gang activity
8. Integration
9. Building credibility and rapport with offenders
10. Providing choices for respect

Participants also identified a number of challenges related to the effective management of gang-affiliated offenders, including those related to the communication of intelligence information and obstacles to affiliation identification.

What it means

By culminating the knowledge and experience gained by staff working directly with gangs, this report can act as a source of information to guide day-to-day gang management strategies at operational sites, inform future policy and guidelines, and provide a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of the gangs in Canadian federal custody.

The identification of frontline staff and criminal justice partners as being key sources of security information on gangs stresses the importance of continued and improved information sharing with these groups. Issues related to the practicality of Commissioner's Directives (CDs) and manipulation of policies by offenders were highlighted by participants, and, while generally considered to be clear, there was a reported need for additional guidance on how to achieve some of the policy objectives in this area.

For more information

Michel, S., & Stys, Y. (2015). *Criminal organizations: An examination of gang management practices inside Canadian institutions* (Research Report, R-347). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.

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