

[RICCIARDELLI] - *An interdisciplinary and mixed method analysis of the Correctional Services Canada National Training Academy's Correctional Training Program: Building a 'toolbox' for correctional officer mental health and occupational success by identifying ways to optimize the impact of training for public safety personnel.*

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Priority Research Area: Biological, clinical and social characteristics of PTSD, including differences that contribute to the risk for developing PTSD and measures/characteristics that may be associated with better treatment outcomes and resilience among PSP

Mental health awareness, stigma reduction, anti-discrimination, and/or literacy programs that have the potential to improve mental wellness among PSP

Relevant PSP Population(s): Correctional Services

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What is the issue? Employees of Correctional Service Canada (CSC), Canada's federal prison service, screen positive for mental disorders at rates significantly higher than the general population. To prepare future correctional officers (COs) for an occupation that is complex, potentially traumatic and riddled with legal, social, physical, and psychological challenges, CSC provides a comprehensive three stage correctional training program. Yet, little research to date has looked explicitly at the program to understand if the training is meeting the health needs of COs, and whether discrepancies exist between the intended content (i.e., the curriculum) and received messages (i.e., learning) in the recruit training materials.

What was the aim of the study? Overall, we aimed to optimize the effectiveness and impact of CSC's CO recruit training program to better prepare COs for their experiences on the job and to positively impact CO health and well-being. Toward building a foundational understanding of the CSC correctional training program, we focused on three main research questions that evolved with time: 1) What messages are delivered in the modules of the CSC correctional training program? 2) How are the intended messages of the CSC correctional training program interpreted?, and 3) How can training instill the intended messages (including those tied to values and ethics) of the correctional training program?

How was the study conducted? the correctional training program, including spending 10-weeks in uniform for the in-person component (Stage 3). She will complete the final four weeks in the future and the primary worker training. We started conducting semi-structured interviews with the trainers. We will complete data collection when possible (due to COVID-19) and then synthesize and analyze our multimodal forms of data to create a training evaluation tool (a qualitative and quantitative survey) that we will be piloting on recruits.

What did the study find? Given that all components of our study are "paused" and not yet completed, our results remain preliminary. However, supported by both interviews and PI Ricciardelli's ethnographic data, is that CSC is committed to the recruitment and training of persons with integrity, and whose ethics and values align with those of the organization. Efforts are made during training to reinforce and confirm said values among recruits. Training materials are delivered with a focus on pedagogy and manual adherence, and modules focus proportionately on physical (e.g., use of force) versus non-physical (e.g., communication) skills in the context of public, personal, and institutional safety. However, recruits tend to direct their attention toward the competencies that are tested, which is often physical skills.

CSC works toward an environment conducive to positive mental health and well-being, including with efforts toward reducing the stigma around mental health, both for recruits and for trainers. Moreover, the vulnerabilities

inherent to the public safety role are acknowledged during training and efforts are made to ensure recruit actions align with best practices.

We note that modern technological innovations could be used to augment training (e.g., enhancing decision-based training modules) and to optimize components that are traditionally challenging for recruits or expensive (e.g., simulation for shooting range modules).

What are the implications of this study? Our study may help to inform the recruitment and retention of people with skills, values, and ethics that align with those required for the job, as well as those of CSC. We are still working toward creating a post-training evaluatory tool that includes everything from physical and mental health and well-being to organizational commitment, which will help CSC evaluate the outcomes of the training more comprehensively. Given the attention recruits dedicate to learning skills that are tested (possible "strikes"), all centrally important skills taught should be tested to ensure maximum recruit attention is directed toward learning said skills.

What are the key messages? Recruit learning tends to focus on the skills that are tested, specifically "strikes". Mental health training has been introduced into the correctional training program and efforts are underway to reduce the stigma tied to mental disorders. CSC training demonstrates the organization's commitment to the safety of society, prisoners, staff, and their institutions.

Provide a list of potential target audiences for this research: Correctional Services Canada, and correctional services in each province and territory in Canada as well as internationally. Correctional Services related Unions (UCCO-SACC-CSN, USJE), stakeholders, policy makers, and practitioners.