

Mental Health & Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Given the predominance of a history of alcohol and other drug use and mental health problems in the file reviews, much information was gained about the risk and benefits of certain case management/intervention practices.

The management of offenders with mental health issues and co-occurring alcohol and other drug use in the community is difficult. The lack of social supports and stable accommodation, and inadequacy of community resources coupled with volatile and erratic behaviour is problematic. Linking offenders with mental impairments to appropriate services is difficult. Mental health services in the general community are under-resourced and sometimes hesitant to provide services to offenders who regularly fail to keep appointments. Until recently, DCS psychology services have not been adequately resourced to meet requirements.

There was some evidence in the files of a teamwork approach between criminogenic psychological intervention and criminogenic case management. This allowed for a focus on the identification and monitoring of factors and behaviours that supported offending and those that did not. Unfortunately, Community Corrections does not have the resources to support this practice on a consistent and regular basis.

Practices that Assist Case Managers

A number of suggestions to assist the case management of offenders with a history of alcohol and other drug use and mental health problems were made in the file reviews.

- Psychological assessment early in supervision period.
- Prioritising the focus of case management/intervention.
- Managing acute mental health issues as a priority, and managing chronic mental health issues simultaneously with alcohol and other drug issues.
- Discussion with a treating professional to identify symptoms and behaviours that indicate a move from the chronic stage to acute stage.
- The need for prompt provision of alcohol and other drug harm minimisation information (Alcohol and Other Drug Brief Interventions group and/or 1:1).

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