

We All Win: Safer Communities through Best Practices in Programming for Offender Integration

**March 12 – 14, 2013
University of Calgary Conference Centre
Calgary, Alberta**

Description:

This conference, a 2 day Forum in Calgary, Alberta on March 12-14th, 2013 will highlight current trends and best practices in the effective and sustainable rehabilitation and integration of offenders into the local community. The forum is hosted by the John Howard Society of Alberta (JHSA) in cooperation with the Prairie Region Halfway House Association, the St. Leonard's Society of Canada and the Canadian Training Institute

The past twenty years have witnessed some significant trends in criminal justice practices in the western world. These include an expansion of indictable and summary offences, a harshening of penalties associated with many of these laws and less tolerance for repeated offenders as exemplified by the 3-strike legislations across the USA. The changes to Canadian criminal law through the recently passed Bill C-10 will clearly have an impact on the level of incarceration in Canada in the decade ahead.

At the same time, it is recognized that many offenders across Canada are not actually incarcerated for their behaviour but serve their sentence within the community. This is especially true for those offenders under Provincial jurisdiction – Alberta alone has approximately 18,000 adults under community supervision compared to an adult custody population of about 3,000. The scale of offenders within community corrections across Canada is highlighted further when compared to the just under 9,000 (est.) offenders under federal conditional release in the community (and 13,351 incarcerated in 2009/2010). This reflects the important fact that far fewer people are convicted of serious and violent crimes and that the majority are not a dangerous threat to society at large.

The primary focus of this forum is to share and explore best practices and models to reduce recidivism. It acknowledges that incarceration alone, or simple community corrections, no matter what the duration of time, will of its own accord do little to prevent recidivism from occurring. Researchers and practitioners have long recognized the crucial importance of programs and services to offenders while they are under community corrections or in custody. While Robert Martinson's devastating dictum in 1974 that "nothing works" in rehabilitation and reintegration has been roundly proven to be incorrect, there remains much discussion and debate about what methodologies and best practices are the most effective in transitioning people into the community.

Organizers recognize and celebrate the influential leadership role demonstrated by Canadian scholars and practitioners in the areas of research and innovative programming in preparing offenders for reintegration. At the same time, it is acknowledged that initiatives and practices are being developed and implemented around the world from which others may benefit. Particular emphasis will be on models that promote a "continuum of care" in the support of an offender from first sentencing through to final release or completion *and beyond* and that develops an ongoing program of reintegration that is built on the strengths of the individual.

Through bringing together delegates from across Canada and the international community who are involved in integration and rehabilitation practices or research at the community level, participants in the forum will have the opportunity to hear about, share and explore innovative programmes and approaches through workshops, plenary sessions and keynote addresses. By way of established speakers and workshop presenters, forum participants are offered the opportunity to build knowledge and awareness, share ideas and best practices and begin the development of strategies to enhance the safety of their communities.