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# **Crime desistance and drug abuse services from offender's viewpoint**

2021 ASC Annual Meeting  
Panel: Delinquency desistance and social  
and community (re)integration of young  
adults: theories, empirical research and  
practice  
November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

# Context

## Drugs and crime links

Drugs and crime are often strongly interrelated :

- The majority of offenders have problematic consumption;
- The majority of people who receive addiction treatment have committed at least one offense and are being prosecuted;
- Why? Explanatory models.

Legal pressures for treatment are :

- An external source of motivation, which can then be internalized;
- A lever for change.

# Context

## Drugs and crime links

These are often the same individuals who are found in the correctional and addiction sectors;

(Brochu, Brunelle & Plourde, 2018)

Long-term service effects are observed and a combination of services is often necessary;

### CUMULATIVE SERVICES

(Brochu et al., 2014)

These individuals present multiple problems and needs that a single service can hardly address on its own.

(Quirion et al., accepted)

- Call for collaboration and intersectorality

# Context

The role of addiction services in the desistance of delinquency?

## Primary desistance

Not to commit crimes.

Observed through behavior.

Addiction (AS) vs lower  
criminal recidivism

## Secondary desistance

Identity change. Can be seen in  
the narrative of its trajectory.

AS vs identity

## Tertiary desistance

Recognition of changes by  
others. Can be seen in the  
nature of social relationships.

AS vs bridge with the  
community

# Context

## The role of addiction services in the desistance of delinquency?

### Assisted desistance

Clinicians participate in this transformation process

By developing a relationship based on listening and speaking, and by emphasizing the motivations, opportunities and capacities of those facing the criminal justice system.

(McCulloch, 2005; McNeil, 2009)

Recovery can begin with specialized clinical treatment, but it will always be supported by efforts in the community.

(Best, 2019)

Recovery and desistance have common characteristics: long term; changes in social networks; opportunities for (re) integration at community level.

(Best, 2019)

# Research questions

- How can addiction services help reduce delinquency?
- How addiction workers/counselors do assisted desistance work?

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

# Method

From *(RÉ)SO 1635 partnership research program*

## Axis 1 *(RÉ)SO 16-35*

Measurement  
time1  
(T1)

- 146 young people from 16 to 35 years old in T1;
- Having been in contact with the judicial or correctional system during the past two years;
- Come from 3 regions: Quebec, Montreal, Mauricie -Centre-du-Québec;
- 78% men, 22% women;
- Average age: 25 years old.

Measurement  
time 2  
(T2)

- In progress;
- 65 interviews carried out.

From *(RÉ)SO 1635 partnership research program*

## Axis 1 *(RÉ)SO 16-35*

# Method

### Semi-structured interviews

- the psychosocial and deviant trajectory of the participants;
- the different services they received;
- their perception of their journey;
- their opinion on what is or would be most helpful for them to facilitate their desistance from delinquency and their socio-community (re) integration.

### Thematic analysis

- Paillé & Muchielli (2003)

This presentation: part of the results collected during the first 47 interviews carried out



# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in court in addiction services?

- Addiction workers are generally seen as caregivers;

« What did I notice? ... Well, what I see is like in the sense that they want to help people. You see they want to help people »

- CÉDRIC, 26 YEARS OLD

# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

- Dependency workers are generally seen as caregivers;
- Adequate response to basic needs;
- Facilitates the establishment of a routine;
- Awareness facilitated by stopping consumption;

« I don't know if you understand what I mean, but this is where I made all my realizations and being sober, well you get things done. When you're on drugs, you hide things, you run away. If you face your problems and you have no choice ... It is impossible here that there is not a person who does not raise awareness throughout therapy.»

# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

- Dependency workers are generally seen as caregivers;
- Adequate response to basic needs;
- Facilitates the establishment of a routine;
- Awareness facilitated by stopping consumption;
- Self-esteem;

« I can't say I accomplished anything concrete. I want to have that feeling that I'm bringing something to there somewhere. Like, here, I do there, you know..., worse, here, I work in the convenience store, then I just have this little task there, well, you know..., it is rewarding, you know..., something rewarding in life.»

# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?(continued)

- Improved interpersonal skills and relationships;

« The bond with my family has been tremendous. I had discussions with my parents which made them understand why I was reacting this way. They understood. I gave my point of view in front of them and the connection was very strong. My dad told me he loved me and was proud of me. Since I was little, I can't even remember the last time he said that to me. Worse, when I got here [addiction organization 2], he told me that.»



# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

- Improved interpersonal skills and relationships;
- Using an addiction service is helpful in itself;
  - Even if it is imposed;

« If that fateful day would not have happened, that I was arrested worse than I landed in prison and that I was taken [to a drug addiction service center] to get out ... It is a truly golden opportunity. Because I really believe that there was something that got me out of that day because on my own I couldn't stop there. It was impossible that even I, by my own will, could get out of it. It's impossible there.»

# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

- Improved interpersonal skills and relationships;
- Facilitates the establishment of a routine;
- Using an addiction service is helpful in itself;
  - Even if it is imposed;
  - Even if the person leaves before the end;
  - Even if the person has already had several therapies;

« Sure, I've had two more therapies, and there's a lot of stuff I know, but I don't know everything yet. And I have a lot to learn ... you're not starting from zero for real now.»

# Results

1

What is the experience of offenders in addiction services?

- Improved interpersonal skills and relationships;
- Facilitates the establishment of a routine;
- Using an addiction service is helpful in itself;
  - Even if it is imposed;
  - Even if the person leaves before the end;
  - Even if the person has already had several therapies;
- **Non-judgmental attitude ;**

« I said to him, I liked you very much, because deep down you don't judge the world. You get to know her. Worse even though I've made missteps and bullshit and all, there's not once you've looked at me crooked. On the contrary, you just wanted to try to understand my old mentality.

What happened to me? How did I evolve? Worse, it's gratifying ... I want to keep my assertiveness, to be able to assert myself the way I do live. Keep my mentality about drug addiction, that it's poop, not good for me. Realizing that I am a girl with potential, before I didn't see it, I just saw the dark, the negative. Now when I wake up in the morning I can't wait. I know what my potential is. »

« The clinicians all told me the same over there. They said  
'Benoît, you're not the same guy when you came back to  
school as you are today'.»

# Discussion and conclusion

## Experience in addiction services

Addiction counselors are generally appreciated by offenders

Privileged relationship

Empathy and therapeutic alliance

Addiction services are helpful in themselves, but not necessarily in the short term

Cumulative services vs PATIENCE to achieve goals related to consumption and delinquency

Can facilitate tertiary desistance also vs bridge with the community

Helpers for (primary) delinquency desistance and contribute to the development of a new identity (secondary desistance)



The  
floor is  
yours!

QUESTIONS ?

COMMENTS?

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