



Parole Board
of Canada

Commission des libérations
conditionnelles du Canada

Important Role of Volunteers within Federal Corrections in Canada



Canada

PBC/CLCC

Volunteers in Canada

In 2013, 12.7 million Canadians (or 44% of the population) participated in some form of volunteer work.

Volunteers devoted about 1.96 million hours which is equivalent to 1 million full time jobs.

On average volunteers contributed 154 hours per year.

Younger seniors contributed the highest average hours - 231 hours per year.

Women were slightly more likely to volunteer than men (45% versus 42%).



Volunteers in the Federal Correctional System in Canada

- Volunteers provide a very strong network of support within Canada's correctional system in many ways.
- They are important to bridging the gap between the institution and the community, and enable former offenders to interact with the broader community.
- Our volunteers range in age and experience from university students to retired seniors, and often include former offenders who have returned to the community and want to give back by helping support their peers.

3

Multifaceted Roles

- Within our federal prisons and parole system, volunteers are involved in many different types of programs and activities.
 - recreational activities
 - spiritual support through chaplaincy
 - classroom and workshop instruction
 - arranging and participating in social events
 - book clubs, and tutoring
 - supporting substance abuse programming
 - providing cultural activities
 - providing citizen escorts

4

Multifaceted Roles

- In addition to individual volunteers, there are numerous national and regional organizations and agencies comprised of volunteers that provide organized advice and support to the federal correctional system.
- These include community organizations such as the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (a coalition of 22 not-for-profit national organizations), John Howard Society, Elizabeth Frye Society, Salvation Army, the St. Leonard's Society and many others.
- Many of these organization run their own volunteer programs to support their in-house services for offenders.

5

Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs)

- Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) started in 1965 in federal Canadian institutions.
- CACs are voluntary, independent, citizen-based committees that bring a public and community perspective to federal corrections.
- Their role includes:
 - Providing advice on the implementation and development of correctional facilities and programs;
 - Acting as impartial observers to the day-to-day operations;
 - And liaising with CSC and communities to raise awareness, understanding, and support for the correctional process.
- In 1992, the role of CACs were deemed important enough that they were entrenched in the federal correctional legislation.
- Currently there are 81 Citizen Advisory Committees in all prisons and parole districts across Canada involving about 400 citizen volunteers.

6

Ethnocultural Advisory Committees

- Involve persons from various ethnocultural backgrounds and/or experience in the area of ethnoculturalism.
- Provide advice, support and expertise on ethnocultural issues impacting offenders including:
 - assisting institutions in providing specialized cultural activities to staff and offenders;
 - addressing offender spiritual needs;
 - assisting offenders in preparing for their parole;
 - facilitate community involvement in mentoring offenders upon their return to the community; and
 - helping offenders find employment and or accommodations in their community.

7

Victim Advisory Committees

Regional Victim Advisory Committees (RVAC)

- Advisory committees made up of victims of crime who volunteer their time to both the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the Parole Board of Canada (PBC).
- Provide input and advice to CSC and PBC regionally, on current and existing service delivery, policy, communications and emerging issues for the organizations.

PBC Committee on Victims

- National committee that provides insight and information to the Chairperson on matters of policy and programs.

8

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

- The concept of CoSa began in June of 1994 through the actions of a Mennonite pastor who befriended a mentally delayed, repeat sex offender who had very few community supports.
- The pastor and some of his parishioners decided to form a support group (or circle) that would meet with him regularly, to assist with his daily life and his reintegration.
- Through the support of this group, this offender remained in the community crime free for 12 years before passing away in 2006.
- The concept was eventually formalized & expanded within federal corrections. Since that time it has spread internationally as an intervention for sex offenders in numerous jurisdictions including the United Kingdom, parts of Europe, several American states, South Korea, and elsewhere.

9

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

- The mission of CoSA is to reduce the risk of further victimization by assisting and supporting offenders in leading a responsible, productive and accountable life upon their return to the community.
- Involves offenders who have committed sexual offences and who have limited supports in the community.
- Circles of Support and Accountability utilize trained staff and community members who build a relationship of mutual respect between the offender and the circle of volunteers.
- In addition to supporting the offender's release, the aim is to reconnect them with the larger community as a form of empowerment and support.

10

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

The relationship and the work of the circle are defined by a Circle Agreement that sets out ground rules and shared expectations of all persons involved.

- Accountability
- Legal obligations
- Boundaries
- Communications
- Confidentiality and its limits
- Expectations of behaviour of core members, volunteers, and staff

11

What are the Challenges of Volunteering?

- Security
- Recruitment
- Training
- Retention
- Changing Demographics



12

Thank You

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