Queensland Corrective Services Violence Prevention Framework 2016

Purpose

The purpose of the Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) Violence Prevention Framework is to provide staff with a framework to reduce the number of assaults and enhance the safety of staff, prisoners, offenders and visitors in correctional environments throughout Queensland.

Performance Indicators

» Targeted reduction in assaults on staff and prisoners
» Targeted program delivery
» Improved resilience amongst staff, prisoners and offenders
» Strengthened positive interactions between staff, prisoners and offenders.

Key Priority Areas and Initiatives

The Violence Prevention Framework will be actioned through a range of strategies, programs and initiatives. Local level Violence Prevention Committees will identify, plan and deliver initiatives with a focus on specific localised drivers. Initiatives will be built upon evidence-based predictors of violence and will focus on improving four key priority areas, including:

1. Secure and functional work units

Ensure a safe, secure and humane environment for prisoners, offenders, staff and visitors.

Initiatives may:

» expand the use of electronic monitoring systems
» ensure non-fixed furnishings and equipment are robust and secure
» enhance safety and security procedures within work environments
» identify and reduce blind and trouble spots.

2. Communication

The delivery of a high profile communication strategy.

Initiatives may:

» improve incident analysis and reporting
» increase the number of proactive strategies for risk identification
» deliver high visibility violence prevention communication material in work environments
» improve local communication strategies to provide front-line staff with timely, high-quality information to support effective workplace management.

3. Staff support and training

Encourage a resilient culture focused on proactive situational awareness and resolution.

Initiatives may:

» establish Violence Prevention Committees in each correctional centre and probation and parole region
» deliver regular officer safety packages focusing on de-escalation techniques and information sessions
» promote the use of discretion to balance staff allocations based on experience levels
» implement staff resilience strategies
» establish peer mentoring and support across all correctional environments.

4. Prisoner and offender management

Develop awareness and diversion initiatives to hold prisoners and offenders accountable while addressing the causes of violence.

Initiatives may:

» develop prisoner and offender focused risk awareness and de-escalation techniques
» incorporate flexible offender management strategies
» establish a peer mentoring group for prisoners
» introduce a coordinated and robust strategy to reduce the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among prisoners, including reducing the demand for drugs within correctional centres and the community.

Predictors of Violence

Research suggests that the following factors can be used to predict violence in custody and the community:

» History of violence – prisoners and offenders with a history of violent offences are more likely to assault staff
» Age – young prisoners and offenders (20-29) are more likely to commit acts of violence
» Drug use – prisoners and offenders with a history of drug use are more likely to commit acts of violence
» Prisoner Movement – moving prisoners within a centre provides opportunity for assaults
» Location – prisoners located in certain accommodation areas are likely to be more violent

» Management – autonomy and incentive models can reduce violent behaviour
» Meaningful activities – engaging prisoners in activities can promote custodial order
» Staff experience – prisoner and offender perceptions of staff can influence their responses to situations.

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Violence Prevention Strategy

Policy statement

Overview

The purpose of Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) is to deliver community safety and crime prevention through the humane containment, supervision and rehabilitation of offenders. QCS is dedicated to delivering services within a safe environment for prisoners, offenders, staff and visitors, with a zero tolerance to violence.

Queensland does not have an unusually high level of either 'prisoner on staff' or 'prisoner on prisoner' assault, although official statistics do indicate Queensland's 'prisoner on prisoner' assaults have increased somewhat over the past year. The growth in prisoner numbers over a number of years has created a range of issues, including the potential for an increase in the number of prison assaults.

Probation and Parole staff may experience violent individuals or the consequences of violent acts within the course of their jobs. This may include any criminal or threatening behaviour directed toward staff such as physical violence, threats of violence, intimidation, extortion, theft of property, damage to one's reputation, or any other act which inflicts damage, instils fear, or threatens one's sensibilities. Similarly, offenders may exhibit this behaviour towards members of the community.

The purpose of this document is to provide staff with a framework to influence the number of assaults and enhance the safety of staff, offenders and visitors in Queensland correctional environments. The framework will be actioned through a range of violence prevention initiatives, built upon evidence-based predictors of violence that contribute to assaults in prisons and in the community.

The initiatives will focus on improving four key priority areas:

1. secure and functional work units

2. communication, monitoring and intelligence

3. staff training and support

4. prisoner and offender management.

Background

Queensland experienced a 38% increase in prisoner numbers, from 5,602 to 7,734, between 31 January 2012 and 2 March 2016.

Over 2,200 prisoners are sharing accommodation – 'doubled up' on mattresses and temporary bunk beds in cells designed for one occupant – in correctional centres across the State.

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There are many risks and challenges associated with growing prisoner numbers in correctional centres, such as:

- an increase in self-harm episodes, 'use of force' incidents and breaches of discipline

- prisoners delayed access to amenities such as seats during meal times, phones, storage space, exercise equipment and recreational items

- prisoners not having access to services such as health, rehabilitation and reintegration support

- an increase in boredom due to the lack of available programs and meaningful activities

- an increase in prisoners making false complaints of sexual assault to avoid being 'doubled up', without considering the significant impact this may have on the alleged perpetrator.

These issues create stress and fear and can contribute to prisoner-on-prisoner assaults erupting over fairly minor things.

Queensland also experienced a 15% increase in offender numbers from 15,150 to 17,900 between 2012 and 2015. There are many risks and challenges associated with the increased growth, which have the potential to contribute to offender violence, including:

- increased number of offenders in the waiting room, creating opportunities for potential offender conflict

- increased pressure on available facilities including interview rooms and urinalysis rooms

- reduced appointment times for offenders due to the increased caseloads

- increased pressure on external services to provide intervention and support services to offenders

- an increase in the risk profile of offenders.

Predictors of violence

Research suggests that the following factors can be used to predict correctional environment violence:

History of violence – prisoners serving sentences for violent offences are significantly more likely to assault staff and other prisoners. Prisoners and offenders with a history of violence are four times more likely to perpetrate serious assaults against staff, than those with property offences.

Age – prisoners aged 20 to 29 years are more likely to be perpetrators of violence against staff and are responsible for more serious assaults. Correctional centres with a high proportion of youth experience more serious assaults, committed not only by young offenders, but offenders of all ages.

Drug use – correctional environments with high proportions of offenders that have a history of drug use are more likely to have more serious assaults.

Prisoner movement – taking detention unit and high security prisoners out of their cells for transportation or recreation provides opportunities for serious assaults

Location – prisoners in observation and detention areas are significantly more violent towards staff. These types of assaults are typical of situations where offenders are active (e.g. being in a corridor or dining area) but not engaged in a structured activity (e.g. industries or education). In the community, common areas such as waiting rooms can increase the risk of offenders becoming violent.

Management – management and culture can also play a role in correctional centre violence. Specific units characterised by a communal atmosphere between prisoners and staff, prisoner autonomy and a remunerative control model (e.g. unlimited visits from family dependent on good behaviour) can be successful in reducing violent behaviour. These units focus on socialising prisoners into new behaviours and thought processes.

Meaningful activities – academic and vocational education programs and activities are a successful tool in promoting correctional centre order, and can reduce breach rates and levels of violence.

Staff Experience – staff who are more experienced are significantly less likely to be victims of assault by prisoners. This can be due to aggressive prisoners perceiving new or unknown staff as threatening. Using discretion to balance staff allocations and providing staff with peer mentoring and support are useful strategies in reducing prisoner-on-staff violence.

QCS Assaults Data

QCS data clearly demonstrates a steady increase of prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff violence however as noted Queensland does not have an unusually high level of assaults.

Prisoner-on-prisoner violence

In 2014-15, there were:

- 129 'serious' prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 1.80 per 100 prisoners)

- 358 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 5.00 per 100 prisoners)

- 606 'other' prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 8.46 per 100 prisoners).

In 2015-16, there were:

- 169 'serious' prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 2.25 per 100 prisoners)

- 533 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 7.09 per 100 prisoners)

- 721 'other' prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 9.59 per 100 prisoners).

Prisoner-on-staff violence

In 2014-15, there were:

- 6 'serious' prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 0.08 per 100 prisoners)

- 18 prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 0.25 per 100 prisoners)

- 139 'other' prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 1.94 per 100 prisoners).

In 2015-16, there were:

- 1 'serious' prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 0.01 per 100 prisoners)

- 68 prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 0.90 per 100 prisoners)

- 200 'other' prisoner-on-staff assaults (a rate of 2.66 per 100 prisoners).

Key priority areas and initiatives

The predictors of violence stated above have been used to develop four key priority areas. These are:

1. **Secure and functional work units** - ensure safe, secure and humane environment for prisoners, offenders, staff and visitors.

   Initiatives may:
   - expand the use of electronic monitoring systems
   - ensure non-fixed furnishings and equipment are robust and secure
   - enhance safety and security procedures within work units
   - identify and reduce blind and trouble spots.

2. **Communication** – deliver a high profile communication strategy.

   Initiatives may:
   - improve incident analysis and reporting
   - increase the number of proactive strategies for risk identification
   - deliver high visibility violence reduction communication material in work environments
   - improve local communication strategies to provide front-line staff with timely, high-quality information to support effective unit management.

3. **Staff training and support** - encourage a resilient culture focused on proactive situational awareness and resolution.

   Initiatives may:
   - establish Violence Prevention Committees in each correctional centre and probation and parole region
   - deliver regular officer safety packages and information sessions
   - promote the use of discretion to balance staff allocations based on experience levels
   - implement staff resilience strategies
   - establish peer mentoring and support across all correctional environments.

4. **Prisoner and offender management** - develop awareness and diversion initiatives to hold prisoners and offenders accountable while addressing the causes of violence.

   Initiatives may:
   - develop prisoner and offender focused risk awareness and de-escalation techniques
   - incorporate flexible offender management strategies
   - establish a peer mentoring group for prisoners
   - introduce a coordinated and robust strategy to reduce the prevalence of drug abuse among prisoners, including reducing the demand for drugs within correctional centres and the community.

Action plans

Research indicates that approaches which effectively combine situational and social prevention strategies, supported by appropriate management policies and research-based staff recruitment and training practices, are a promising approach for reducing violence.

Agency Action Plan

An Agency Action Plan will be developed by Statewide Operations. This will be developed by analysing agency and program level drivers of violence to develop strategies/programs/projects aimed at reducing violence.

An Agency Action Plan template has been developed. This template is a multi-purpose document that will also serve as an Agency Level Reporting tool.

Local Action Plans

Each correctional centre and Probation and Parole office will develop a Local Action Plan by analysing their specific drivers of violence and developing initiatives for prevention. This empowers staff by supporting them to develop their own solutions to making their work environments the safest they can be.

A Violence Prevention Committee will be established in each correctional centre and Probation and Parole region. Each committee will be chaired by a Violence Prevention Coordinator, who will lead the coordination, development, implementation and reporting of local actions.

A Local Action Plan template has been developed to document each centre/office's local actions. This template is a multi-purpose document that will double-up as a reporting tool.

The Agency Action Plan and the above mentioned key priority areas, initiatives and predictors of violence should be used as a guide to develop of a range of local actions aimed at reducing violence.

Reporting

Correctional centres will report on the progress and performance of their violence prevention initiatives on a monthly basis, while Probation and Parole offices will do so every two months. This will be coordinated by the central governance committee.

Violence Prevention Strategy 2016

Governance and Reporting Structure

Board of Management

Violence Prevention Strategy Governance Committee

Statewide Operations

- Agency Action Plan
- Governance, Risk Management, Secretariat and Coordination of Reporting

Safety and Security Committee

Violence Prevention Committees

Correctional Centres

- Local Action Plans

Violence Prevention Committees

Probation and Parole Regions

- Local Action Plans

Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC)

Input