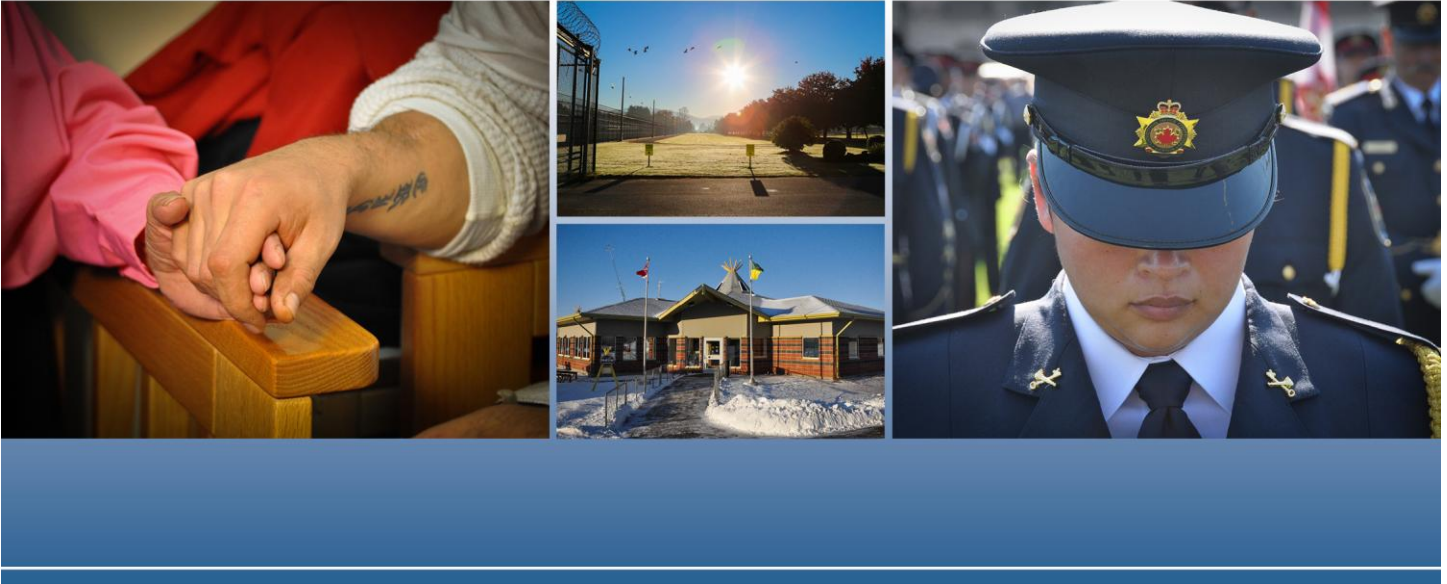


CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.



Restorative Opportunities Victim-Offender Mediation Services

2016-2017

Correctional Results for Face-to-Face Meetings



Correctional Service
Canada

Service correctionnel
Canada

Canada

Background

The Correctional Service of Canada's Restorative Justice (RJ) Unit provides a safe and constructive process whereby victim(s) and offender(s) can communicate with each other and address the harms caused by serious crime. This is achieved across Canada through the Restorative Opportunities (RO) program.

Originally, institutional staff identified potentially appropriate offenders and generated the vast majority of requests received. However, there has been a significant rise among referrals received from victims for this service.

Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) is a restorative process important in addressing the needs of all participants, contributing to public safety and the prevention of future crime. RO is a CSC funded initiative with a focus on safely reintegrating offenders into society by ensuring that they understand the human costs inflicted by their crime, address the harms, and repair some of the damage, as agreed upon by both the victim and offender. It is a critical step towards providing helping opportunities for victims by having their questions and needs responded to by those directly involved.

All requests for service are carefully assessed to determine the appropriateness of the intervention and the readiness of the participants to proceed with communication. Some of these requests will be screened out if the other party is inaccessible, unwilling to participate or if either party's motivation is deemed inappropriate for the program. Others will be managed using indirect communication – shuttle communication and/or letter/videotape exchanges. Finally, some will be delayed to allow for further preparation.

This report provides information about the requests for victim offender-mediation services, the services delivered through the Restorative Opportunities program and the correctional results of 246 offenders who completed a face-to-face VOM meeting from 1992 to March 31, 2017. An analysis of the data provided, in correlation with data extracted from the Offender Management System (OMS), was used to verify offender status and offence history post-VOM.

Although this report does not include an analysis of the various impacts to victims and offenders as a result of their participation in a face-to-face VOM meeting, it does include quotes from past victim and offender participants revealing high satisfaction. The quotes are taken from RO program feedback questionnaires completed by victim and offender participants at the time of file closure and submitted directly to CSC's RJ Unit at National Headquarters.

A 1995 qualitative evaluation demonstrated high levels of satisfaction for both victims and offenders. For victims, they reported having greater control over their safety and their lives, and that the process offered them a measure of closure. For offenders, in addition to personal growth, they reported having a greater commitment to addressing their criminogenic needs. Staff interviewed confirmed a higher commitment on the part of those offenders to participate actively in their correctional plan.

In addition, Ruge (2006) examined the effects on participant's physical and psychological health. Both victims and offenders exhibited positive changes over the course of the program in relation to the pre-post Physical Health Checklist and to the pre-post Psychological Health Checklist. There was a significant positive difference between participants who experienced a victim-offender meeting and those who did not.

In May 2013, a Preliminary [Analysis of the Impact of the Restorative Opportunities Program](#) was conducted by the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada. The preliminary examination indicated that the program shows promise in reducing recidivism. The trend suggested that after one year of release, offenders involved in a face-to-face had fewer returns to custody despite lower reintegration potential and motivation ratings.

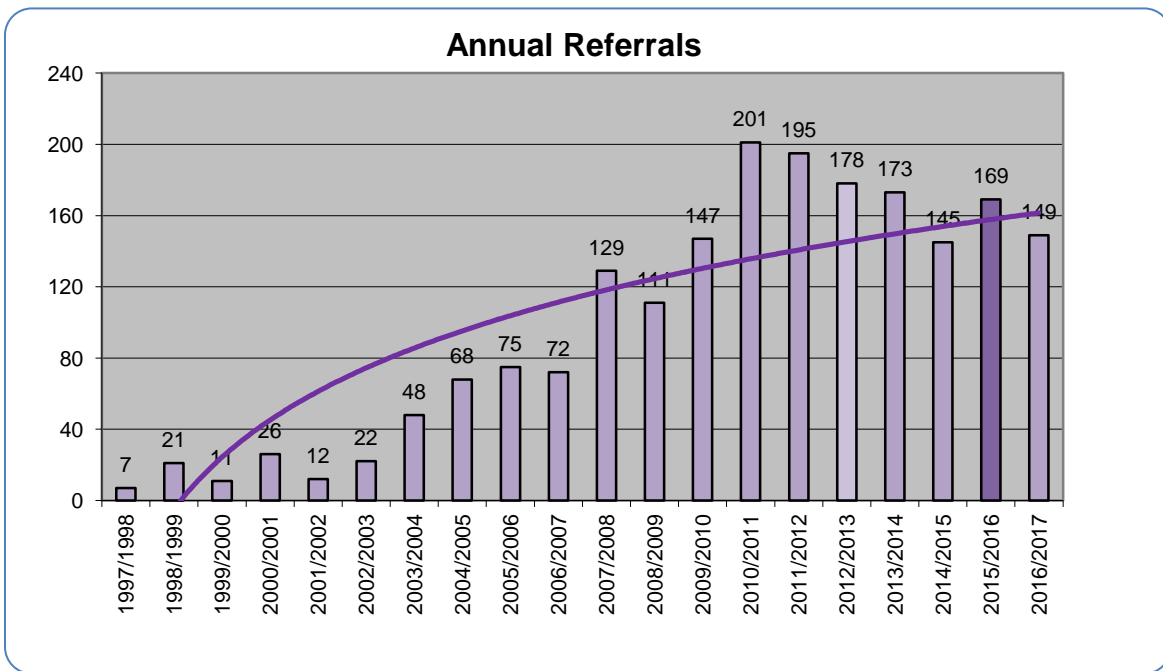
Following the Preliminary Analysis the Research Branch conducted an [Analysis of the Impact of the Restorative Opportunities Program on Rates of Revocation](#). The findings from the study provide support for RO program participation, particularly when meetings were offered in the community. The results also suggested that taking part in RO while in the institutions may reduce revocation rates over time

REFERRAL STATISTICS

Annual Referrals 1998-2017

Participation in the RO program is available to people harmed by the offence requesting to communicate with the offender who caused the harm. Since 1992, the RO program receives requests from victims directly, or through a victim representative acting on behalf of registered victims. Federal offenders serving a sentence under the jurisdiction of the Correctional Service Canada and who have taken responsibility for their actions may express their interest to participate in the RO program to a CSC staff person. For the purposes of this report, these are represented as institutional referrals.

Although CSC’s VOM services have been available since 1992, this graph includes referrals received since 1998. From 1992-1997, program data collection on incoming referrals was not standardized and requests for VOM services were not recorded.



The total number of referrals received during fiscal year 2010/2011 remains the largest number of referrals received since the beginning of the RO Program. RO program outreach and presentations were completed in-person from 2007/2008 to 2010/2011 and were effective in referral increases; while the years where the Restorative Justice Unit was unable to deliver in-person presentations shows the opposite. The slight increase in 2015/2016 may be due to the coming into force of the Canadian Victim’s Bill of Rights, which provides victims with a right to information on Restorative Justice programs.

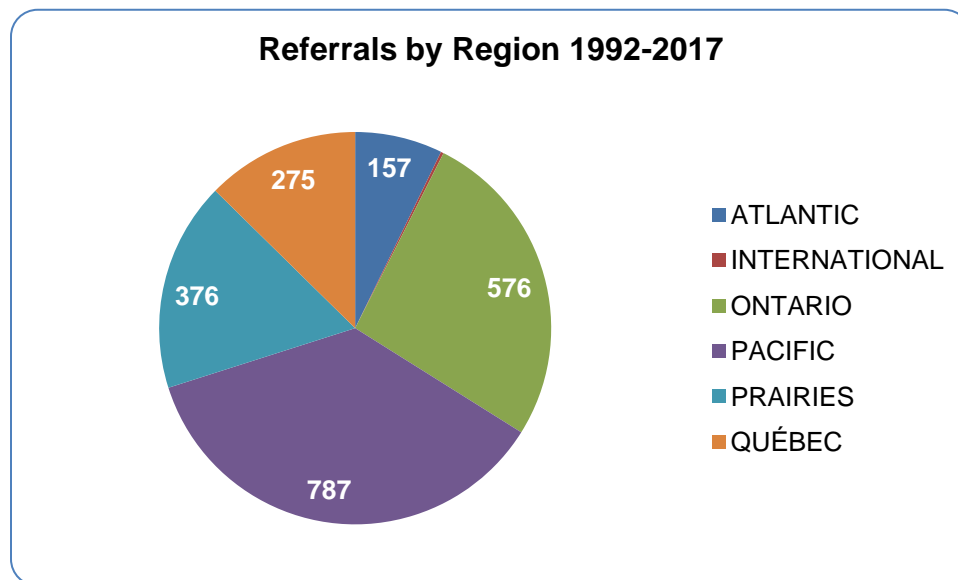
Referral Origin 1992-2017

Victim Initiated Referrals	707
Institutional Initiated Referrals	1251
Other / Unknown¹	221
Total	2179

The number of institutional referrals continues to exceed the number of victim initiated referrals. The Québec Region is the only region to maintain higher victim initiated referrals versus institutional initiated referrals. Pacific has the highest ratio of institutional initiated referrals.

Regional Snapshot 1992-2017

The Pacific Region has provided VOM services for more years than any other of the 4 regions in Canada. For this reason, Pacific has the highest number of cases.



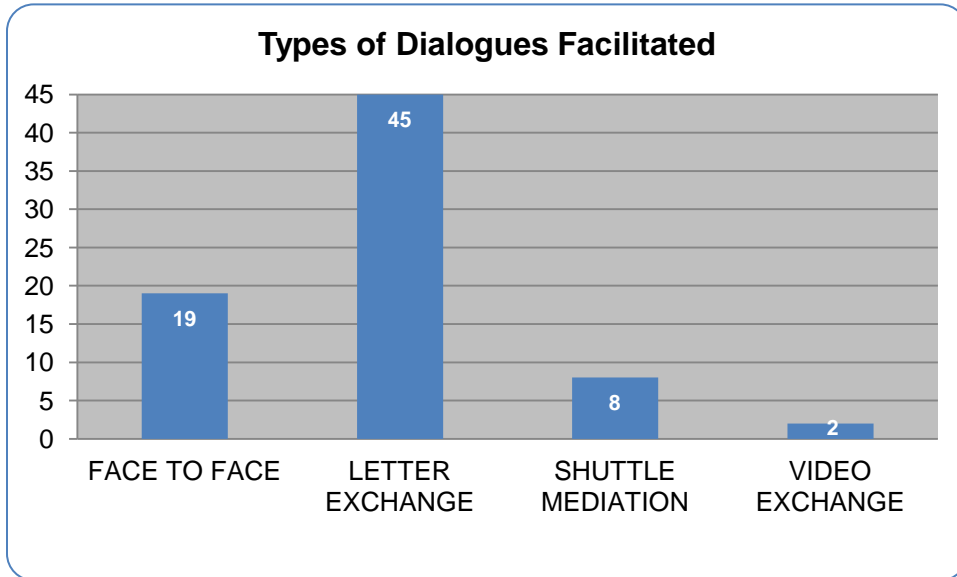
VICTIM-OFFENDER MEDIATION SERVICES FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017

Types of Dialogues Facilitated in Fiscal Year 2016-2017

The RO program provides VOM services that include a number of RJ processes or types of dialogues. The types of dialogue processes used are guided by the needs of the participants. They can meet face-to-face, correspond in writing, have a circle process and exchange video messages. The mediator can also relay

¹ The origin of referral was not recorded during the earlier years of the Victim-Offender Mediation Program (VOMP) which provides VOM services in the Pacific Region, where the program was piloted.

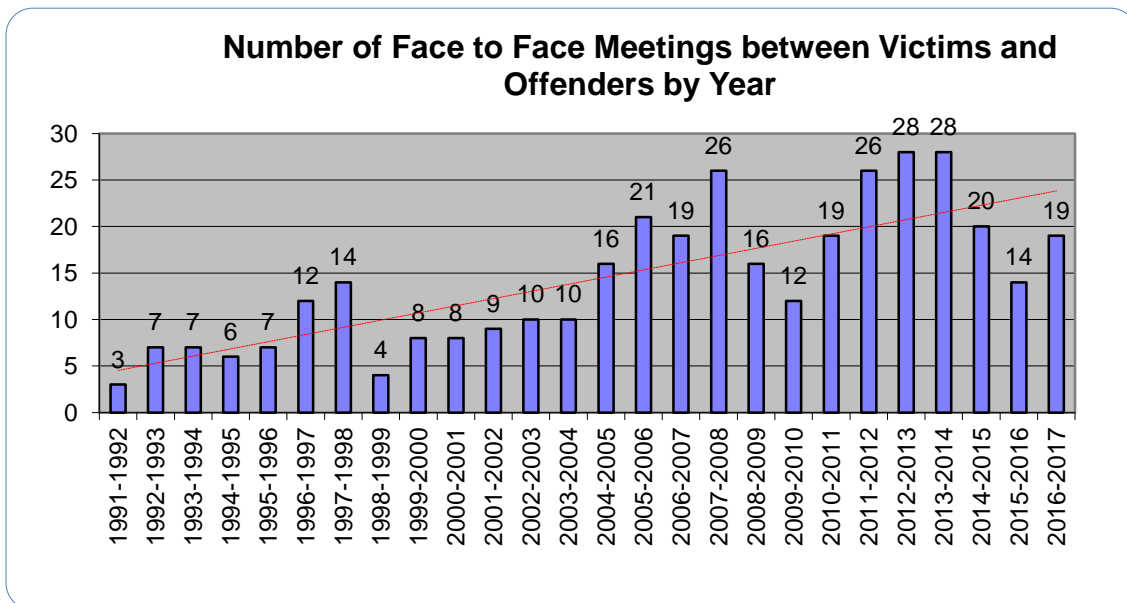
messages back and forth between participants (shuttle mediation). During fiscal year 2016-2017, the RO program mediators have mostly facilitated letter exchanges and face-to-face dialogues.



FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUES 1992 to 2017

Face-to-Face Meetings per Year

Between 1992 and March 31st 2017, 246 offenders participated in 397 face-to-face dialogues.



Number of Face-to-Face Meetings per Offender

Of the 246 offenders:

1 Meeting	2 Meetings	3 Meetings	4 Meetings	5 Meetings	6 + Meetings
159 (%)	51 (%)	12 (%)	6 (%)	3 (2%)	5 (2%)

OFFENDER PARTICIPANT SNAPSHOT

Age

- The age of the offenders who participated in a VOM face-to-face meeting at the time of their offence ranged from 15 to 77, with an average age of 30.
- Their age at the time of their first VOM face-to-face meeting, ranged from 19 to 85, with an average of 41.

The time between offence and VOM face-to-face meeting ranged from 10 months to 44 years, with an average of 11 years.

Marital Status

- 44% of offender participants were single at the time of their participation in a VOM face-to-face meeting.
- 29% were in committed relationships, either common-law or marriage.
- 21% were separated or divorced from their partners, and
- 4% were widowers.
- 1% unknown

Gender

- 94% of offender participants were male and 6% were female.
- These ratios are comparable to the general federally-sentenced offender population:

Federal Offender Status	Women	%	Men	%	Total
Incarcerated & on release	1,331	5.78	21,714	94.2	23,045 ²

Aboriginal Representation

Seventeen percent of participants were of Aboriginal origin. This representation is below the Aboriginal representation in the total federally-sentenced and incarcerated offender population of 23%³.

² Source: CRS-M 2017-09-08

³ Source: CRS-M 2017-09-08

Religious Affiliation

Participants come from a variety of religious and spiritual backgrounds. For example, of the 246 mentioned in this report, 60 are Catholic, 49 are Protestant, 10 practice native spirituality, 5 are muslim and 59 do not associate with any religion or spiritual belief system.

Risk/Needs

For those who were rated at the time of intake, the majority of offender participants were rated as high risk and moderate needs.

Risk

53% high risk
37% moderate risk
10% low risk

Needs

41% high needs
48% moderate needs
11% low needs

INDEX OFFENCES

Offence Type

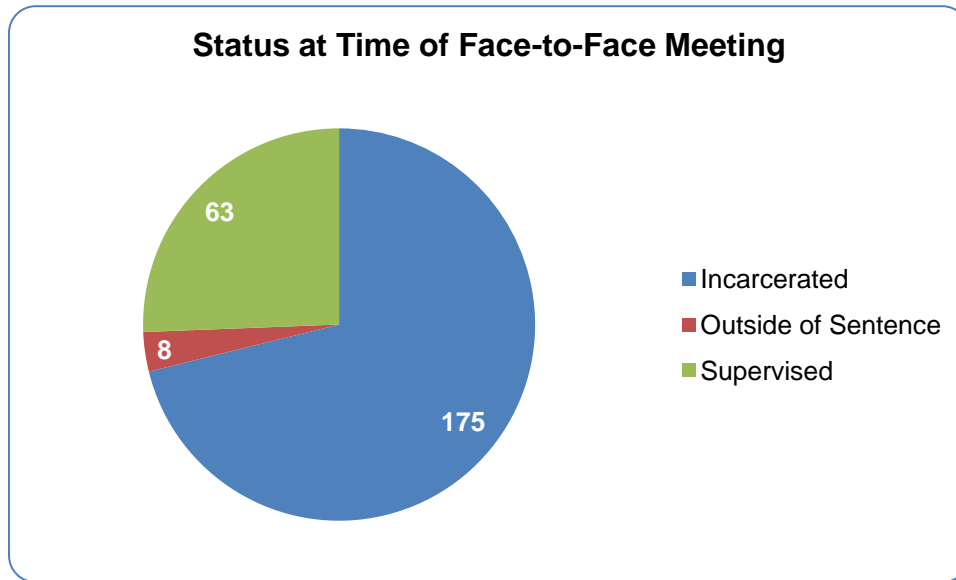
Offences for which a VOM face-to-face meeting was sought:

- 50% murder, manslaughter or attempted murder
- 27% sexual offences
- 8% robberies or break and enter
- 5% driving offences causing death or bodily harm
- 4% assaults
- 3% death by criminal negligence
- 1% kidnapping and forcible confinement
- 1% threat and criminal harassment

This is comparative to the percentages representing the types of offences for which victims register with CSC; particularly with respect to the first two offence types represented above.

CONDITIONAL RELEASE SUCCESS STATISTICS

Participant Status at Time of Face-to-Face



Current Participant Offender Status

Of the 246 offenders, 75 are presently incarcerated, 162 offenders have either reached warrant expiry or are on release, 3 offenders were deported, and 6 are deceased.

Of the 246 offenders:

Sentence Completed	Incarcerated	Supervised	Deceased	Deported
108 (44%)	75 (31%)	54 (22%)	6 (2%)	3 (1%)

Timeframe of Release Post-VOM Face-to-Face

Of the 176 offenders who were incarcerated and eligible for conditional release at the time of their victim-offender mediation, 109 were subsequently released.

- 21% (n:28) of offenders were released within 1 year of their next eligibility
- 42% (n:51) of offenders were released within 2 years of their next eligibility
- 67% (n:74) of offenders were released within 3 years of their next eligibility
- 78% (n:85) of offenders were released within 4 years of their next eligibility
- 80% (n:88) of offenders were released within 5 years of their next eligibility

The majority were released on day parole (n:59) and statutory release (n:41).

Reoffending Following VOM Face-to-Face

Recidivism

Of the 180 offenders who were either on release when they participated in a VOM face-to-face meeting or who were subsequently released:

- 97% had not re-offended within 1 year of their face-to-face meeting.
- 87% had not re-offended within 5 years of their face-to-face meeting.
- By Year 10, 86% had not re-offended.

Offences Committed Post-VOM

Of the 246 offenders involved in face-to-face meetings (this includes all offenders since 1992 who were on release at the time of their face-to-face meeting, subsequently released, and incarcerated at the time of this report):

- 220 offenders (89%) have not committed a new offence
- 26 offenders (11%) have committed a new offence

Type of Offences Committed Post-VOM

Of the 26 offenders who committed a new offence post-VOM:

- 7 charged with Robbery as their major offence;
- 2 charged with Sexual Assault as their major offence;
- 6 charged with Assault;
- 2 charged with criminal harassment;
- 2 charged with B&E
- 1 charged with theft of a credit card
- 1 charged with possession of substance for trafficking;
- 1 charged under a provincial statute;
- 1 charged with possession of restricted firearm;
- 1 charged with breach of long term supervision
- 1 charged with kidnapping
- 1 charged with indecent act with intent to insult

Note that 18 (69%) of new charges are for lesser offences than those for which mediation was sought.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Victims and offenders provide us with feedback on their experience participating in the Restorative Opportunities program. Overall, participants show great satisfaction, finding strong support from the RO mediators, who are praised for their level of professionalism, honesty, and dedication. Victims expressed their expectations being met and, in some cases, exceeded, finding healing in the process and a sense of closure. Many offenders expressed an increased level of empathy toward the victim and appreciation for the compassion the mediators provided them.

“My expectations were fully met. I now am able to fully empathize with what the youngest daughter of my victim has gone through after her mother’s murder... I believe I was able to find out more about who my victim was. She was a human being and not just a victim.” (offender)

“It was life changing for myself. I could not see a more difficult nor more rewarding process in the past or future.” (victim)

“I truly thank God for [the mediators] for bringing this entire experience to a very fragile human level. [This was] more than just ‘people doing their jobs.’” (victim)

“It has very much helped me to move on in a positive direction and reinforced in me the resolve to reform and be a better person. I have come to regard my victim’s mother as one of the people I must not disappoint with respect to my morals and behavior during ... my incarceration.” (offender)