

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Moving On: An Outcome Evaluation of a Gender-Responsive, Cognitive-Behavioral Program for Female Offenders

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) completed an evaluation of Moving On, a gender-responsive, cognitive-behavioral program for female offenders. The evaluation assessed the effects of participation in the program on recidivism among offenders released from the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Shakopee between 2003 and 2013. The follow-up period for the offenders in this study ranged from 6 months to 11 years.

KEY FINDINGS

- From the inception of Moving On at MCF-Shakopee from 2001 through 2010, the program had relatively high fidelity
 - Its operation was generally consistent with how Moving On was designed
 - Class sizes were small (less than 10 offenders per class)
 - The length of the program was 12 weeks
 - Role-playing exercises were used
 - Participants were in class for a total of 48 hours
- Between 2011 and 2013, Moving On had relatively low fidelity
 - Its operation was generally inconsistent with how it was designed
 - Class sizes were large (more than 40 offenders per class)
 - The length of the program was 3 weeks
 - No role-playing exercises were used
 - Participants were in class for a total of 30 hours
- Results showed the “high fidelity” Moving On significantly reduced rearrests and convictions
 - Significant effects were not observed for either reimprisonment measure (new felony sentences or technical violation revocations)
- Findings revealed the “low fidelity” Moving On did not have an impact on any of the four recidivism measures
- The evaluation suggests that program integrity is critical to reducing recidivism

Moving On is a gender-responsive, cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT) program that focuses on improving communication skills, building healthy relationships, and

expressing emotions in a healthy and constructive manner. The program is delivered in 26 sessions via group and one-on-one discussions, self-assessments, writing exercises, and role-playing and modeling activities. The women are encouraged to set goals for the future and assess their own personal strengths and weaknesses. Each session is designed to last one and a half to two hours.

Moving On was initially offered to female offenders at the MCF-Shakopee during the fall of 2001 by trained facilitators. Up through 2010, it was generally offered to offenders on a quarterly basis. Participation in the program was voluntary, and offenders often entered the program during the last half of their confinement period. The program lasted a total of 12 weeks, participants were in class four hours per week for a total of 48 hours, and class sizes were relatively small (between 5 and 10 participants).

In 2011, a decision was made to begin offering Moving On to offenders shortly after their admission to the MCF-Shakopee. Due to concerns that scheduling offenders for Moving On often seemed to conflict with prison work assignments or participation in other institutional programs, Moving On began to be offered to offenders on a mandatory basis at the time of intake. Modifying the point at which offenders entered Moving On brought about several substantive changes to the way the programming was delivered. Because reception and orientation generally lasts three weeks, the length of Moving On was trimmed from 12 weeks to 3 weeks. Offenders participated two hours each day, five days per week, for a total of 30 hours. While some curriculum was cut in reducing overall classroom time from 48 hours to 30 hours, the main program changes involved the elimination of role-playing, skill-building, and homework exercises.

This evaluation compared recidivism outcomes from an evidence-based CBT program with a standardized curriculum from when the curriculum was and was not fully implemented. The population for this study consisted of 4,101 female offenders released from prison in Minnesota between 2003 and 2013. Of these offenders, 216 participated in Moving On prior to 2011 when it was run with integrity. Another 864 offenders participated in the program during the 2011-2013 period when it did not operate with fidelity. The remaining 3,021 inmates did not participate in either version of Moving On.

To determine whether participation in Moving On and, more generally, program integrity had an impact on recidivism outcomes, a retrospective quasi-experimental design was used that included three separate sets of comparisons. The first comparison assessed the effects of participating in Moving On prior to 2011 on recidivism. The second comparison examined the impact of the Moving On program offered during the 2011-2013 period on recidivism. The third comparison evaluated the effects of participating in Moving On both before 2011 and during the 2011-2013 period on recidivism.

Recidivism Results

The results suggest that Moving On was generally effective in reducing recidivism prior to 2011. Although significant effects were not observed for either reincarceration measure, pre-2011 participation in Moving On lowered the risk of rearrest and reconviction. The findings further showed that between 2011 and 2013, Moving On did not have a significant effect on any of the four measures of recidivism. The results from the first two comparisons were confirmed by the third comparison, which indicated that recidivism outcomes—particularly for rearrest and reconviction—were significantly

better for pre-2011 participants in comparison to those who participated in Moving On during the 2011-2013 period.

Time-Adjusted Recidivism for Moving On Participants and Comparison Group Offenders

	<i>Rearrest</i>	<i>Reconviction</i>	<i>New Offense Reincarceration</i>	<i>Technical Violation Revocation</i>
<u>Comparison #1 (N = 430)</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Pre-2011 Moving On	49.3	34.9	16.3	23.7
Comparison Group	62.8	48.4	20.5	27.4
<u>Comparison #2 (N = 1,720)</u>				
Moving On, 2011-2013	42.9	25.1	6.9	20.9
Comparison Group	39.2	24.1	4.8	19.9
<u>Comparison #3 (N = 432)</u>				
Pre-2011 Moving On	19.4	7.9	2.3	16.2
Moving On, 2011-2013	31.0	16.7	4.2	19.9

The findings indicate Moving On can be an effective correctional program for female offenders. But the results also imply that its effectiveness hinges on whether it is implemented with fidelity, which provides support for the notion that program integrity matters when it comes to reducing recidivism. When the operation of Moving On was largely consistent with how it was designed, the program significantly lowered rearrest and reconviction. But when parts of the curriculum were cut, the length of the program was shortened, and class sizes were far bigger than recommended during the 2011-2013 period, participation in Moving On ceased to reduce reoffending. As the quality of the intervention was diluted, so was its beneficial impact on recidivism.

Summary

The findings carry several important implications for correctional research, policy, and practice. First, the results provide additional evidence that cognitive-behavioral programming can be effective in reducing recidivism for offenders. Second, this study offers additional, albeit qualified, support for the idea that program integrity matters. Third, this evaluation provides evidence that making changes which compromise program integrity can have an adverse impact on recidivism outcomes. Ensuring program integrity is therefore critical to the efficient use of successful interventions that deliver on the promise of reduced recidivism.