

# *Hard Time: Promoting HIV and Hep C prevention programming for prisoners in Canada*

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## About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

## About the Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN)

PASAN ([www.pasan.org](http://www.pasan.org)) is a community-based prisoners' rights organization that strives to provide advocacy, education and support to prisoners and ex-prisoners in Ontario on HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other harm reduction issues. Established in 1991 PASAN is the only community-based organization in Canada exclusively providing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C prevention education and support services to prisoners, ex-prisoners, youth in custody and their families.



# Overview

- 1. Acknowledging the Challenges of Providing HIV/HCV Prevention & Harm Reduction in Prisons**
- 2. *Hard Time*: The Project & The Report**
- 3. Two-Slide Legal & Policy Overview**
- 4. Best & Promising Programs – Eight Examples**
- 5. Conclusion**

# Acknowledging the Challenges



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# Health care staff face significant challenges

## Health care staff face significant challenges to providing comprehensive HIV and HCV prevention programs for prisoners:

- Prison population has complex health needs.
- Health care resources are stretched.
- Health and rights of prisoners not popular issues.
- “Harm reduction” is contentious, and facing backlash from federal governing party.
- Prevention, harm reduction measures often seen as incompatible with institutional security.
- Behaviours that risk transmitting HIV/HCV from prisoner to prisoner are illegal in prison, and driven underground.

# *Hard Time: Project & Report*



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## The project goal (pages 8, 9)

**To encourage and aid stakeholders in responding to challenges of HIV and HCV prevention for prisoners.**

**The stakeholders (i.e., the people who need to be involved):**

- Prison systems (administrators, management, Cx staff, health care staff)
- Other sectors of government (i.e., health and public health)
- NGO and community organizations (policy and service-providers)
- Prisoners

# Increase knowledge, capacity, involvement and collaboration (pages 8, 9)

**The project sought to achieve its goal by increasing stakeholders’:**

- Knowledge of legal, ethical and human rights issues related to HIV and HCV prevention and harm reduction.
- Capacity to respond to prisoners’ needs.
- Involvement in dialogue, info-sharing and problem-solving regarding policy and programming.

**The *Hard Time* report is intended to build upon existing collaboration. Especially to expand collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders.**

- Many of the “Best and Promising Programs” in the report are collaborative efforts! More please.

# What we did (1) (pages 9, 10)

## Desk review of documents:

- Access to info requests sent to 14 jurisdictions.
  - Policies, guidelines, directives, memos, standing orders
  - Training and educational materials
- Focus on prevention/harm reduction:
  - HIV antibody testing & counselling
  - Condoms, dental dams, lube
  - Bleach to clean needles
  - MMT
  - Illicit drug testing
  - Drug-free living units
  - Education and info for prisoners (health care, Cx)
  - Special programs for women, Aboriginal prisoners
- Youth and adult corrections

## What we did (2) (pages 9, 10)

### Prison visits and in-person interviews:

- Federal and provincial prisons, NGOs, prisoners and prisoner organisations, government officials, prison health care staff
  - BC, Alta, Sask, Man, NS, NB, QC, ON
  - 20 prisons, 85 people
- Gathered information on prevention projects and initiatives:
  - Background and contact person
  - Objectives and main activities
  - Start date
  - Outcomes
  - Lessons learned
  - Limitations
  - Funding
  - Evaluations

# We selected “enabling policy” and “best and promising programs” (pages 10, 11)

## Enabling policy ...

- is consistent with international and Canadian law and guidelines about the rights and health of prisoners, including those that have been articulated in the context of HIV; and
- provides a foundation to deliver best and promising programs.

## Best and promising programs ...

- work in some demonstrable way either in full or in part; and
- illustrated lessons learned (i.e., what works, how and why).

# A Two Slide Overview of Legal and Policy Foundation



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# International standards on HIV/AIDS and harm reduction in prisons (pages 13 to 19)

## General principles for HIV/AIDS prevention and care in prisons:

- Good prison health is good public health
- Good prison health is good custodial management
- Respect international human rights and other laws
- Adhere to international standards and health guidelines
- Equivalence in prison health care
- Holistic approach to health
- Evidence-based interventions
- Addressing vulnerability, stigma and discrimination
- Collaborative, inclusive and inter-sectoral cooperation and action
- Monitoring and quality control
- Reduce prison populations

**Source: UNODC, *HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care, Treatment and Support in Prison Settings: A Framework for an Effective National Response* (2006)**

# With exceptions, the legal and policy foundation is weak

**With the exception of NS Correctional Services Act and CCRA (federal), legislative foundation for health care in prisons is weak.**

- Legislation dated and does not reflect international standards.

**Overall, BC and CSC had the most complete, well-articulated policy for HIV/HCV prevention and harm reduction for prisoners.**

- There are many other examples of enabling policy.
- Important to look on an issue-by-issue basis.

**Even in absence of strong, coherent legislative and policy foundation across Canada, many excellent programs have been implemented – “best and promising programs.”**

# Best & Promising Programs – Eight Examples



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# Community health centre operates clinics inside provincial prisons (page 33)

- Quebec
- Bordeaux Correctional Centre
- CLSC Ahuntsic

# Release packages distributed by Manitoba Corrections (page 40)

# Provincial prison works with community MMT clinic to initiate prisoners (page 54)

- Nova Scotia
- Capital District Health Authority
- Direction 180

# Provincial prisons initiate methadone maintenance therapy (page 55)

- British Columbia

# Federal prison dedicates resources to health education for incoming prisoners

(page 74)

- Stony Mountain Institution (Manitoba)
- CHIPS (Choosing Health in Prisons)

# ASO delivers HIV and HCV prevention and harm reduction training for guards

(page 80)

- Alberta
- HIV Edmonton
- Non-Prescription Needle Use Consortium
- Alberta Solicitor General

# University partners with provincial prison for women – participatory action research empowers prisoners (page 85)

- British Columbia
- Dr. Ruth Elwood Martin, UBC Department of Family Practice
- A.C.C.W. Women Alumni Health Research ([www.accwalumniresearch.org](http://www.accwalumniresearch.org))

# Aboriginal ASO engaged to train Knowledge Keepers (page 92)

- CSC prisons and healing lodges in Saskatchewan
- All Nations Hope AIDS Network

# Conclusion



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# The value of collaboration

**Many of the best and promising programs in the *Hard Times report* are examples of the value of collaboration.**

**Collaboration can take advantage of resources and expertise (i.e., community, public health, prisoners) where you do not yet have a solid policy foundation, or lack institutional resources to develop and implement prevention programmes.**

# Prison health care staff play a central role in collaborative efforts

**Health care staff are often the key to collaboration because of your position.**

- You know the players (prisoners, prison administration and security, public health, community organizations).
- You know how things work in prisons.
- You are members of a self-governing profession.
- You have allies in one another.
- You have a new resource to draw from and build upon – ***Hard Time*** is about promoting greater collaboration and, ultimately, increasing vital health programs for prisoners.

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