

Overview of Program

Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak is a program designed to support women in SK who are repeatedly incarcerated for low-level offences. Women with repeated criminal justice system involvement are offered up to 18 months of support to address their unique and often complex needs by building supportive transitional pathways to improve their community reintegration. The program is funded by the Saskatchewan Ministries of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety (CPPS), Justice and Attorney General, and Health and delivered by the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Methods

Twelve interviews were conducted with 22 key stakeholders who had been involved in the implementation and initial delivery of Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak. Interviews were also conducted with 4 relatives who participated in the program.

Results

Implementation

Strengths

- Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) took leadership to design and implement the program.
- A database was implemented to support data collection.
- A strong partnership was developed between Pine Grove and STC with STC staff entering the facility four days a week to complete program intakes.

Challenges

- Interviews suggested that violent offences were becoming increasingly common among women which made it difficult to reach the intended target population. Additional consultation with frontline staff while planning Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak may have helped identify this emerging trend.

Program Delivery

Strengths

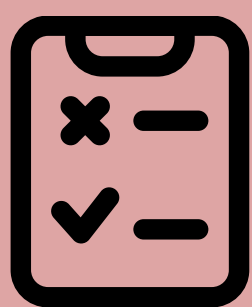
- STC assembled a strong team to provide a wide range of supports and services to relatives in a holistic manner, including a safe place for the women to live (i.e., an 18-unit apartment complex).
- The Research and Implementation Branch (RIB), Ministry of Social Services, and STC worked together to ensure a streamlined application process for income assistance for eligible individuals.
- From the relatives' perspectives, the apartment complex felt like home and was a supportive environment.

Challenges

- Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak had to follow *The Residential Tenancies Act* as the apartment complex was managed by Cress Housing and participants were considered tenants. This presented difficulties with entering relatives' suites and evicting relatives that were not complying with the program's rules.
- Relatives had built relationships with specific STC staff while at Pine Grove, but those staff did not regularly work at the apartment, due to having to travel to Pinegrove almost daily, requiring relatives to build new relationships with different staff upon moving into the apartment. This lack of continuity in relationships may have contributed to some relatives leaving the program.
- Difficulties were encountered keeping relatives engaged in the program, especially when relatives were experiencing mental health and addictions concerns.

Ideas for Program Improvement

- Increase the pool of potential participants for Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak by modifying the program eligibility criteria.
- Focus on increasing the retention of relatives in Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak (e.g., by using motivational interviewing).
- Increase staff continuity to enhance relationships with the residents and promote the retention of relatives.
- Consider how supports and treatment for addictions can be further incorporated in Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak.
- Ensure contact is maintained and supports continue to be delivered to relatives who have transitioned into the community.



An Evaluation of Īkwēskīcik iskwēwak

(ah-gwee-ski-chick isk-way-wuk) (Cree)
Women Turning Their Lives Around

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