



## FACT SHEET

### Responsivity

#### What is Responsivity?

Responsivity is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the often quoted Risk – Needs – Responsivity principles from the What Works literature. Risk refers to who to target for rehabilitation, Needs refers to the areas to work with (like drug use or attitudes) and Responsivity refers to how likely an offender is to RESPOND to an intervention.

One way to think about responsivity is to think of the smoker who doesn't want to quit. We all know that a smoker won't respond to a treatment program until they are ready to stop – and it's the same with offenders. We simply can't just expect them to go to a program and then they will be "fixed".

#### Two types of Responsivity

The first type of responsivity is General. This means that, in general, all our interventions have to be evidence-based. They have to (1) have some proof that they work, for example, Cognitive-Behavioural programs work with offenders' thoughts, feelings and behaviours. (2) They have to be put on at the right time – for example some interventions work best early in the custodial sentence and others work best just after they are released, and (3) they have to match the way offenders learn new skills, e.g. using concrete examples, simple language and learning-by-doing.

The second type of responsivity refers to getting the offender ready to respond. If they don't speak English, and we only offer our programs in English... then we need to teach them English first. Responding to a program these days requires offenders to be able to read, to write, to be ready and motivated to do the program, to believe that programs work, to make sure our facilitators are well trained, to be encouraged to participate and have all wing and other staff reinforce the program material.

#### How is it measured

CSNSW has included in its suite of assessments a Treatment Readiness assessment on OIMS. It will determine if an offender is "Treatment Ready" or needs "Program Preparation". In the latter case, the offender's individual report even gives some guidelines to increase the offender's readiness.

#### Improving Responsivity

We have to make sure our programs provide the right mix of interventions and they work. We have to make sure the offenders are motivated and ready for the intervention. We cannot "wait until they are ready" anymore – Case plans that include strategies like "self refer for AOD" need to be rethought and involve both the offender and the officer – "work towards attending the SMART program by December" is a much better strategy to increase responsivity.