



Operations Manual

MODULE 2



Theory Supporting Stride's Approach to Reintegration Support

The needs of women reintegrating into society after serving federal prison time are acute, diverse and complex. Professional services are needed to provide the trauma and /or addictions counselling, government services are needed to provide affordable housing and new identification cards and employment opportunities are needed to become self-sufficient. Stride contributes to successful reintegration, not by providing any of the above services, but by providing a woman with the social and emotional supports she needs to persevere through these systems and to offer the role modelling of a healthy lifestyle. The theory contained in this module speaks to this aspect of supporting reintegration.

This Module contains Strides Theory of Change, Logic Model

We are here to LISTEN not to work miracles.

We are here to help a woman IDENTIFY her OPTIONS... not to decide for her what she should do.

We are here to DISCUSS STEPS with a woman... not to take the steps for her.

We are here to help a woman DISCOVER her own STRENGTHS... not to rescue her and leave her still vulnerable.

We are here to help a woman DISCOVER SHE CAN HELP HERSELF... not to take responsibility for her.

We are here to help a woman LEARN TO CHOOSE... not to keep her from making difficult choices.

WE ARE HERE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CHANGE.

– Anonymous

Stride's Theory of Change

Theory of change statement

While in custody, women involved in the justice system are connected to Stride volunteers and staff through a shared activity to establish a relationship that will follow them into their community and facilitate the reintegration process.

Following release, the positive relationship building

and community engagement offered by Stride Circles help to protect against the many dynamic risk factors faced by women in the justice system. Stride Circles work to foster prosocial behaviours and develop the skills necessary for participating women to make healthier life choices. As a result the women are more likely to become connected to their communities, and to have developed the protective factors that promote desistance.

Target Group

If the target group engages in Stride programming while inside facility, **then** the Stride staff and volunteers can begin to facilitate the building of relationships with participating women and identify those willing to engage in more intensive support through Stride Circles.

Outputs

If women in the justice system become engaged with volunteers at Stride Night and form circles, **then** there is an increased likelihood that short term outcomes will be achieved. The foundation of support that Stride Circle staff and volunteers provide allow for the development of prosocial behaviours, which in turn help to mitigate the risk factors faced by reintegrating women, and decrease their likelihood of recidivism.

Short Term Outcomes

If the short term outcomes of positive attitudes and prosocial behaviour are met through the development of an strong Circle of support, **then** there is an increased likelihood that a decrease in criminogenic behaviour will be achieved. Thus, reintegrating women will have their practical needs met, be aware of community resources available to them, develop and enhance their social support networks, and increase their mental health and wellbeing by being able to more effectively manage fear, anxiety, and stress.

Intermediate Outcomes

If the short term outcomes that move the women towards more positive attitudes and prosocial behaviour are met, **then** there is an increased likelihood that the long term outcomes will be achieved. As the women gain stronger social-emotional skills and enhance their social support networks, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of self and self-worth that will contribute to their making positive life choices and reducing their risk of reoffence.



Long Term Outcomes

If long term outcomes are achieved, then the women will be more positively integrated into their communities. As women become more stable, they will most likely become less dependant on their Stride Circle for socio-emotional support as they have developed the skills to better navigate problems and stressors on their own. As a result, the women will have developed a stronger sense of self and community, thus decreasing likelihood of recidivism.

Ultimate Outcomes

All outcomes are expected to contribute to: healthier lifestyles for the women and other vulnerable populations; reduced recidivism and increased desistance for women in the justice system; social and economic integration of the women and other vulnerable populations; increased culture of belonging and inclusion in communities across Canada; and increased resiliency fore individuals and communities.

At Stride, all of our programs are founded on principles of restorative justice consistent with Community Justice Initiatives' values, a way of addressing conflict and crime that engages the person who caused the harm, people who were affected by the harm, and the community.

Community Reintegration Overview

Stride Mission: *Commitment to the development of community partnerships and processes that facilitate the healthy reintegration of women in the justice system into their communities, with a focus on the evolving individual needs of a woman's reintegration into the community.*

Stride Vision: *We envision supportive, responsive community partnerships, working with women in the justice system women to facilitate their return to the community and empower them to improve their quality of life, resulting in healthier families, neighbourhoods, and communities.*

Stride is a community- and strengths-based program that works by reducing the isolation and stigma experienced by women in the justice system (the women), both while incarcerated and upon release. The program is predicated on restorative justice principles, and the reintegration process is a partnership between the community and the women Stride serves. The women are valued for who they

are and are encouraged to explore their personal strengths and skills as they work toward successfully integrating into their community. The communities receiving the women help to facilitate belonging for vulnerable peoples and inspire empowerment.

Correctional Services of Canada (CSC) and other agencies working with women in the justice system have recognized Stride as a "best practice" for women in the justice system aiming to reintegrate into society following release from prison. According to the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales, Stride demonstrates good practice in community services that aid reintegration (2006). The importance of providing community-based programming within women's correctional facilities has been highlighted for the last three decades, but particularly since the Creating Choices report (Correctional Service Canada et al, 1990).

Stride utilizes an evidence-based model to inform, assess, ready, and support women in the justice system and to support community volunteers to embark on an often remarkable journey of relationship, commitment, and accountability. These relationships are fundamental to providing reintegrating women with the support they need, and allow for the development of significant protective factors (such as positive attitudes, conflict resolution skills, good mental/physical/emotional/spiritual health, and strong social supports).

Stride Circles are extremely effective in their ability to reinforce positive decision making and sound judgment for the participating women (Pedlar, 2005). Stride participants' connections with volunteers and staff allow for the self-management skills necessary to make and maintain positive life choices consistent with enhanced strengths, coping strategies, and self-esteem. We believe that every community member bears responsibility for the options available in our community for vulnerable people.

The Stride program contributes to community safety and crime prevention. For a woman involved in the justice system to be successful and not return to crime, a crucial initial step is to connect them with the community while they are still in prison/ in the system. Involving the community in this way aids in building understanding and trust between the women and their communities. It helps in the forming of positive relationships that follow the woman into their community, essentially providing a "head start" that facilitates reintegration and desistance. Involving the community within a prison also helps break down barriers and create a culture of belonging. Stride's support continues long after



Stride is innovative in that participating women self-select for all Stride programming — all participation is voluntary and may begin or end as the participant sees fit. A woman's level of need in terms of practical support (e.g., transportation, access to community resources.), emotional support, and social support is determined by herself, with the support of her Circle. In cases of high-needs clients, they may be determined by Stride staff based on case file data, which includes the Circle intake and consultation with Parole Officer/Primary Workers from prisons, and previous interactions with Stride.

Key Stride Objectives:

- Providing quality strengths-based programming with a strong volunteer presence in order to engage women involved in the justice system in Stride programming, and facilitate the relationship building necessary to develop Circles
- Engage community in participating in the reintegration of women involved in the justice system back into their communities, bolstering volunteer capacity within Stride programming, and building cohesion within different communities to better support women in the reintegration process
- Create safer communities by facilitating a culture of belonging within the community that is engaged in supporting vulnerable people
- Participate in evaluation consistently and in research opportunities provided by CJI, in order to monitor Stride's effectiveness in relation to recognized best practices for women reintegrating from prison, and better engage the community in reintegration programming in order to monitor Stride's effectiveness in relation to recognized best practices for women reintegrating from prison, and better engage the community in reintegration programming

Stride is a community-based model with a built-in flexibility to adapt to the needs of any given community. It uses various intervention strategies to help women successfully reintegrate and reduce their risks of reoffending. Stride programming operates as follows:

Pathway to Reintegration

Stride Night > Stride Circles

- > reduced risk/enhanced protective factors
- > reduced recidivism/enhanced desistance and enfranchisement
- > reintegration

Stride Night

Components

Stride Night is a weekly social recreation program operating inside a prison or other institution to bring together community volunteers with women in the justice system to cultivate awareness, understanding, and caring.

- Staff focus on providing a safe space with healthy activities geared toward facilitating relationships between the community (volunteers) and the participating women.
- Stride Night also functions as an avenue to recruit, screen, and develop our volunteers encourage and facilitate other community agencies to support women involved in the justice system and their families. It allows staff to further screen volunteers, and facilitate connections between complementary personalities. To become involved in Stride Night, volunteers are screened and must attend 10 hours of training. Stride Night volunteers decide on their own level of commitment to programming.

Intervention — general support

- Stride programming facilitates connections between the wider community (participating volunteers) and incarcerated women.
- Stride Night
 - provides general support for engaged women involved in the justice system, and allows for the building of the foundational relationship between the women and volunteers that is necessary for Stride Circles.
 - offers a prosocial environment for women to feel empowered and supported.
 - functions as the contact point for most participating women, and creates a non-traditional pathway to other social services and more intensive support.
 - introduces volunteers to the prison and participating women, thereby engaging the community with the prison, challenging stereotypical thinking, and opening the possibility of increased community cohesion and belonging for women involved in the justice system.



Stride Circles

Components

Stride Circles is an intensive service linking trained volunteers with women involved in the justice system to community services to assist in reintegration. Circles offer the best avenue for mitigating the dynamic risk factors related to recidivism, thereby facilitating reintegration and improving desistance

- The women and volunteers meet during Stride Nights. Participating women self-select to partake in Circles, and, overseen by the Circle Coordinator, suggest volunteers they have connected with to be part of their Circle.
- Stride Circles remain active throughout a woman's incarceration, travels with her as she reintegrates to community, and continue until the participating woman decides to end it (this may be well past Warrant Expiry).
- To become a Circle volunteer, a Stride Night volunteer must attend an additional 10 hours of training. Once training is complete, a participating woman may request the volunteer as part of her Circle – the entire process of matching is overseen by staff.

Intervention – general support

- Stride Circles offer an excellent continuum of program, which are consistently highlighted as necessary for women involved in the justice system, providing continued contact pre- and post-release. This is consistent with the holistic care considered beneficial, especially for women in custody, by CSC.
- Stride Circles support the woman's sense empowerment, responsibility and belonging:
 - The women have the opportunity to engage with volunteers during Stride Night events and find volunteers they are comfortable with. Research shows that the trust enjoyed between Circle volunteers and participating women is a result of the foundational interactions built during Stride Night/shared activities.
 - Women self-select to become part of a Circle and participate in an intake process that identifies goals and perceived risks to successful reintegration. Participation is not based on a risk assessment but rather on the individual engagement of the woman. However, high-risk women are accounted for during the Circle intake process, with staff supporting

and ensuring the safety of both volunteers and women participating in the Circle. Staff and volunteers work with women participating in their Circles before release to help ensure their basic needs are met upon release.

- Because integrating into a community is not a linear path, Stride staff and volunteers seek to remain adaptive and flexible in supporting the woman. This support may include meeting basic needs and helping the woman gain stable/meaningful employment, and develop other protective factors (e.g., healthy relationships, healthy leisure activity, participation in cultural activities).
- Stride Circles help to mitigate the risk factors associated with leaving correctional facilities while creating and promoting the protective factors needed for no longer offending or exhibiting anti-social behaviour through...
- facilitating a mutual relationship, which is integral because it helps create social inclusion and reduce risks of isolation and stigma.
- the practical and socio-emotional support of volunteers.
- intensive relationships, which offer the opportunity to facilitate the development of the prosocial behavioural norms necessary for reducing the risks of social exclusion, isolation, and stigma, clearly articulated in relational theory as highly detrimental to women.

Outcomes

Women in the justice system /Individual

- Short-term Outcomes:
 - Normalized interactions between participating women and the community, through volunteers and volunteer supported access to services
 - Increased support for practical needs/awareness of community resources
 - Enhanced prosocial support networks, through Stride Circles and the healthy relationship modelling of Stride Circle volunteers
 - Enhance decision-making skills
 - Reduced fear/anxiety about reintegration
 - Enhanced stress management/coping skills
 - Increased self-esteem/self-worth
 - Connection to positive role models and peers



- Intermediate Outcomes:
 - Reciprocal relationship building that highlights the commonality of human experience and reduces stigma/stereotypes
 - Increased access to community resources, employment services, affordable housing options, and family-centred services
 - Enhanced problem-solving skills and conflict resolution skills
 - Improved self-efficacy
 - Positive/healthy use of leisure time
- Long-term Outcomes:
 - More consistent mental and medical healthcare, with an increase in overall wellbeing
 - Lower rates of family violence
 - Lower rates of poverty
 - Higher levels of consistent employment
 - Stable housing
 - High levels of community participation
 - Reliance on healthy relationships from family and/or friends for social support

Community/Societal:

- Short-term Outcomes:
 - Increased collaboration between communities to provide foundation for Stride programming
 - Increased number of Stride Programs available across Canada
 - Enhanced partnerships with service providers across Canada
 - Increased public safety
 - Awareness of vulnerable populations in the community
- Intermediate Outcomes:
 - Increased ability for community to engage with and receive reintegrating women involved in the justice system
 - Reduction of stigmas and stereotypes surrounding women involved in the justice system and other vulnerable populations
 - Increased ability to deliver quality woman-centred programming for women involved in the justice system

- Increased understanding of necessary services for reintegrating women involved in the justice system and serving vulnerable populations
- Strengthened community resiliency and advocacy for creating belonging
- Long-term Outcomes:
 - Community action/messaging about creating belonging within the community for vulnerable populations
 - Increased advocacy for vulnerable populations
 - Increased knowledge transfer between diverse communities, agencies, and people supporting any vulnerable population
 - Increase availability of cost-effective prevention programming
 - Community investment in the potential of reintegrating women involved in the justice system

Ultimate impacts:

- Healthier lifestyles for women involved in the justice system and other vulnerable populations
- Reduced recidivism and increased desistance for women involved in the justice system
- Social and economic integration of women involved in the justice system and other vulnerable populations
- Increased culture of belonging and inclusion in communities across Canada
- Increased empowerment of individuals and communities

Best Practice Elements of the Stride Circles Approach

Stride Circles demonstrate program best practices for reintegrating women involved in the justice system into the community. Stride programming can be viewed through the developmental psychology lens of Relational-Cultural Theory (RTC), which has been the driving force behind Stride programming (for further information, see Pedlar et al, 2008). RTC must be understood as an essential part of the female experience, as well articulated by Jean Baker Miller in 1986, “women’s sense of personhood is grounded in the motivation to make and enhance relatedness to others... women tend to find satisfaction, pleasure, effectiveness and a sense of worth if they experience their life



activities as arising from, and leading back into, a sense of connection with others” (Baker Miller, 1986).

It is worth noting that RTC values have been accepted as more broadly applicable in the assessment that people only develop as they become more related to others. There are five key characteristics of the growth-fostering relationships RTC identifies as essential for healthy psychological development: vitality, empowerment, clarity of one’s self, the other, and the relationship, self-worth, and an increased desire to build more healthy relationships (Baker Miller, 1986). These are consistent with the relationships expected to emerge out of Stride Circles.

Stride values uphold RTC for women in the justice system, insisting that the community pay a significant, mutually accountable role in their rehabilitation and integration. Demographic information regarding the women consistently demonstrates severe trauma. RTC acknowledges the importance of creating a social space for the healing of wounds that occur in a social context (Bloom, 2000). As noted, by utilizing community volunteers, Stride programming is able to offer a continuum of care.

Equally important, the RTC approach also helps to create a more balanced power dynamic (especially in comparison with traditional clinical therapeutic methods) that allows for healthy psychological development. This mutuality is crucial within RTC as it allows for all members to grow and change as part of an empathic, empowering relationship, where members are engaged in becoming more responsive in fostering wellbeing in the other – essentially, facilitating growth through interpersonal connection (Jordan & Hartling, 2002).

Stride programming is rooted in a strengths-based approach and RTC provides the necessary understanding of vulnerable people who have faced adverse social conditions as possessing the ability for resiliency. In this way, resiliency is understood as “finding and moving toward mutually empathic, mutually empowering relationships in the face of adverse conditions, trauma, or alienating social/cultural pressures, that is, the ability to connect, reconnect, and resist disconnection...a broader, contextualized, interpersonal understanding of these experiences” (Jordan et al, 2002). As Stride research explains, women consistently note the difficulty of integrating back into community when burdened with deep stigma and stereotypes. The common experiences of disconnection, social isolation, and violation that the women identify

have the devastating consequence of disallowing the development of empathy for both the self and others (Covington, 2007).

Stride Circles help to mitigate the risk of social isolation and repair social trauma, encouraging growth for all members which in turn creates more resiliency and safety for the individuals involved, as well as the communities they live in.

In terms of criminological theory, while Stride programming utilizes aspects of the classical individualized Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model that are complementary to RTC, the more recently developed Good Lives Model (GLM) is more consistently reflective of RTC. Stride values its focus on empowerment, strengths-based growth-fostering rehabilitation, and the restorative practices of community participation and collaborative problem solving. GLM understands that humans, regardless of offending behaviour, are naturally inclined to seek a range of primary human goods (understood as an experience, activity, or situation sought for its own sake and intrinsically beneficial which, if secured, will result in a greater sense of purpose and self-fulfillment (Ward, Yates & Willis, 2012). Notably, GLM asserts that all intervention plans for offenders must incorporate all risk and psychological factors (such as poor living conditions, mental health concerns, and personal capacity) that may have an impact on the individual’s criminal behaviour or difficulty attaining primary goods (Ward, Yates & Willis, 2012).

Consistent with the GLM, Stride programming is based on the individual’s identified needs and values that contribute to their successful integration into community, rather than on a clinically prescribed rehabilitation plan. The GLM’s use of self-identified goals is also an important factor consistent with Stride programming, and is complementary to mitigating risks noted in the RNR framework, namely, potentially destabilizing low- and medium-risk offenders by over-programming and increasing the likelihood of reoffending (Wilson & Yates, 2009). Stride’s use of self-selection for program participation combines these philosophies, and allows for women involved in the justice system to identify their own level of need. As well, the aims of treatment in a GLM context are consistent with the strengths-based approach of Stride. Thus, consistent with RTC, rehabilitation must incorporate relational interaction, in order to encourage an individual to view themselves as able to create their own change in socially appropriate ways that is more reflective of their own personal values and needs (Yates & Ward, 2008).



Stride programming is consistent with the needs of the women outlined by the Auditor General of Canada. As suggested in the April 2003 report, partnerships with community resources can be effective: “Working with community agencies and volunteers to provide continuity of care is recognized as an effective way to help individuals who need a support network. It is also a cost-effective model” (Government of Canada, 2003). By ensuring a relationship is built pre-release, Stride is better able to provide the community programming deemed necessary by both the Auditor General and the Canadian Human Rights Commission in the “most critical part of the transition period – the first three to six months after release” (Canadian Human Rights commission, 2003).

Stride programming is consistent with CSC recommendations for women offenders outlined in the Creating Choices (1990) report. In the Revised National Community Strategy for Women Offenders (March 2010), it is consistently noted that there is a “need for certain fundamental principles to be in place in order to identify, develop and implement responsive strategies for federally sentenced women offenders,” including specifically, a holistic approach, women-centred programming, integration between institution and community, and a continuum of care (CSC, 2010). These are important components of Stride programming. By rigorously training volunteers, Stride aids in the provision of trained volunteers supporting the women. As noted by CSC, such trained volunteers are considered very valuable in their ability to provide companionship and support needs of the women. As such, Stride is “worthwhile” as it not only benefits the women offenders but also helps increase community capacity (CSC, 2010).

As research has indicated, Stride Circles are effective and unique in their ability to minimize power imbalances between members, and thus create a reciprocal relationship that establishes trust and honour for the women (Fortune, Thompson, Pedlar & Yuen, 2010). This reciprocal relationship is consistent with Creating Choices’ “program directions that work” as Stride provides the building of self-awareness and self-esteem, provides a continuum of support, increases community support and integration in the community, bolsters inter-agency coordination and community support, and ensures women are treated with respect and dignity (CSC et al, 1990).

Research has shown that Circles “functioned in ways that helped reinforce positive decision making and sound judgment on the part of members who may not have made those choices previously ... [and fostered] the ability to connect with other citizens and organizations, helped the women find their way into the community at large” (Pedlar, 2008). In achieving these outcomes, Stride Circles demonstrate program best practices for reintegrating women involved in the justice system, and similarly maintain CSC recommendations for effective programming for women. As well, Stride contributes to safer communities by empowering vulnerable people, supporting their desistance, and thus reducing recidivism.



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