

FAMILIES AND CORRECTIONS JOURNAL

Canadian Families and Corrections Network |
Regroupement canadien d'aide aux familles des détenu(e)s
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**The mission of the Canadian
Families and Corrections Network
is:**

**“Building stronger and safer
communities by assisting families
affected by criminal behavior,
incarceration and community**

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Family-Victims Research: Needs and Characteristics

By Louise Leonardi, Executive Director, CFCN
and Dr. Stacey Hannem, Assistant Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University

If you are a family member with a loved one incarcerated there can be many challenges. Adults and children left behind are victims of the ‘consequences’ of crime and are the ones who have to deal with feelings of loneliness, shame, anger and grief; effects of the loss of family income; and are filled with questions and concerns for their loved one who is incarcerated. Families are often ostracized and isolated in the community and the children are ignored, teased and often bullied at school because they have a parent in jail.

It is not easy to be on the outside when your loved one is in prison. Now imagine that they have been sentenced because they committed a crime against YOU! The family is a victim in many of our most serious crimes in Canada including murder, incest, child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse and yet there is a focus on ‘stranger’ or ‘acquaintance’ crime while direct family-victims are an unspoken reality.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network serves family members who are always a victim of the ‘consequences’ of crime and we are interested in the segment of this population who are also ‘direct’ victims of crime. The current government concern toward increased support for victims aligns with CFCN in our efforts to assist families and in October 2013, Public Safety Canada contracted with CFCN to conduct a study of current Family-Victim programs (mainly in Ontario) to answer the primary research question:

How can victim-service programs and resources adequately address the needs of family-victims, giving particular attention to the complexity of family relationships that have been disrupted by crime?

So what did we do?

Canadian Families and Corrections Network joined in partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford Campus) and in particular, Dr. Stacey Hannem, Assistant Professor at the Department of Criminology to complete the research and analysis on this valuable project in an effort to examine the needs, characteristics and experiences of family-victims.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network staff completed interviews in three classifications: experts, victim-serving agencies and direct family-victims. Dr. Hannem completed a Review of the Literature on Family Victimization and evaluated our Research Findings.

Experts were chosen from the fields of corrections, victim services and government for their creditability, policy recommendations and understanding of current legislation around victims of crime and included those from the areas of Correctional Service of Canada, Office of the Correctional Investigator, Parole Board of Canada, Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, Restorative Justice, Academic Research, and Victim Services. Their focus was not to be reflective of any particular type of crime (e.g. domestic violence) but to be broad enough in scope to offer insights around all familial crime in Ontario and across Canada.

The victim-serving agencies were carefully chosen to reflect integrity, stability and varied insight gleaned over time. They were to be agencies family-victims would be drawn to in order to obtain strong, credible information. A great deal of time was spent ensuring that victim-serving agencies were inclusive of all types of crime and the consultation

participants included agencies dealing with domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, sexual assault, youth crime, etc. They were chosen to represent both male and female victims, various ages, Aboriginal and French cultures, and the rural and urban perspective across Ontario. We interviewed St. Leonard's Society, the John Howard Society, the Salvation Army, the Elizabeth Fry Society, F.E.A.T for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Friends of Dismas, Mennonite Central Committee, Community Justice Initiatives and many others working in the areas of domestic violence, elder abuse, counseling and support for victims.

Family-victims were added to the consultation process to add the value of experienced reality. Several individuals stepped forward from the solicitation process and were granted anonymity to encourage them to speak freely.

Family-Victims in Canada

Statistics Canada's analysis of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data from the year 2010 shows:

- 25 % of all reported victims of violent crime in Canada were victims of family violence. 49% were spouses, 51% were children, parents, siblings, or other relatives.
- From 2000-2010, 35% of all homicides and 59% of homicides involving children under the age of 18 as victims were committed by a family member.
- 25% of all reported violent offences against children under the age of 18 were committed by a family member.
- Approximately 30% of reported violent crime against seniors was perpetrated by a family member.
- Rates of charging are higher for violent crime perpetrated by a family member than by a stranger or acquaintance. Why? The perpetrator is known to the victim and can be readily identified, as well as the fact that we have mandatory charge policies in Canada for domestic and intimate partner violence.
- Despite the fact that reported rates of family violence have been declining (as is the overall violence crime rate) for the past thirty years, family-victims still comprise a significant overall percentage of violent crime victims in Canada.

But this is not the whole story – why?

- Not all crime comes to the attention of the police. Self-report victimization surveys consistently show that sexual violence and intimate partner / domestic violence are under-reported. Children often do not report their own victimization and most reports of violence against children are made by family members or other concerned parties. It is likely that the proportion of family-victims is significantly higher than the statistics indicate.
- The UCR Survey “does not record victim information for non-violent crime, such as the relationship of the accused to the victim. As a result, it is not possible to identify non-violent incidents that targeted family members.” So financial exploitation or theft from the elderly, property crime, etc. would not be reflected in the available statistics on family crime.

Family Victimization Literature Review

- While a large subset of the literature does address family-victims in the sense that the focus is on particular forms of victimization that occur largely or only in families (e.g. intimate partner violence, child abuse, domestic and family violence, incest), relatively little attention has been paid to explicitly documenting the unique needs and considerations of these victims in terms of the complexity of family relationships and ongoing needs post-victimization.
- In the literature on forms of victimization that are not specific to families (e.g. homicide, assault, sexual assault, theft, property crimes), there is often no consideration of the importance of the victim relationship to the offender, and analyses reveal a pre-existing bias toward assumptions of stranger crime.
- The research on homicide does include a subset directed at contextualizing and understanding intra-familial homicide, but the gap is that intra-familial homicide is most often considered from the criminological perspective of the offender, focusing on comparisons of offender and victim characteristics, prevalence, motives, risk factors, protective factors, and prevention.
- Family or domestic violence is the most well documented and researched aspect of family victimization in Canada, but also the most fraught with contradictions. Only in the past thirty years has our understanding of family violence moved away from viewing it as a private problem to be dealt with behind closed doors. We now have mandatory arrest and charge policies for cases of domestic violence where there is evidence to support that a criminal assault has taken place, without requiring the victim to agree to the charges. Ironically, the very policies initially created to underscore the seriousness of family violence and to empower victims to extract themselves from abusive relationships have since come under fire as contributing to a rigid response that is no longer sensitive to issues of gender inequity and imbalances of power.
- There is growing literature around the needs of “families of offenders” or “families affected by incarceration”. Many researchers working in this area present the families of offenders as secondary or “hidden” victims of crime. A shortcoming of this work is that although researchers do acknowledge that these families are also often primary victims of crime, the analysis often marginalizes that victimization in favour of a focus on the collateral effects of the criminal justice system, instead of a holistic consideration of the effects of the crime and justice system responses on families.

So what did we find out?

- The qualitative data collected from experts and government officials, victim service providers, and family-victims indicated that while family-victims share many of the same needs as non-family-victims, there are unique needs and considerations that set them apart and require sensitivity and expanded services.
- The family-victims in this research shared that they did not feel that others understood the difficult situation in which they found themselves – torn between their hurt and anger at their victimization and the family bond that they shared with the perpetrator.

- Family-victims who do not report their victimization often feel even more ambivalent and less understood.
- Family-victims often blame themselves and experience profound guilt and shame about their own victimization. Particularly in intimate partner violence, victims are troubled by stereotypes of “*the kind of woman*” who stays in an abusive relationship and they question their own role in the victimization.
- Family-victims have unmet needs which hinge on our dominant definitions of victims that often exclude families of the offender. For example, access to victim services may be hampered by the family identity; family victims suffer collateral consequences of legislation such as the mandatory victim surcharge and provincial victim compensation policies; restorative justice processes are often unavailable for family victims; family victims are often unable to have a meaningful voice in the justice process, as when charges are laid against their wishes. Other needs are outlined fully in the research analysis and recommendations.
- Perhaps most importantly, what emerges from the data is the power of individual relationships and caring people to assist family-victims with healing. Although systemic changes are necessary to address the complex needs of family-victims, the participants pointed out repeatedly that there were a few people or even a single individual in the system who they recall as making a difference just by treating them kindly and with respect. Ensuring that front-line workers at all levels of the criminal justice system (police, victim services, courts, and corrections) recognize the legitimacy of family-victims and afford them basic courtesy and respect is a key first step to improving services for this population. Discourtesy, delegitimization, and unprofessionalism among criminal justice responders adds to the trauma that these individuals are already experiencing and may dissuade them from seeking further services and assistance.
- The need for recognition and emotional support that validates a person’s experience of victimization is complicated by kinship with the offender due to the stigma that is often associated with being the family member of an offender. As one participant stated:

“Typically what the victim’s family would experience is a fair amount of community support and engagement... With the family-victims...there is a great deal of shame and there can be ostracization. They can be viewed as being responsible in some manner, due to parenting, due to influence, due to lack of support, due to dysfunction within the family unit. So there doesn’t appear to be the same reaching out, empathetic response that comes with those who are the direct victims of the act.”
- A discrepancy emerged in the data with respect to family-victim perspectives on victim services. One problematic area is that there may be a lack of sensitivity to a victim’s desire to maintain or repair a relationship which exacerbates the stigma and may even have the effect of limiting the services that can be accessed. One interviewee stated:

“Well I guess the assumption that the victim [always] wants the relationship to be over is a faulty assumption. And then there’s another assumption that I’ve heard lots of professionals make, especially when I was working in the system, and that was that if the victim wanted the relationship to continue it was because of the abuse of power the offender held over the victim. And that’s not necessarily the case...I also know other situations where myself or other victims have genuinely forgiven and do feel a capacity to have a continued relationship with this person and do feel a right to have a continued relationship with the offender. And it’s not up to professionals to decide what the victim’s experienced situation is or to decide what’s best for that victim. Like, it’s really up to the victim to decide that.”

One of the results of the research is 10 recommendations to improve services to family-victims in Ontario:

1. **Documentation of the prevalence of family-victims:** “What percentage of your clients would fit our definition of ‘family-victims’?” was asked during the research interviews. Unexpectedly, the primary finding that emerged from this question is that victim-serving agencies in Ontario are not currently tracking victim relationship to the offender as a key measure of service. The only agencies able to provide a solid answer to this question were those who exclusively serve victims of family violence; their response was that 100% of their clients are family-victims.

Victim-serving agencies in Ontario should begin documenting and collecting statistics on the prevalence of family-victims in their case loads to ascertain the demand for family-victim-specific services.

2. **Documentation of family-victim characteristics:** Surprisingly, what emerged from the interviews with victim-serving agencies was that, for many, this was the first time that they were challenged to consider, in a focused way, the impact of the kinship relationship between victim and offender.

Victim-serving agencies in Ontario should document and collect statistics on the characteristics of family-victims in their case loads, with particular attention to the status of their relationship with the offender (e.g. whether or not they choose to maintain a relationship with the offender) in order to assess the need for specific family-victim interventions.

3. **Promote awareness of family-victim issues among victim-service providers:** Other than victim services for family/domestic violence, we were unable to locate victim services that are designed uniquely for family-victims and in some cases family-victim relationships with offenders were minimized or ignored. (For example, services provided to victims of domestic violence often take it as a given that the most desirable outcome is the dissolution of the abusive relationship, irrespective of the victim’s wishes or perspective on the situation.) Also family-victims want further victim notification information than what is available, such as what will happen to the offender, prison visitation, family reintegration, etc.

“Our silence is the result of your question, because it’s profound. I think what we’re doing is reflecting on our practice and we are identifying that there are areas where we have not necessary provided a strong focus, so that’s something we want to talk to you about. And that’s that awareness piece.”

By sharing this research widely, through the presentation of family-victim awareness training, individuals working with and for victims of crime should be encouraged to consider the implications of these issues for their practices.

4. **Make information about all services for family-victims readily available:** CFCN found that there were a wide range of services available to victims of crime including Victim-Offender Mediation, Aboriginal Healing Circles, Victim Notification Services, Peer Support Groups, Victim Advocacy, Education, Court/Parole Accompaniment, Victim Impact Statement Preparation, Crisis Response, Safety Planning, Victim Witness Assistance, Counselling and Emergency services. And while many agencies indicated that all victim services were open to family-victims, there were very few services which had considered the distinct needs of family-victims (other than services for victims of domestic violence). It was also found that interventions with victims are often designed to facilitate an exit from the relationship rather than to provide assistance in dealing with the root of the dysfunction.

Family-victims also emphasised that the effects of victimization are far-reaching and long lasting. Victims may require services, particularly medical and mental health services, for many years. The violation of trust and security that is experienced when an individual is victimized by a person that s/he loves is a life-changing event. As a society and community we need to think about victim services in a holistic, longitudinal way, recognizing that immediate crisis response is only the tip of the iceberg, and designing services and case management processes that allow for continuity of care and support as victims travel on their journey to healing.

There is clearly a need to provide family-victims with timely and thorough information about the kinds of services that are available and how to contact services providers. In addition to raising awareness among victim service providers about the unique types of information that family-victims may need, we recommend that an educational booklet about the criminal justice system and the family which details “what to expect” and where to find relevant services and information be made available to all family-victims in Ontario at their first contact with police or victim-serving professionals.

5. **Assess the impact of legislation on the financial circumstances of family-victims:** Victims experience financial effects of crime in loss of working days and wages, due to trauma, medical or counselling appointments, court attendance, and possibly attendance at Parole Board hearings. There may also be many out-of-pocket expenses such as parking costs; transportation; child care; the costs to replace damaged or stolen property; the replacement of home locks for victims of domestic abuse; relocation costs; crime scene clean-up costs; the costs of ongoing counselling, etc. But for family-victims, further impact may include the loss of a contributor to household income and the cost of legal fees. Further, if the offender has caused damage or destruction to property that is co-owned with the victim, insurance will not compensate the victim because the spouse is also named on the insurance policy.

Another troubling systemic cost is the potential irony of the mandatory victim surcharge fees, which came into force in the fall of 2013. The fee, assessed on top of any fine or custodial sentence, is intended to make offenders accountable for the costs of victim services but if the offender is not able to cover this cost, the victim surcharge, in effect, is being taken directly from the family-victim’s pocket. As one participant stated:

“I’ll tell you that much, there is no point in taking money out of children’s mouths to pay a fine.”

Particularly with respect to victim surcharges and policies surrounding Criminal Injuries Compensation claims, judges and adjudicators should be given discretion to assess how the policy affects family-victims and to make rulings that would lessen the impact on family-victims.

6. **Increase the number of emergency transitional housing spaces available for women and children who are victims of domestic violence:** All victims need to feel protected and that their safety is assured with appropriate measures. For family-victims there may be practical, concrete concerns about having further contact with the offender. When there is a history of violence in the relationship, the family-victim is far more vulnerable to repeated and escalated violence than the victim of stranger crime. Available services for domestic violence include safety planning, however the need for improved availability of emergency and transitional housing for victims of domestic violence is well documented in Ontario and across Canada.

Transitional houses (shelters) for battered women and children should be provided with adequate and sustaining funding to meet the needs of women and children fleeing abusive homes.

7. **Inform and prepare family-victims for the possible long-term effects of receiving victim notification and participating in submitting Victim Impact Statements to the Parole Board:** The federal government has made changes to legislation over the last several decades to permit victims of crime to participate in the justice process by submitting Victim Impact Statements, first in court at the time of sentencing and, more recently, at Parole Board

number of offenders with a history of victimization, it is imperative that public safety initiatives incorporate prevention and early response for survivors of trauma into the scope of their services, rather than relying on the presumed (and unsubstantiated) deterrent effect of longer and harsher sentences for offenders.

10. **All government-sponsored victim services, as well as the proposed Victims' Bill of Rights, should utilize an inclusive definition of victims of crime that does not exclude family-victims:** Victims deserve to know that the rights and services that are afforded to them on paper will be available in practice. The implementation of appropriate and effective victim services is an integral need for all victims who require these services. For family-victims, the availability and implementation of such services may be affected by the relationship to the offender. Some victim service agencies do not recognize family-victims as such and some family-victims report having been denied services to which they were legitimately entitled by virtue of being a named victim in a criminal proceeding.

No victim-service provider should deny services to those family-victims who continue to maintain contact or a relationship with the offender.

Thank you!

Canadian Families and Corrections Network is grateful to Public Safety Canada and the Wilfrid Laurier University for their partnership in this valuable research. We also extend our thanks to all the organizations, interviewees and especially the direct family victims who participated in our research. The Final Report can be obtained on our website at www.cfcn-rcafd.org or by emailing national@cfcn-rcafd.org.



Parole Office
Locations

Toronto ON
330 Keele Street
2nd Floor

Kingston ON
552 Princess Street
Suite 200

Halifax NS
2131 Gottingen Street
Suite 102

Moncton NB
1 Factory Lane, 1st Floor

St. John's NF
531 Charter Avenue

**Canadian Families and
Corrections Network**

**Regroupement canadien d'aide aux
familles des détenu(e)s**

*Invites you to their
Annual General Meeting
via technology
at a Parole Office location listed*

**Friday, March 21, 2014
11:30 am – 1:00 pm EST**

RSVP before March 17th, 2014
national@cfcn-rcafd.org
(888) 371 - 2326



Canadian Families and Corrections Network Annual General Meeting Friday, March 21, 2014

For the first time ever, this year CFCN held their Annual Meeting via technology! Some people flew to join us in our main location at the Toronto Keele Community Correctional Centre in Ontario and we connected with Parole Offices from there to the East Coast.

We took the opportunity to hold some meetings in Toronto and moved to continue CFCN under the provisions of the new Not-For-Profit Corporations Act in Canada.

As a national organization with partners and staff in many locations, it was an exciting venture and one we hope to continue.

Quakers Fostering Justice for assisting Canadian Families and Corrections Network in the reprinting of our resource “**Times’s Up: A Reintegration Toolkit for Families**”. We appreciate your help!

Thank you!

Aid for the Wrongly Convicted

Families affected by crime come from all situations. Canadian Families and Corrections Network would like to acknowledge those families who have been involved in the criminal justice system but were wrongly convicted. On October 2nd, the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted (AIDWYC), in partnership with wrongful conviction organizations and allies around the world, will recognize **Wrongful Conviction Day**. It is hoped that on this day concerned people will unite to increase public awareness of the causes of wrongful convictions and that it will inspire discussion of positive change in the criminal justice system and help prevent future wrongful convictions.

To give you some context around this event, we focus on wrongful conviction case of the Truscott family. Steven Truscott was sentenced to be hanged by the neck in 1959 at the age of 14 for the murder of his classmate, 12-year-old Lynne Harper, whose body was found near London, Ontario. It was later discovered that the case was based on unreliable evidence and in 2001 the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted submitted an application for Ministerial Review, which included fresh evidence. In 2007, the Ontario Court of Appeal acquitted Steven Truscott based on this new evidence, concluding ***“that Mr. Truscott’s conviction was a miscarriage of justice and must be quashed.”***



Ryan and Steven

We asked Ryan Truscott, Steven’s son, what it was like to be a family member of someone who was wrongly committed:

"On a daily basis, wrongly accused and their families, friends and supporters are reminded that life and freedom are to be cherished. Charges and arrests that can take only moments to appear can take a lifetime to disprove. For the fortunate few that have not only the courage but the perseverance to see these cases through, they are to remember that even in a country where we are guaranteed our legal rights, the justice system is made of individuals just like you and me and 'to err is always human'."

Please see all the event information and details for the October 2nd Wrongful Conviction Day at www.aidwyc.org and come out to support families affected by crime who were wrongly convicted.

“Telling the Children”



Through a generous donation from the Community Foundation of Kingston and Area (CFKA), CFCN has created a new brochure entitled ***“Telling the Children - How to Talk to Children about a Loved One’s Incarceration”***. This resource was created to offer parents, caregivers and teachers information and support on how to explain incarceration to children. We are distributing this resource through our partnerships in the non-profit sector of the Kingston ON area but you can receive a copy on our website at www.cfcn-rcafd.org or by calling (888) 371-2326.

CFCN Ontario Coordinator Marg
Holland and Terry Harris from CFKA

Thank you donors!

Canadian Families and Corrections Network needs your help to continue our work and greatly appreciates your donations.



Families of offenders are often the 'forgotten society'. They are the ones who are left behind to cope with the stigma, shame and confusion in dealing with the effects of crime and our legislation. Children are often teased and bullied in school and are 2-4 times more likely to be in conflict with the law as they grow up. We need to provide service and interventions to families to help them cope and change the outcomes of these statistics!

What will we do with your Donations?

We help families all across Canada by answering questions, offering support and helping them find local community assistance on our confidential, bilingual, toll-free telephone lines. Recently we helped a man find the boy to whom he had been a Big Brother many years ago. The boy is now incarcerated and the friend flew across the country to spend some time visiting him. At the end of their time together, the man left his incarcerated friend some canteen money and a promise to stay in touch and help him in the future.

Your kind dollars allow packages to be mailed out to struggling family members coping with the effects of crime, offering education and resources as they navigate the criminal justice system. We recently sent out our United Nations recognized storybook *"Jeffrey Goes to Jail"* to allow a caregiver to prepare a child for the visiting procedure at an institution.



And your financial commitment goes toward creating and distributing new resources such as our *"Telling the Children - How to Talk to Children about a Loved One's Incarceration"* brochure to help strengthen the parent-child bond and keep children connected to their incarcerated parent, if possible.

Change lives by helping a family member today - every donation helps!

Please mail donations to:

CFCN
PO Box 35040
Kingston ON K7L 5S5
(888) 371-2326

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Canadian Families and Corrections Network

Or go to our website at www.cfcn-rcafd.org and click the **DONATE NOW** button to pay by credit card or PayPal

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Membership: Access to CFCN Journal, criminal justice information and incarcerated family related material

- ☐ Individual membership: \$30.00
- ☐ Student / senior / underwaged / Prison group: \$10.00
- ☐ Non-profit organization / agency membership: \$65.00
- ☐ Corporate Patron: \$175.00 or more



Peer Support – Bereaved Families of Ottawa and CFCN

By Louise Leonardi, Executive Director, CFCN

Over the past several months, Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) has participated on the Advisory Committee of the Bereaved Families of Ottawa (BFO) **Peer Support Research Project**. CFCN is interested in this work for two main reasons. CFCN recognizes that many families of offenders who we assist have experienced grief and bereavement as they may have lost someone due to crime and CFCN believes in the value of Peer Support and is working on assisting groups who support families of offenders across the country.

Bereaved Families of Ottawa, through a partnership with Carleton University, set out to investigate *‘The Unique Value of Peer Support’*. Assistance was provided by a student research team from the Master of Social Work Program at Carleton University and an Advisory Committee of volunteers, group facilitators, partnering agencies, etc.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the project were to conduct a Literature Review on Peer Support to examine existing information about the unique value of peer support and to explore existing evaluation tools; to collect demographic data of those involved in the research at all levels of participation; to collect qualitative information through in-depth interviews of Support Group participants; and to analyze and evaluate the collected data. The participant pool for the interviews was selected from members of Bereaved Families of Ottawa, who were over the age of 18 and who had participated in a closed Peer Support group within the last two years. Interviews were held with these participants related to their experience with peer support and a demographic questionnaire was completed, with their permission. All necessary considerations were taken around ethics, risks, benefits, confidentiality, etc.

The work was overseen by the Advisory Committee whose purpose was to involve community partners in this valuable research, to meet periodically to discuss the work of the Research Team, and to offer assistance and oversight to the project direction. They were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire.

What is the Unique Value of Peer Support?

Analysis and Evaluation of the project results led to the following:

- One of the strongest themes was that 100% of the participants valued the **Shared Experience** and **Understanding** of Peer Support groups which allowed for empathy and the creation of an open environment.

Interview Quote: “Sharing is helpful to everyone, that kind of protected and privileged information that can only stay there”

Participants described how they were able to **Feel Normal** in terms of their situations and feelings that were similar to others in the group which was very important to their experience.

Interview Quote: "In the group, everyone just gets it"

Interview Quote: "We've made that connection and we're not letting go, these are life-long."

- Individuals felt that Peer support offers evidence that they are not alone in the challenges they face which **Reduced Isolation**.

- The theme of a **Safe Space** evolved - A place to be alone without fear of judgment. Similar to this was the finding of the value in **Sharing Your Story** and hearing about other's situations.

Interview Quote: "For some, it's hope to get up the next morning or hope to put a bad memory behind you."

- Many participants indicated that having a **Designated Time and Space** to share was not available in other areas of their lives. Some people 'saved up' for the group each week.
- **Ongoing Support and Relationships** were talked about by all participants. The connections made, the trust built and the friendships made were all valuable components of the Support Group. People commented about how they found **Hope**, felt supported and were able to give back to others. They expressed **Positive Feelings and Increased Self-Esteem** from the group.
- While many of the group had sought **Professional Support** (for example, social workers, psychologists, doctors or spiritual advisors), and found it helpful, some thought it lacked a shared experience and experiential knowledge of Peer Support.

Peer Support Groups offer value to people that is not attainable elsewhere. It is a personal decision whether to get involved, whether to give back to the group and receive what they are offering. There is no perfect time to join; again it is an individual decision. The Bereaved Families of Ottawa Peer Support Research Project was of great importance and spoke to the many positive benefits of Peer Support Groups both in the literature and in the qualitative data.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network recognizes this significant work and is working to promote the knowledge and awareness of Peer Support Groups for families affected by crime. With generous funding from the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, CFCN is developing a **Support Group Guide** for families and friends affected by crime which will contain information around how to begin a support group, where to advertise, funding requirements, location ideas, guest speaker possibilities, etc. Once created, this Support Group Guide will be available to those in need across Canada through our website and our toll-free telephone line.



Support Groups for Families and Friends of Offenders

CFCN is trying to identify support groups that provide practical information, support and advice for those that have a loved one involved in the justice system. Below are the ones we know about across Canada. If you know of others that are accepting new members, please let CFCN know at (888) 371-2326 or email us at national@cfcn-rcafd.org to help us share the information with other families in need.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Contact</u>
The John Howard Society	Vancouver BC	(604) 872-5471 ext.235
The John Howard Society	Calgary AB	(403) 266-4566
The Elizabeth Fry Society	Edmonton AB	(780) 421-1175
The Bridge House	Hamilton ON	(905) 522-0283
The John Howard Society	London ON	(519) 438-4168
The John Howard Society of Niagara	St. Catherines ON	(905) 682-2657
St. Leonard's Society	Windsor ON	(519) 256-1878
Dismas Fellowship	Toronto ON	(888) 371-2326
The Salvation Army	Kingston ON	(613) 549-2676
Kingston Counseling Centre	Kingston ON	(613) 549-7850
Restoring Dignity and Hope	Barry ON	(705) 796-2212
MOMS (Mothers Offering Mutual Support) Group	Ottawa ON	www.momsottawa.com
Moncton Community Chaplaincy	Moncton NB	(506) 851-6384
Concilio Spring House	Springhill NS	(902) 597-2171



Reach out and
Support Each Other!