

THERAPEUTIC LIVING UNITS (TLU)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Therapeutic Living Units (TLUs) are specialized self-contained units within correctional facilities that support individuals with addiction. These units provide a structured recovery-oriented environment focused on treatment, skill-building, and recovery planning.

The program follows a four-phase approach:

1. Orientation
2. Primary treatment
3. Community building
4. Aftercare focused on supporting members in developing recovery capital.

SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

- From July 2023 through March 31, 2026, the TLU program has received over **1,500 applications** and provided services to over 500 individuals.
- TLUs are operating 72 beds. In the last six-month reporting period, they had an **82.8% average occupancy rate** and a 62.4% program completion rate.
- **92%** of TLU members who completed the Assessment of Recovery Capital (ARC) showed **significant gains** in recovery capital from admission to program completion.*
- In the last six-month reporting period, **140 outbound referrals** and 37 warm hand-offs were supported during transition from incarceration to recovery communities, supportive housing, and other community supports
- As of March 2026, there were **230 applicants on the TLU waiting list**. The average wait-time is 67.5 days.

RECOVERY OUTCOMES

- TLUs internationally have demonstrated positive outcomes for people with addiction who are in correctional facilities, including reduced re-incarcerations, drug relapses, and re-arrests.
- Based on the number of people completing the program, TLUs are estimated to avoid \$360,000 in direct carceral costs from reduced re-offending alone, without including social and community benefits of reduced criminality.
- TLUs not only help avoid correctional facility costs, but they help significantly improve the health and lives of those who have completed the program.
- Alberta-specific evaluation is underway by the CoRE evaluation and research team.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

- Preliminary anticipated savings are estimated based on reported reduction in reincarceration.
- Based on the number of individuals completing the TLU program, potential cost avoidance of ~\$360,000 per year could be expected on reduced re-offences alone.
- If re-offence resulted in an average one-year incarceration stay, then direct cost avoidance would rise to ~\$1.8 million per year.

RAPID LITERATURE REVIEW

While research on this innovative model is early in development, there are published positive outcomes including:

- Reductions in re-incarceration
- Reductions in drug relapse
- Reduced re-arrests among incarcerated individuals who have completed substance use prison-based treatment programs.

*Recovery capital reporting changed after March 2025; thus this number is from inception to March 2025.