

Mentally challenged people entering our prisons and correctional facilities

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The term 'prison' is used to describe "the institutions that hold people who have been sentenced to a period of imprisonment by the courts for offences against the law. However, principles, approaches and technical advice are also relevant to other forms of compulsory detention." (Clear, Cole and Reisig 29) The phrase 'health promoting prison' covers the prisons in which; "the risks to health are reduced to a minimum; essential prison duties such as the maintenance of security are undertaken in a caring atmosphere that recognizes the inherent dignity of every prisoner and their human rights; health services are provided to the level, and in a professional manner, equivalent to what is provided in the country as a whole; and where a whole-prison approach to promoting health and welfare is the norm." The continued withdrawal of mental health funding in the USA, has turned its jails and prisons into default mental health facilities. The system, initially designed for security is now full of mentally handicapped people who, being trapped inside the system, have nowhere else to go. The Rosenhan Experiment, conducted by David Rosenhan in 1973, when applied in latter times found out that many medical officers, across a number of states, could not really detect with a surety, those with genuine handicaps and those just simulating auditory hallucinations. The study concluded that clearly there was a difficulty in distinguishing the sane, (those faking the disorder); from those with genuine mental disorders in the different places the experiment was conducted. Mental illness is "an illness of the mind and it cannot be understood without understanding the ideas, habits and predispositions - the idiosyncratic cultural trappings - of the mind that is its host." (Clear, Cole

and Reisig 37) It has been found out that, in the USA, female prisoners have higher rates of mental health problems than male inmates. At mid 2005, reports had put the estimates at more than half of all prisoners had a mental health problem of some sorts (Clear, Cole and Reisig 34). Findings have placed the status as: - “ over one in three State prisoners, one in four Federal prisoners, and one in six jail inmates who had a mental health problem had received treatment since admission.” Mental health problems were defined in two main ways: “ symptoms of a mental health problem” and “ a recent history of a mental health problem”. Connected with the above, through findings, is that the problems were exacerbated by the statistics of either a parent (or both) of the patient was a drug abuser, a brother had also been incarcerated among a myriad of other socio-economic issues (Clear, Cole and Reisig 35). Most mentally ill people are wrongly put in prisons and correctional facilities for mistakes they did unconsciously. It is not correct to put mentally ill persons in prisons and correctional facilities like normal people. They have to be treated with care. They should be taken to medical institutions so that they can be treated. The medical practitioners should also help ascertain those who are mentally ill from those who are healthy and normal. This will help differentiate those who pretend to be mentally ill and those who are actually mentally ill. It is a right for all sick people to receive medication no matter the condition they might be in. putting mentally ill persons in prisons puts them and other inmates in danger because they may act in ways that may harm others because of their uncontrollable behavior and temper. Therefore, all inmates must undergo thorough medical checkup before being incarcerated. In addition, prison and

correctional facilities should look at medical records of inmates before incarcerating them. This will help ascertain those who might have been involved in crime unknowingly because of their mental ill health. In conclusion, the recognition that prisons is not the appropriate recipient facilities for people with dependency and mental health problems should thus inform the populace to put prison health high on the states/country's policy agenda. A national strategy is needed so as to include prison policies in the national agenda. This is due to the fact, "... at any one time, prisons contain a disproportional number of those who require health assistance." (Clear, Cole and Reisig) Evidence has shown that most people get into prisons and correctional facilities while they are mentally ill. This is against human rights because all seek people must have access to medication, in the best environment possible regardless of their occupation or role in the society. Works cited Clear, Todd R., George F. Cole and Michael D. Reisig. American Corrections. London: Cengage Learning, 2010.