

Issue of the lack of rehabilitation programmes in us correctional facilities



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The recidivism rate is at an all time high in the United States because of the lack of rehabilitation programs within correctional facilities.

To be able to create the most helpful rehabilitation programs it is imperative to understand the demography and geography of where most offenders originate from.

Many people think that offenders have no rights in prison when it comes to being rehabilitated however, some advocates have implied that the courts could take rules from a few specific constitutional amendments to make rehabilitation a right for offenders (Seifago, 2017). The term for corrections means to correct bad behavior to prevent it from reoccurring. But the United States has made the correctional systems priority to punish offenders rather than rehabilitate. This lack of correcting offenders has led to the extremely high recidivism rate (Seigafo, 2017). Seifago (2017) acknowledges that offenders that were rehabilitated while at a correctional facility became crime free upon reentering into society. Seifago (2017) references a study conducted by Milkman and Wanberg that concludes the best rehabilitation method for offenders is Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which focuses on both the mind and body. The cognitive portion focuses on the inside of the persons mind while the behavioral portion focuses on the actions and attitudes on the outside (Seigafo, 2017). This therapy allows inmates to learn coping mechanisms that turn their negative behaviors into a productive and healthy action.

On the other hand, many government officials and citizens would disagree when it comes to providing offenders with opportunities to better

themselves. According to Seigafo (2017), because correctional facilities have not made rehabilitation the primary method that the courts have avoided from giving offenders the absolute right to rehabilitation. During the *Padgett v. Stein* case, the court concluded that there is no constitution that binds them to making it an absolute right to provide offenders with rehabilitation services (Seigafo, 2017). Despite this case, in the *James v. Wallace* the court decided that a correctional facility cannot interfere with an inmate's opportunity to engage in a rehabilitation program (Seigafo, 2017). Nonetheless, the courts have been slowly

In recent years, the Department of Corrections among all states have realized the benefits of rehabilitating offenders to reduce their prison population, help lower the recidivism rate, and to make offenders productive members of society again. There has been research study conducted in England that shows the benefits of an animal-based therapy program. The purpose of this research study was to see if an animal-based therapy program would be helpful to offenders and what valuable knowledge did they acquire during the program (Mercer et al., 2017). This research study took place in a small unit of the prison where male offenders either have a mental illness or often become distressed (Mercer, Gibson, & Clayton, 2015). This particular unit had an outdoor area that consisted of dogs, miniature ponies, ducks, goats, and chickens that the offenders had unrestricted access to at anytime during the day (Mercer et al., 2015). Mercer and her colleagues interviewed every offender that participated in that program asking them a couple direct questions, but mainly open-ended questions so, offenders could give as much thought and detail as possible (2015). The offenders

were asked questions relating to their experience level of animals before being imprisoned, their experience of the program, and if the program made any changes within the offender (Mercer et al., 2015). Mercer and her confidants also asked the staff supervising the offenders to discuss what they observed (2015).

Based on the responses of the offenders, the study highlighted four major themes that were present with every offender including: making them feel responsible, finding positive ways to build trust, being able to communicate with others easier, and having a happy and positive mood more often (Mercer et al., 2015). First, it made the offenders feel responsible, but provided them with a purpose and something to care for because now an animal was relying on them (Mercer et al., 2015). Secondly, trust is a major issue with offenders since, many of them have been betrayed by family or friends. It teaches the offenders that they can rely and count on the animal and the animal can do the same without fear that they are going to be betrayed. Third, offenders learn a tremendous amount of nonverbal communication and tone of voice when dealing with animals. The conclusion of this study indicates that there are psychological benefits from having inmates partake in a program similar to this.

In 2012, Marquette Law School surveyed 804 registered Wisconsin voters that contained questions about the criminal justice system as a whole and the sentencing process (O' Hear, 2016). The purpose of this poll was to understand the attitudes that the community had towards offenders, but the entirety of the criminal justice system as well. In the first part of the poll the voters were asked to rate five priorities and the majority agreed that they

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were either absolutely essential or very important (O' Hear, 2016). 92% of voters top priority is to make Wisconsin a safe place to live, 88% of voters said that offenders should receive the punishment that they deserve, 81% of voters said that victims should be informed of the perpetrators case status and inform them on how the system works, 74% of voters said that offenders should be rehabilitated, and 51% of voters said to reduce the amount of money that is used on housing offenders (O' Hear, 2016). In the second part of the poll, they answered questions pertaining to how well the system is functioning now in several areas, the majority responded with good or excellent for these percentages. 37% that the system treats everyone fairly regardless of race, 35% voted that law enforcement does a good job of removing the most dangerous offenders from the community, 34% of voters said the system does a good job at punishing those who deserve it, 34% of voters also indicated that the system does a good job of keeping victims informed about the case, and 21% of voters specified that the system does a good job of rehabilitating offenders (O' Hear, 2016). This poll brought to the forefront the shocking fact the community finds rehabilitation to be an important function within the correctional system however, the correctional system does a very terrible job at rehabilitating offenders (O' Hear, 2016). This study exemplifies that a significant portion of the community is encouraging the correctional facilities to implement rehabilitation programs not only for the good of the offender, but for the wellbeing of the community. This study confirms that correctional facilities should be devising the best rehabilitation programs for the interest of everyone.

Conversely, there are some concerns that the voters voiced about why can be weary of rehabilitation for offenders. The voters wanted offenders to be punished for the crimes they have committed almost as much as they wanted rehabilitation for offenders (O' Hear, 2016). And many of the voters are skeptical of criminal justice professionals and policymakers (O' Hear, 2016). A paramount problem that every community has is when their taxes are raised for a specific reason and the money is not being used for that purpose. This action causes serious distrust and doubt between the community and government officials.

The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) has become the blueprint correctional system for all other states. The MDOC has recently launched their newest rehabilitation program called Vocational Village. The first Vocational Village opened in 2016 at Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility and the second Vocational Village opened in 2017 at Parnall Correctional Facility (Michigan Department of Corrections [MDOC], 2018). Vocational village is a one of a kind rehabilitation programs where offenders can learn from ten different skilled trades (MDOC, 2018). The skilled trades that offenders can choose from include: carpentry, plumbing, CNC machining, welding, automotive technology, electrical, robots/CNC, CDL/forklift, and masonry/concrete (MDOC, 2018). Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility Vocational Village has 165 trade students, 27 trade tutors, and 12 building trade workers (MDOC, 2018). Parnall Correctional Facility Vocational Village has a maximum of 240 students and 32 trade tutors (MDOC, 2018).

Every student at Vocational Village will wake up at six in the morning either go to work or start school for the day. The working day for the offenders is <https://assignbuster.com/issue-of-the-lack-of-rehabilitation-programmes-in-us-correctional-facilities/>

three in the afternoon. After that, they had back to their unit where they engage in cognitive activities that help to exterminate their bad behavior. Having the offenders sharing a housing unit helps to keep them on track by associating with individuals that are trying to make their life better. When the offenders have successfully completed their training, they will receive state and nationally-recognized certificates in their specific trade (MDOC, 2018). When the offender is approved for parole the correctional facility will send out the inmates resume to job openings to secure the offenders income before they are released. Vocational Village is an exceptional example of the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy that Seifago (2015) said is the leading rehabilitation method to ensure the optimal success of each offender.

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