

Community based correctional systems criminology essay



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'Community corrections' is an umbrella phrase, which includes everything from intermediate punishments to pre-trial diversion. A community correctional system includes any non-incarcerative, but supervised way of handling offenders who have already been convicted or who are facing conviction. Parole and probation are the most renowned forms of community corrections, but the phrase also includes: electronic monitoring, home confinement, work release, day fine programs, restitution, halfway houses, check-in programs, community services, community based correctional facilities and curfews. In Ohio, community corrections refer to a system of particular facilities, which provide non-residential and residential services to a convicted offender. A good example of a community based correctional system in Ohio is the Western Ohio Regional Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (W. O. R. T. H. Center). This paper will attempt to cite the strength and weaknesses of the W. O. R. T. H. Center. I will also explain whether or not this system serves the community better than institutional correctional systems.

Discussion

The W. O. R. T. H. Center, just like other community based correctional systems in the United States, receives funds from the state, but, it is based in and operated by the local community in Ohio. In addition to this, this center is a male and female community based correctional facility, which houses criminals for a period not exceeding six months. This center provides an "...intermediate residential sanction at the front end of the system between prison and probation, known as diversion and re-integration

services at the tail end of the system between parole and prison, known as transition..." (Bronstein, 2005).

The W. O. R. T. H. Center has various programs that are aimed at fully rehabilitating the offenders such as: moral reconnection therapy, skills class, chemical dependency, substance abuse, AA meetings, educational services, job readiness, money management, anger management, domestic violence, public service, parenting classes, Bible study, recreation, and community meetings. Each program is highly structured with evaluation, treatment, follow-up services such as transitional counseling (W. O. R. T. H Center, 2011). The offenders who effectively complete the program at this facility normally continue on non-residential probation that is supervised for a certain period of time. And those offenders who do not are sent to jail.

Offenders sentenced to the W. O. R. T. H. Center are normally felony low level felony offenders or probation offenders who are otherwise headed to jail or prison. Rather than being sentenced to jail, such offenders are diverted into centers such as the W. O. R. T. H. Center where they receive severe treatment for education, chemical dependency, family relations or employment assistance. In numerous ways, the W. O. R. T. H. Center is similar to a conventional prison setting since it is a residential placement with very little freedom to actually move around. However, this facility has minimum security operations, which houses between fifty and two hundred male and female offenders, so it is somewhat smaller than most jails and offers to some extent, more freedom to the offender.

Community based correctional system such as the W. O. R. T. H. Center is believed to be an evident improvement over conventional corrections programs for humanitarian reasons. The W. O. R. T. H. Center can be considered humanitarian because it provides less serious male and female offenders with choices, which allow them to continue with various elements of their lives. In addition to this, this community based correctional facility is also humanitarian because it avoids many of the negative effects of incarcerations such as stigmatization, damage to mental or physical health as well as constant exposure to criminal peers (Bronstein, 2005).

Another advantage of the W. O. R. T. H. Center is that it offers opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of victims, offenders and the community at large. For instance, the restorative resolution program in the W. O. R. T. H. Center is a community alternative to imprisonment. This program targets lawbreakers who are facing a prison term of about six months or at times even nine months. Another sentencing plan is developed for lawbreakers referred to this program that aims to tackle the individual needs of the lawbreaker as well as address victim concerns.

Another advantage is that the community programs at this facility are more effective than prison or incarceration. Effectiveness can be measured in terms of avoiding exposure to undesirable effects, reducing recidivism as well as promoting the successful re-integration of offenders into the community (Bloomberg, 2000). Moreover, the cost of running the W. O. R. T. H. Center is not as costly as conventional prison.

However, the W. O. R. T. H. Center is not without its weaknesses. This community based correctional facility appears to have very little impact on the rates of recidivism among the ex-offenders (W. O. R. T. H Center, 2011). In addition to this, since the W. O. R. T. H. Center includes residences or halfway houses where the ex-offenders learn to make the successful transition from prison into society, the residents who live around are naturally kept on a strict curfew. In addition to this, these halfway houses are located in a neighborhood, as opposed to remote locations and this commonly disturbs the residents of that particular neighborhood, who live in fear of being victimized or even threatened by the ex-offenders residing in the halfway houses.

Recidivism is the repetition of criminal behavior. Clearly, one objective of community based correctional system such as the W. O. R. T. H. Center is to prevent the offenders from repeating any kind of criminal behavior. In the past, these facilities have been commended for being more effective in reducing recidivism than conventional prison settings since they never take the offender completely out of the community and that they also provide a transition period between the community and the prison (Bronstein, 2005). Ideally, community based correctional systems teach the offender how to be productive and successful members of the community. But, regrettably, some offenders in community based correctional programs do recidivate. The re-arrest, charging and return of criminals to correctional facilities has a public safety advantage and numerous social as well as fiscal costs.

Proponents of community based correctional systems argue that community programs are in reality more effective than prison. Effectiveness can be <https://assignbuster.com/community-based-correctional-systems-criminology-essay/>

measured in terms of avoiding exposure to undesirable effects, reducing recidivism and so forth. According to Benzy (2004), incarceration is "...not more effective than community corrections in preventing re-offending and treatment programs have been shown to be more effective when delivered in a community setting...". What is more, community based correctional programs spare the offenders numerous negative effects of incarceration.

I believe that community based correctional system serves the community better than institutional correctional systems. Community based correctional programs facilitate many of the factors linked with the successful re-integration of the offender into the community. For criminals being released from prison into a community based correctional facility, the benefits of community corrections are rather obvious. Not only is the criminal provided with the chance to steadily re-integrate into society, he or she is able to pursue educational and employment opportunities. Moreover, family ties are better maintained when a criminal is residing at a community based correctional facility rather than a prison.

Presently, community based correctional facilities have not been widely accepted by the general public and this opposition manifests itself in numerous ways. For instance, the general public has never fully embraced community corrections programs like fines, probation, full and day parole, intermittent prison sentences and temporary absences. A majority of communities in the United States are unfriendly to the notion of having residential centers such as the does a community based correctional system serves the community better than institutional correctional systems for law offenders located in their midst for fear that adjacent property values will

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drop and crime will increase, a phenomenon commonly referred to as Not In My Back Yard Syndrome or NIMBY (Benzy, 2004). But, most individuals agree that the current institutional correctional system does not work and many are even willing to consider community based correction systems.

Institutional correctional systems such as prisons generally make individuals worse. Presently, nothing much has changed other than that there are many more individuals in prison and our prisons are currently larger and in fact, more destructive of the human personality than before with harsher regimes and fewer programs (Bronstein, 2005). Research reveals that there are only three possible changes in the life of an offender during his or her incarceration in an institutional correctional system: availability of a reasonably supportive job, family upon release, as well as the process of aging that ultimately eradicates criminal behavior as an alternative (Bronstein, 2005). It is rather obvious that in the institutional correctional systems, offenders are incarcerated not to treat them, but for other reasons. Increasingly, such systems are places of punishment and have nothing at all to do with rehabilitation unlike the community-based correctional systems.

Conclusion

Community based correctional systems offers workable alternatives to incarceration for offenders at different stages of the criminal justice process. The alternatives that are available to the offenders include: alternative measures programs, bail supervision programs, fine options programs, restitution programs, probation, community service order, parole and so on. The community based correctional system serves the community better than

institutional correctional systems since the offenders are given a chance to steadily re-integrate into society, pursue educational and employment opportunities and in general, be more productive in the community.