

Prisons and jails

Business



Jails are temporary secluded confinement enclosures, within which a person, alleged to have committed a minor crime, stays. Prisons are state owned confinements that keep criminals found guilty of serious offences. The similarity between prisons and jails is their role of confinement of suspects or lawbreakers for purposes of rehabilitation. There are numerous differences between prisons and jails.

County governments locally operate jails, while state or government runs prisons. This implies that a person cannot be confined in a jail outside his county. However, criminals can be confined in a prison away from their county since they are under a state. Jails harbour people, convicted of minor crimes, with sentences that do not exceed two years, while prisons confine people, convicted of state or federal crimes. Jails have fewer amenities than prisons. This is because jails harbour people for a short period, while prisons confine people for long periods up to a lifetime.

Amenities in prisons, which are not available in jails, include vocational training programs and entertainment facilities. Jails only offer basic needs such as food, house and safety measures (Foucault, 1975). Types of Prisons Prisons differ with the level of security given to them. These are minimum security, low security, medium security and high security prisons. Minimum Security Prisons are called Federal Prison Camps.

Characteristics of Minimum Security Prisons include a low staff-to-inmate ratio and a limited security wall. Such prisons have dormitories for their prisoners. They offer accommodation to prisoners who are working or those under special programs. They exist at a military base or labour intensive

sites such as mines. Federal Correctional Institutions fall under Low security prisons.

They have perimeter walls and a double fence. Prisoners in this prison sleep in cubes and follow a tough schedule of working program. The number of staff in such a prison is higher than that in the Minimum Security Prison (Cressey, 1961). Medium security prisons have an electric fence, in addition to a double fence. Prisoners sleep in cells and are subjected to a tighter working schedule than prisoners in Low Security Prisons are. The ratio of staff and the inmate is higher than that in the low security prisons.

In U. S., the High Security Prisons are called United States Penitentiaries (USP's). They have highly secured compounds with congested cells. The number of staff is the highest compared to the other prisons (Cressey, 1961).

Prison as a Total Institution A prison is a total institution, when every aspect of an inmate's life is under the authority. Research shows that making a prison a total institution has several effects on inmates and staff. An inmate who serves ten years in a total institution prison becomes ten years older upon his release, while staffs who work for twenty years in a total institution prison reduce their life expectancy by ten years (Carlson & Garrett, 1999).

The Role of Jails in the Criminal Justice System Jails offer a temporary basis, upon which a minor criminal or a suspect is withheld. Its role in the criminal justice system is to prevent guilty suspects from evading the law until a full trial is completed.

They also provide temporary confinement of innocent suspects during trial, thus, ensuring that one's justice sustains by not confining in strict prisons.

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Jails help in rehabilitation of minor criminals, thus, reducing the level of minor crimes (Harnsberger, 2011). Roles of Community Based Programs, Associated With Jails Community based programs, associated with jails, have different roles that they play in the criminal justices system. Among the roles is the employment opportunity they create to the inmates. In the U.

S., the inmates in community-based programs have to work for forty hours in a week within a fortnight on their arrival in the community-based programs. The staffs available at the program liaise with local employers, thus, helping the inmates to get temporary jobs and permanent jobs. The program promotes accountability, while the inmates serve away from jails and prisons. The community-based staffs monitor the inmates and authorize their departure from the community bases upon confirmations of reasons of movement.

Among the allowable reasons of movement, include seeking of employment, working, and counselling. Monitoring measures include drug tests and in-house counts. The community-based programs provide housing facilities to inmates, thus, reducing congestion in prisons and jails. It also gives inmates time to locate new houses that they will stay upon leaving the jail. During their stay, the inmates pay for their cost of confinement, which does not exceed 25% of their income (Harnsberger, 2011).

The community based programs act as substance abuse treatment and counselling centres. Inmates, who got addicted to drugs while in prisons or jails, find an opportunity to go through counselling and medication. This helps the inmates to quit drugs before their release to the society. The

programs also offer medical treatment to inmates, thus, ensuring that the inmate's health is stable after years of life in jail or prison. Violence in Prisons Violence in prison and jails is observed between inmates or between inmates and staff.

Factors that affect violent behaviors among inmates and staff include inmate's level of education, experience in prison, age, his criminal activities and years that the inmate has served in jail. On a social perspective, incarceration does not contribute in reducing violence in jails and prisons. Restricting inmates with tight rules and tough conditions mounts pressure and stress on them, thus, increasing the rate of violence. These violent acts are either reactive or proactive. Reactive violence occurs, when an inmate attacks another inmate or a staff after being offended by the second party.

Proactive aggression occurs, when an inmate plans to attack a second party who has not contributed to his aggression. This is either caused by the system in use or conditions of the environment. Strategies that can reduce violence in prison have to take into consideration the conditions in prison and the system of operation, used by the staff. The strategies include use of fair management and supervision, separation of gang members, providing counselling to inmates and providing adequate basic and secondary facilities in the jails and prisons (Foucault, 1975). Parole Parole is the state of allowing inmates to serve the remaining part of their term in the community.

Conditions met for an inmate to deserve a parole include completion of one third of one's term in jail and the reformed character and personalities.

Abstinence from alcohol and drugs are also considered (Harnsberger, 2011). Truth in Sentencing Truth in sentencing was established to ensure that an inmate serves most of his term in jail or prison before being released to the community on parole. Advocates fixed that an inmate ought to serve 85% of his term in prison as truth in sentencing. The role of truth in sentencing is to reduce levels of crime since criminals get an assurance of serving a considerable amount of their term in jails or prisons. The concept protects victims and the public from unreformed criminals released on paroles (Cressey, 1961).