

# The american corrections system criminology essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the organizational structure of the American Correctional System, the Department of justice has the overall mandate of overseeing the operations of the whole system. The next in rank is the governor who supervises the correctional facility's activities. Four directors supervise legislative affairs, quality assurance, public communications, information, and the medical docket. From the directors is the support administration that oversees matters regarding community development, field operations, correctional facilities administration and operations support administration. Under these administrators, there are officers who deal with parole, operations, research and the planning of human resources. These officers also deal with issues regarding money, security, health care and the general welfare of inmates.

Correctional management has a wide range of issues and implementations in America's criminal justice system. The initial and principal part of correctional management involves issues concerning the safety and security of offenders and its staff. In General, the management within these institutions has to declare what it deems to be safe versus what is not. Formulation of rules and policies occurs every other time an ugly incident occurs, immediately changing existing policies. Correctional administration may put into operation policies that may make the survival of inmates to be almost unbearable.

Another element of correctional administration is health care, which at times can be very controversial and pose many complications. Within a prison setting, officers have the responsibility of ensuring that all offenders receive proper medical attention. Some prisons around the country have their own medical facilities as others get charged fees to take their prisoners to a

<https://assignbuster.com/the-american-corrections-system-criminology-essay/>

hospital. One of the most important concerns of correctional administration is rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is a broad subject that faces rehabilitating habitual offenders, drug users as well as other offenders with mental issues. Correctional institutions in collaboration operate these rehabilitation programs with the professional assistance of doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and other additional medical staff. Everyday, different issues arise within the correctional system, but it is how and where the correctional administration either implements new programs, makes changes to correct controversial issues or plans to do that matters. Correctional units operate independently with their own administration, budget, committees, assets and support staff.

Education and work programs are the two most widely used prison-based forms of correctional programs in American prisons for both adult and juvenile offenders (Ira J. Silverman, 1996). These programs include academic education, vocational counseling, vocational training, substance abuse counseling, organized recreation, mental health counseling, positive peer culture and sex offender treatment. Undoubtedly, the dominance of these treatment programs reveal the steadfast belief that work and educational skills-and the good behavior learned in attaining these skills-are essential to get employment opportunities and also being an industrious citizen. These programs do have a reserved impact in the reduction of post release recidivism according to research carried out

Inmates also have access to other forms of education like life-skills training. Prisons maintain these educational programs in the belief that upon release to society, many offenders may not have the sort of basic understanding that

<https://assignbuster.com/the-american-corrections-system-criminology-essay/>

is essential to functioning in the American society. Thus, these courses teach diverse skills on how to manage one's finances and property, how to apply and interview for a job, good parenting, securing a driver's license and how to live healthy lives. As a final move in preparing inmates for employment after release from correctional facilities, several prisons offer vocational education.

Besides these educational programs that attempt to equip inmates with the necessary skills to live productively in society, other correctional facilities institute counseling/psychological programs aimed at changing the underlying problems that led to the offender's criminality. The most common interventions under this system are drug abuse programs, since according to the records, as many as half of all incarcerated criminals enter prison having at least done drugs a few months prior to their arrest. About half of the prison inmates in both state and federal prisons confess to being on drugs at the time of their crime, for which they were consequently jailed (Maguire, Pastore, & Greenfield, 2005). Other institutions have some programs called therapeutic communities-in which they house drug-addicted inmates in separate housing units-referred to as Residential Substance Abuse Treatment, which provides drug treatment to such inmates in the separate units. While in other facilities, inmates participate in individual or group counseling sessions, but happen to live in the general offender population.

Correctional facilities normally provide individual and group counseling, aimed at luring inmates into forfeiting their criminal lifestyle. Cognitive-behavioral treatment modality, a technique of growing appeal is widely used due to its growing support for its successes (David Lester, 2009). Despite <https://assignbuster.com/the-american-corrections-system-criminology-essay/>

coming in different forms, these treatment plans target the criminal attitudes and unlawful ways of thinking which encourage unlawful behavior. This intervention involves counselors acting as role models in an effort to reinforce inmates who portray such conduct. Juveniles get privileges for conforming to set standards. Counselors mainly focus on the aspect of offenders' thinking and reasoning by challenging rationalizations encouraging criminal conduct, offenders' antisocial behavior, failure to face the mistakes they have committed and trying to externalize blame (D. A. Andrews, 2007).

Other groups of inmates who get special services in prison are sex and mentally ill offenders. Commonly, sex offenders receive counseling services at both the individual and group levels. Other special services for sex offenders are diagnostic centers and use of therapeutic communities. While for the mentally ill offenders most receive therapy and counseling while in prison, some are on a prescribed medication, whereas others receive treatment in mental institutions. Another form of correctional programs in these prisons is religious volunteer groups and prison chaplains whose main role is providing counseling to inmates. This type of counseling often goes beyond religious matters and to other issues in the offenders' lives. There are various types of faith-based programs found within almost every correctional institution. These support and religious programs involve prayer and meditation sessions, Bible study, worship services and peer mentors (Cullen, 2001).

As a common practice, management of inmates is through unit management and direct supervision. These methods create a more secure and safer

<https://assignbuster.com/the-american-corrections-system-criminology-essay/>

environment for the staff and inmates, by offering proactive monitoring and built-in surveillance. Unit management divides a correctional facility into smaller and easily manageable housing units. Responsibility and authority is decentralized, which provides the staff with an opportunity to solve directly problems. Correctional officers follow the Corrections Corporation of America philosophy of “ walking and talking,” which involves the officers spending time with and among the inmates, rather than distantly monitoring them or occasionally watching their housing units - listening to their needs and making a follow up on inmate’s concerns so as to quell incidents and disputes before they arise. Through unit management, the facility’s staff becomes aware of collective and individual inmate behavior owing to the direct contact and interaction with the inmates. The officers get to identify behavioral changes among the inmates long before they negatively affect the facility’s security. Use of unit management enables officers to get first-hand insight on inmate activities, ensuring effective monitoring of inmates.

Alongside unit management, correctional facilities also use direct supervision to manage inmates with correctional officers housed within the inmate housing units. This enables them to become familiar with a unit’s inmates and their daily operations, communication styles they use and other relevant issues regarding inmates housed there. These officers set and reinforce expectations for inmate behavior and instantly address arising issues at the forefront level. This direct interaction between inmates and officers promotes communication, reduces tension and suppresses possible conflicts between the two groups. Direct supervision Fosters staff collaboration, as unit managers, correctional officers, correctional counselors and case managers

handle everyday matters concerning safety and security, inmate cases and sanitation, which helps in streamlining operations in the facilities.

When used together, direct supervision and unit management offer important opportunities to create a safer, more secure inmate environment, enhancing facility operations and in providing employees with expanded operational tasks. Inmates and staff interact on a more dependable basis, which enhances effective communication between the two groups.

The modern private prison business emerged when the Corrections Corporation of America got a contract to take over a facility in Tennessee. This was the first time that any government had outsourced the complete operation of a prison to a private operator. As of today, private companies in the United States run 264 correctional centres, housing almost 100, 000 adult criminals. Prison privatization has several advantages, which have led to the immense growth of private prisons. Private prisons as compared to state prisons are more responsible and accountable due to fear of fines. According to a research conducted on the cost/benefit analysis, results indicated that states could save a considerable amount of cash if they used a shared system of both publicly and privately managed prisons.

By using the private sector to manage or build prisons, many states believe they can reduce operational costs. Cost comparisons between government and private operation of prisons shows notable cost savings under private administration. While the average cost to hold a prisoner in a state prison is about \$40 a day per inmate, many private prisons charge the government considerably lower fees for the same. By contracting out prison labor and

paying the prisoners competitive wages, many private firms are reducing prison costs for the state by withholding income earned for taxes, victim's compensation and family support. Such employment also provides prisoners with skills and work experience that prepares them for the job market when released from incarceration (Tewksbury, 2006).

Various states consider private construction of prisons as a promising solution to the overcrowding crisis in state prisons. Normally, states finance construction of prisons by issuing general obligation bonds or through cash appropriations. The former creates problems, as it requires voters' ratification and control by debt limits, while the latter completely lays the financial load of constructing on the state's annual budget. The only alternative is private financing through lease agreements or lease purchasing contracts. This option does not require voter approval neither does it place the costs involved on the annual budget. Under a lease/purchase contract, private firms agree to build a prison only if the state signs a long-term lease for the prison. Prompt payments of rent by the government assist the private companies to fund the construction. When the state fully settles the payment, the debt and finance charges, it takes over control of the facility. The private firms benefit from tax waivers and cash inflow from the lease payments. The state benefits from the quick construction, as debt limit limitations do not apply and voter support is not a requirement (Tewksbury, 2006).

Privatization of prisons ensures that only those service providers who offer quality products at a competitive market price will survive the operations of a free market. This aspect of privatization argues that a free market

<https://assignbuster.com/the-american-corrections-system-criminology-essay/>



introduces efficiency and discipline through the mechanisms of demand and supply.

As more criticisms towards prison privatization become evident, it is obvious that rehabilitation of prisoners is not a concern of the influential, since prisoners in private prisons act as cheap labour. The individuals who own private prisons not only make huge returns from the funds provided by the government to run these prisons, but also make great profits from selling the labour provided by their prisoners. Under the disguise of saving taxpayers money, the trend of privatising prisons has gained momentum, whereas the drawbacks of private prisons are hushed-up. Privatization of prisons is one of the countless ways in which the rich exploit people without their utter knowledge, for their own hidden motives by the public.

Private prisons have brought about a huge political and sociological change that most people ignore. Living conditions in the prisons have deteriorated and it is evident that abuse of human rights is becoming rather rampant in these prisons as rising abortion rates, rape, use of psychotropic drugs and failing health care systems become known. It is obviously certain that it is in the interests of private prisons to operate for stricter legislation, so that prisoners stay incarcerated for as long as possible. In addition, it is in their interest that the number of prisoners continues to increase significantly, since the more prisoners there are within these prisons, the more profits they earn.

Conversely, health care personnel are losing jobs in privately owned prisons, as the number of health care workers engaged by private prisons is

considerably low. The influential individuals take advantage of the over populated state operated prisons to make profits from the privately run prisons. The health care facilities in private prisons are extremely bad, a situation which has led to a dramatic increase in the death rate of prisoners. In a number of private prisons, only basic first aid facilities and over the counter drugs are available to prisoners. Owing to the lack of proper medical attention, countless prisoners have resulted to committing suicide. It is the duty of the state to make sure that there is adequate health care offered to prisoners. In fact, the state pays private prisons for basic healthcare cost to cater for every prisoner. However, this money used by the private prisons owners for their own interests. Actually, the disadvantages of prison privatization outweigh the advantages by far.