

War cja 450 (r1)
christopher manning
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WAR ON DRUGS Debby McGee Criminal Justice Administration CJA 450

(R1) Christopher Manning December 7, 2004 Abstract Because of the war on drugs, prison overcrowding is vastly becoming a problem of astronomical proportion, putting a strain not only on the system of law enforcement, but on citizens as well. With studies in DNA and other forensic sciences that can pin point with exact precision the perpetrator of a crime; more and more criminal offenders are being caught, tried, and imprisoned for the crimes they have committed. Many of these crimes are initiated by the use of drugs, such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, ice, crystal meth, angel dust, PCP, etc.

Along with the success of catching these offenders and sentencing them to pay retribution for their crimes, another problem has surfaced prison overcrowding. Because of this overcrowding, a shift to community-based alternatives has been incorporated in an effort to help to alleviate this ever increasing problem. This paper will examine a few of these alternatives.

Community Based Alternatives With the rise in incarcerating a felon, the court system is trying to find alternative based sentencing. It is a hard task, because of the variety of crimes committed.

If a person does not need to go to prison and deal with that lifestyle, then utilizing something else may be more beneficial. Here are some ideas for community based alternative sentencing. Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) The first alternative that we will look at is being utilized by the courts: Electronic Monitoring System (EMS). This system might seem as though it would be the ideal answer to alternative sentencing, however, as with any electronic device there are drawbacks. This system is easy to monitor, but

bulky to wear. Most of the courts do not like to implement this system because of the cost of monitors and tracking systems.

There is also the fact that the person wearing the monitor must maintain a semi-constant contact with a phone line. Another problem, that has been difficult to overcome, is the monitor's alarm going off, even though the person is no more that twenty feet from the phone line. Even with the cost and problems it is still cheaper to utilize the EMS rather than incarcerating the criminal. There is another product on the market that could replace the EMS altogether and that is the Shadow Track. The Shadow Track is an interactive voice response system.

If implements the leading voice authentication software on the market. This system is practically foolproof. The tracking system can be used from a computer, phone, e-mail or pager. This makes it user friendly. If the criminal decides not to maintain contact through the above devices, then the proper authorities are notified. Because of the need not to buy expensive equipment and the ease with which it can be used this makes this tracking system a viable alternative to incarceration. But these are just the electronic ways to alternative sentencing, other options are still available.

Community Service Most community service programs are implemented to first-time offenders. This would show the offender that he or she is accountable for their actions and that illegal activity brings about significantly adverse consequences, with major intervention at the first sign of illegal behavior. Connection in a persons mind between the act and the consequences must be realized.

Several tasks that could be accomplished through community service are: picking up trash along the roadside and in parks, cleaning publicly owned vehicles, painting little league football bleachers, and the maintaining and cleaning of animal shelters. Other programs may include unskilled work for private nonprofit organizations such as churches, goodwill industries, social service agencies, libraries, and schools. These programs would be well organized, effective, and highly monitored. The first-time offenders would learn new skills and enhance their self-esteem while paying a debt to society. It might also be possible for their community service assignments to turn into permanent paid positions.

Community service should be standardized and incorporated into a sentencing grid. Numerous offenders now servicing time in jail could have been punished by some type of community service work that would have had a more profound effect on them than incarceration. By working out his sentence through community service work, he would be allowed to work, support his family, receive counseling