

Special needs prisoner



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Special Needs Prisoner David Thompson University of Phoenix Special Needs Prisoner The American penal system is comprised of every element of society imaginable. There are people from all walks of life being held in one prison or another across our great country for crimes they've committed or allegedly committed against mankind. Be it at the state, federal or county level, the U. S. prison system does not discriminate with regards to those who are physically challenged.

Be it a prisoner who is mentally challenged or one whom is confined to a wheelchair, if they have committed a crime and are found guilty of such, they will be sentenced to facility that under most circumstances are equipped to handle prisoners with special needs. Take for example the criminally insane or those suffering with various kinds of mental illness: Round about 1955 the number of mental institution experienced a drawdown of types, in that they were not building any new facilities, despite the fact that approximately forty of the existing one's had been shut down or were scheduled to be shut down.

This change prompted the prison system to take over the role of caring for mentally ill inmates. As more and more prisons grew so did the role of the prison system to care for the influx of the special needs prisoners. Prisons were able to house and care for some 45, 000 prisoners including those who were mentally ill, compared to that of a mental institutions ability to house some 3000 in a mental hospital. Perhaps one of the biggest drawback or downfalls related to this concept is that of the ability to rehabilitate the mentally ill.

Because the prison system was/is not geared for actions such as this, many of those who are diagnosed with a mental illness usually find themselves serving their time, only to return to confinement a few years later, due to the prison systems inability to adequately treat and care for their sickness. But let's not throw this all on the prison system, as the private sector has just as much responsibility for this shortfall/s as does the penal system.

Many communities simply do not have the funds necessary to open and operated programs to take care of the mentally ill. For those that do have something in place to combat the problem, their efforts seem to fall far short of the need. There seems to be far more people in need of help than the help that is available, and the more we look into the problem the more we see that this is not just limited to adult men and women, but children as well.

The end result of which is the criminally insane sometimes find themselves back on the streets, as does many of the mentally ill. While incarceration may be somewhat more difficult on someone with a mental illness, prison officials try and combat this by housing the mentally ill in separate wards, to reduce violence, combat stress, and maintain order. Prison officials today try and provide specialized training and equipped to those who work with the mentally ill.

Although improvements have been made, there is still much to accomplish as some patients do not transition well into some of the rehabilitation programs made available to them; for example the Drug and Alcohol program, many officials think that mentally ill patients can and does usually become extremely disruptive, during counseling sessions, which causes setbacks and limits the progress of others. Therefore, many of the disabled,

mentally ill, or otherwise hard to reach inmates/patients are turned away from rehabilitative parts of the program built around small group settings.

Honestly speaking, there is very little room for care of the mentally ill within the prison system, as few places are equipped with the staff and specialist needed to care for these special patients. Try as we may, we can't effectively make the connection needed to make a difference in these individuals lives. Not to mention the attitude/s the outside community takes towards those suffering with mental handicaps.

The lack of compassion, care and concern towards these less fortunate individuals does little to help the situation inside or outside prison walls, as we're all struggling to make the best of a bad situation. We must stay focused and be extremely flexible as we seek to make changes in this area, in particular in that every failure has the potential to have widespread affects on everyone, including the department, and the community into which some of these people may be released.

Taking a lackluster attitude towards helping these people rebuild their lives simply will not work. We must be committed to the care of prisons with special needs just as if they were able to afford whatever treatment is available. Combating mental illness is not easy, but in most cases it can be done. References: The Sentencing Project (Washington, DC), (2002), Mentally Ill Offenders in the Criminal Justice System: An Analysis and Prescription, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation <http://nicic.gov/Library/017558>