

PROFESSIONALISM IN CORRECTIONS

“*Professionals have a love for their work that is above that of employment merely to receive a paycheck.*

—Judge Arlin Adams, United States Court of Appeals, 1989”

This material was contributed by William Sondervan, EdD, CCE, with the assistance of Ania Dobrzanska, MS, CCM. Sondervan is Professor and Director of Criminal Justice, Investigative Forensics and Legal Studies and Master of Science in Management with a criminal justice specialization at the University of Maryland. From 2003 to 2006, he served as director of Professional Development at the American Correctional Association. In 1999, Sondervan was appointed commissioner of the Maryland Division of Corrections. He served as commissioner until 2003. Sondervan earned a BS in business administration from the College of New Jersey, an EdM in counseling psychology from Boston University, an MPA in criminal justice from Jacksonville State University, and an EdD in adult education and human resource development from Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University. Dobrzanska is Program Coordinator with the Moss Group, Inc., Washington, DC. She earned a BA in psychology and administration of justice from Rutgers University, and an MS in justice, law, and society at American University.

This discussion supplements *Corrections in the 21st Century* by Frank Schmallegger and John Smykla.¹ It is intended to provide insight into many of the topics and issues outlined earlier in the text as they relate to professionalism in corrections. The material should prove relevant and valuable to individuals preparing for a career in corrections.

Corrections work is stressful, hazardous, and always challenging. Faced with staggering budget cuts and burgeoning prison populations, correctional administrators struggle to balance limited resources to meet management and treatment demands.

After 50 years of relative stability in the proportion of people incarcerated, the prison population doubled in size between 1970 and 1982; between 1982 and 1999, it increased threefold.² Today, with more than 2 million Americans behind bars in the nation’s prisons and jails, corrections faces pandemic overcrowding, frustrating density, the arrival of younger offenders with more serious needs, and higher numbers of female inmates. Furthermore, corrections must deal with limited resources for inmate programs, high turnover rates, and difficulty in recruiting and training correctional workers.

TODAY’S CHALLENGES

The Expansion of Prison Construction

More than half of all the prisons in the United States have been built within the past 20 years.³ With an average of four prisons being constructed every month, we are building more prisons than schools. “The United States

has a higher per capita incarceration rate than any other industrialized democracy.”⁴

This continuing growth has resulted in our nation’s prisons and jails being taxed to near breaking-point levels in many areas. For the first time in history, prison construction—estimated at \$6 billion a year—has appeared as a public investment opportunity listed on the stock exchange. Scott Christianson found that in Texas, the competition for prison construction during the early 1990s grew so fierce that some communities offered free country club memberships and other perks to prison officials as an incentive to get them to make the right siting decision.⁵ To keep up with the rapid prison growth, corrections faces tremendous pressure to recruit, hire, train, and maintain quality staff to run these facilities in a professional manner.

Overcrowding, one of the most pressing problems, has created the dilemma of having to admit more inmates than there is available space. Obviously, overcrowding places enormous strain on classification, housing assignments, food, medical services, and the already limited spaces for treatment programs. This causes tension among inmates and places more pressure on the staff charged with maintaining order within the institutions. Every potential outbreak of violence must be detected and prevented to preserve staff and inmate safety.

Who Is Entering Our Jails and Prisons?

As society changes over time, corrections must keep up with the changes in the characteristics of the growing prison population. Today, prisoners with more serious needs are entering the system than ever before, and their needs are often unmet. Women have been the fastest-growing prison population segment. The number of women in U.S. prisons and jails is now about 10 times more than the number of women incarcerated in all of western Europe.⁶ Today, 60 percent of all women in the nation’s prisons are serving time for either drug or property offenses. The increase in the women’s population creates expensive demands for programs and amenities to meet gender-specific needs such as gynecological services.

Increasing budget cuts make it more and more difficult to meet the treatment needs of shifting population trends. Prisons are increasingly taking in disproportionate numbers of minority inmates—unskilled, uneducated, poor, city-raised blacks and Hispanics.

Research shows that 75 percent of the total prison population serves time for nonviolent sentences. The number of Americans incarcerated for drug-related offenses has skyrocketed. Special populations (i.e., offenders who are elderly, mentally ill, or physically disabled) have significantly increased. One of six inmates coming into the system is mentally ill. With limited resources and increasing budget cuts, corrections is under tremendous pressure to provide inmate programs and train staff to stay current about the more complex needs of the incoming prison population.

New Technology

The overwhelming growth in prison and jail populations has yielded an increase in the rates of violence in our prisons and jails. Coupled with the crowding and density, this violence has made it more difficult to manage the facilities. Not known for its innovative use of technology, corrections struggles to effectively perform its work with the limited resources available. Whereas U.S. corporations and industries have flourished as a result of technological advances, corrections has, for the most part, fallen well behind.

In many cases, fiscal resources simply are not available to provide the equipment needed. In situations when hardware and software are

available, little has been done to blend the myriad databases into a smoothly flowing information system. Consequently, corrections faces problems in records accuracy and in both internal and external information exchange—problems that can critically impact public safety.

New technology is being implemented within the correctional field, but the process remains slow. Advances in technology help correctional staff communicate, observe, document, evaluate, interrogate, detect contraband, and perform all aspects of business at faster speeds and with greater accuracy. Although this helps staff members keep pace with increasing management demands, it brings with it new requirements, such as training in the use of new technologies and the need to shift limited dollars from inmate programs and security. Although technology systems allow jobs to be performed faster, safer, and more effectively, they also result in high maintenance costs, labor relations conflicts, inmate climate issues, and political concerns.

In addition to meeting the technological challenges, correctional staff must deal with complex issues that have become more prominent in recent years. There are more gangs in prisons and jails. Gangs have emerged with new power and influence in many jurisdictions, challenging the ability of the prison administration to control the prison environment.⁷ For example, correctional officers trying to crack down on inmate drug use may receive death threats, necessitating appropriate preventive measures.

Terry L. Stewart, former director of the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC), is a victim of an ongoing death threat against him and his family. In 1997, Director Stewart implemented a special management policy as a control measure for gang activity within the ADC prison system. When ADC inmates became aware of the department's new strategy for managing violent gang activity, the Aryan Brotherhood, a major prison gang, set forth the first known assassination plot to kill Stewart.

Two years later, there were two separate attempts by *La EME* (the Mexican Mafia) to assassinate Stewart. The Phoenix Police Department, in cooperation with the ADC, indicted several EME gang members. In 2001, members of the Aryan Brotherhood conspired to have Stewart assassinated by means of an explosive device. Today, law enforcement intelligence indicates that Stewart remains a priority target for gang assassination. The ADC has recovered two separate hit lists from different Mexican Mafia associates; both have Stewart listed as “kill on sight.”

The Effects of 9/11

Incarceration has always been an expensive proposition, but the economic downturn brought about by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, has made the situation even more critical. In preparation for attacks by terrorists, more funding has been allocated to homeland security at great cost to prison systems nationwide. Funding to various correctional agencies has been significantly cut, forcing several states to postpone prison construction, downsize prison space by closing housing units, and, in some states, close entire prisons. Correctional organizations already operating on slim budgets continue to face pressure to maintain secure facilities and offer programming to rehabilitate inmates.

The Public Image of Corrections

Although correctional administrators continually work toward meeting ever-increasing demands, their efforts often go unnoticed or are misunderstood. Much of the public has a negative view of corrections. Prison administrators have been burdened by the weight of stereotypes of

corrections, and labels such as “garbage bins of society,” “human warehouses,” “human dumping grounds,” “storage bins,” and “schools of crime” are often associated with our nation’s prisons.

Prisons are frequently subject to public scrutiny. Media distortion in the coverage of crime, prisons, prison administration, custody, and prisoners is not uncommon. Accordingly, the practice of corrections has been mischaracterized and misrepresented. Public perceptions about who is a criminal come, in part, from television or newspapers. But the media fail to fully explore the operations of prison and frequently paint a picture that closely mirrors stereotypical views.

Numerous articles appeared in prominent publications following the scandal at the military’s Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Unfortunately, however, prisons and prison administrators in this country have been unjustly linked to the events in the Iraqi military prison. Several of the articles claimed that the American public should not be surprised by the events at Abu Ghraib because similar incidents routinely occur in U.S. prisons and jails.

As a result, correctional officers have become the victims of the stereotype of correctional officers as corrupt, unprofessional, abusive, and inhumane. On May 4, 2004, a *New York Times* article cited several examples of physical and sexual abuse of prisoners, specifically naming the states that were involved. Such reports served to reinforce a negative view of corrections. Overwhelmingly, correctional staff members are highly qualified, properly trained professionals. Incidents of mistreatment are rare. When they do occur, corrective action is typically firm and swift.

Prisons, like most other public institutions, are not perfect, but change and improvement have been ongoing over the last 30 years:

There are fewer conditions of confinement lawsuits, staff are better trained, prisoner health services are greatly improved, national standards have been promulgated, prisons have become accredited, and the number of homicides has dropped—in fact, the likelihood of dying in a prison is substantially less than the likelihood of dying outside a prison.⁸

The field of corrections is improving. The process, however, remains slow and difficult, primarily because the necessary funding is simply not available. This directly impacts correctional administrators’ ability to recruit quality employees, provide essential intensive training, encourage continuous professional development learning efforts, and, ultimately, foster professionalism.

Safety First

Despite these disheartening economic realities, the demands placed on correctional leaders and staffs continue to grow. Corrections administrators need to find ways to decrease costs without sacrificing security.

Corrections administrators do not promote a culture of violence. They see the mission of a professional correctional system as delivery of safe and secure corrections services. To that end, proper disciplinary actions are taken in response to incidents of violence. “People are sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment.”⁹ Corrections practitioners feel obligated to keep prisons a safe environment that encourages inmates to rehabilitate themselves and staff to facilitate the inmates’ rehabilitative efforts.

Inmate Programs Second

With severe correctional budget cuts, prisons struggle to obtain money for inmate programs. With few rehabilitative, treatment, vocational, and educational programs, prisons have not done nearly enough to ensure

decreased recidivism. Reentry, as it stands, is one of the most pressing problems we face as a nation. Every day, 1,600 ex-offenders walk out of prison with minimal skills and education, no savings, debt, no unemployment benefits, few employment prospects, and low ties to the community.¹⁰ National statistics indicate that 7 of every 10 prisoners function at the two lowest levels of literacy.¹¹ Simply put, at that literacy level, they are not able to fill out a job application.

Today, the needs of ex-offenders are more serious than ever before. Due to the scarcity of programs, however, those needs are often unmet. The majority of ex-offenders need substance abuse treatment, yet only a small fraction have the opportunity to receive it. More offenders with mental illness are coming through the system; one out of six inmates takes psychotropic medications for mental disorders than ever before. Upon release, without adequate health care, they are unable to receive and pay for prescribed psychotropic medications and often relapse return to prison.

Within three years, 67 percent of released ex-offenders recidivate; 75 percent recidivate within five years, and the literature shows that only one of four ex-offenders remains a law-abiding citizen. The importance of inmate programs cannot be overstated. If recidivism is to decrease, reentry planning must begin from the first day of incarceration—a difficult task to accomplish in light of the dwindling resources. It is essential that we find ways to reintegrate ex-offenders into society because each and every one of us has a stake in what comes out of our prisons.

With decreased funding and a post-Martinson skepticism about rehabilitation states became focused on performance-based funding, allocating money for the programs that presented reliable and valid data that they work.¹² Research and evaluation should automatically be a part of any correctional program effort and should be considered an essential element of any budget.¹³ Institutions must find not only *what works* but also *how it works* and *for whom* it is effective.

Correctional education is one inmate program that does work. Although education has played a role in the mission of the prison throughout its history, that role has been affected by the systemic conflict between security and treatment.

Presently, correctional education is the product of scattered attempts to offer prisoners an opportunity to construct meaningful lives both in prison and following release. In the early 1970s, correctional education administrators considered the need for funds to expand programs and staff, purchase educational materials and technology, and provide additional vocational training opportunities for the offender to be their top priority.¹⁴ Studies have documented the need for instructional materials, a lack of funds, and a shortage of books and other teaching aids. Most states had neither a full-time curriculum specialist nor a media specialist on their staff. Unfortunately, we have not seen much progress since then. Those needs are still not being met.

With increased emphasis on performance-based funding, the Correctional Education Association (CEA), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, conducted a three-year, three-state recidivism study.¹⁵ The Three-State Recidivism Study of Correctional Education compared correctional education participants and nonparticipants in Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio to assess the impact of correctional education on recidivism and postrelease employment. The study consisted of a 3,099-inmate cohort, making it one of the most comprehensive studies ever conducted in correctional education. The participants were mostly male (87 percent).

The study found strong support for educating incarcerated offenders. The Three-State Recidivism Study confirmed that correctional education significantly reduced long-term recidivism for inmates released in late

1997 and early 1998. For each state, the measures of recidivism—rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration—were significantly lower. Correctional education participants had statistically significant lower rates of rearrest (48 percent) compared to nonparticipants (57 percent) and had reincarceration rates (21 percent) lower than those of nonparticipants (31 percent).

Recruitment

With the prison boom, the number of correctional employees has doubled since the 1980s:

The corrections system now employs more than 716,000 persons, with a total monthly payroll of \$2.1 billion. The total number of U.S. citizens employed by the justice system has increased so rapidly relative to the entire U.S. population that approximately 1.5 percent of the nation's entire labor force now works in the justice system.¹⁶

Despite the needed increase of correctional staff, the corrections profession remains in critical status because the turnover rate remains high.

Recognizing the critical status of the correctional workforce, the American Correctional Association embarked on a project titled "Building a Strategic Workforce Plan for the Corrections Profession." Although still under way, the study's initial data clearly show the difficulty of recruiting and retaining personnel, especially correctional officers.

Cast in a negative light, correctional administrators feel additional pressure to perform their jobs efficiently. Adding to this quandary is the increasing difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified personnel. As noted, funds to support salary enhancements have become all too scarce. The entry pay for corrections officers in adult facilities ranges from approximately \$25,000 in South Carolina to \$46,000 in New Jersey.¹⁷ Inadequate pay for corrections officers, as compared to law enforcement personnel and others recruited from the same workforce pool, is widely blamed for the continuing recruiting and retention difficulties. Individuals possessing associate's and bachelor's degrees or even high school diplomas are unwilling to accept the low starting wage offered by prisons and jails, particularly when other fields of endeavor offer a more comfortable and safer work environment with higher compensation.

Other frequently cited causes of recruiting difficulties include burdensome hours and shift work, a shortage of qualified applicants, and the undesirable location of some corrections facilities. Individuals who do enter the corrections field, even those satisfied with their jobs, often leave as raises and other incentives continue to dry up. High rates of turnover among corrections officers result mainly from demanding hours and shift work, inadequate compensation, stress and burnout, poor initial selection of candidates, competition from other law enforcement and security agencies, poor career prospects, and poorly qualified supervisors. Consequently, there is constant pressure for continuous recruitment to replace departing officers. System growth due to increasing inmate populations compounds the recruitment problem.¹⁸

The Importance of Training

Faced with staggering budget cuts and a spurt in prison population growth, corrections is struggling to utilize available limited resources to balance management with treatment. Simply put, training, leader development, salary enhancements, infrastructure repairs, drug treatment, education, and so on have been sacrificed so that prisons and jails could continue to operate

in an efficient manner. The importance of training cannot be overstated. Lack of proper training may result in poor decision making, and the consequences may be problematic (e.g., the scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison).

For example, lack of proper-use-of-force training may result in poor decision making at a critical moment when a life or lives may be in jeopardy. Correctional administrators ensure development of and adequate staff training in appropriate policies and procedures. With limited resources, it is challenging for corrections administrators to recruit qualified staff and skilled field training officers, introduce new technology, and train staff in vital skills such as communication. Officers must be trained to initially respond verbally to a situation that requires potential use of force. Without proper equipment (e.g., cameras) and funding for training, everyone is at risk.

Execution Teams

Executioners are not a popular topic. We think of executioners as grisly, cold-blooded people and may wonder how they sleep at night. Our image of the executioner is often misleading and misunderstood.

Executions are complex and very difficult processes that require a high level of training and professionalism. Candidates who volunteer to serve on the execution team are carefully screened to weed out those who may experience adverse reactions to performing execution duties.

Correctional officers on execution teams are typically very serious and solemn and highly professional. Their files are carefully studied, and their backgrounds are thoroughly checked. They are then interviewed by the warden, psychologically screened by a clinical psychologist, and, ultimately, approved by the members of the execution team. The team is a close-knit family that functions as a source of support—a unity that must be trusted. To cope with the experience, a clinical psychologist is assigned to work with the team throughout the entire process.

Well-trained officers who can “keep cool” are selected to join the execution team, and from there they are trained for the execution. “They participate in the execution process not for monetary benefit but due to a sense of professionalism and commitment.” Countless rehearsals are meant to produce a confident group that is capable of fast and accurate performance under pressure.¹⁹ At the end, the job is carried out with precision, humility, and teamwork.

Everyone on the team must have and understand a shared purpose. The team members must have a good leader, be encouraged to utilize psychological services to assist in coping with the execution process, and, most important, be able to trust one another. The assignment is broken into a series of tasks, and each executioner is assigned a task in which he or she will specialize (e.g., strapping the right leg).

Despite the common myth that today’s executions are carried out by emotionless executioners, those who take part in the process are affected by the psychological burden. The process may run smoothly, efficiently, and professionally, yet despite moral beliefs, it remains a difficult act with which everyone must learn to cope.

Professionalism is required in the execution process. The officers are well trained to ensure that the execution itself is done professionally. The goal is to carry out the execution as uneventfully as possible to avoid media sensationalism. The condemned are not dragged or weeping, but they seem to submit to it with some level of acceptance. No one on the execution team seeks to inflict suffering. The execution process is carried out as humanely as possible, without any room for abuse.

In the eyes of the executioner, the execution process is not killing, nor is it a vengeful act. It is a job to be done, a lawful sanction. Officers who volunteer to be on the execution team are committed to the process, working hard to carry it out in a professional and humane manner that will be least painful to all.

Inmates

Prisoner reentry is one of the most pressing problems we face as a nation. Most released prisoners are rearrested and return to prison.²⁰ The reality is that 95 percent of prisoners will be released at some point. Our goal should be to ensure that those released from prison do not return to a criminal lifestyle. According to a recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 30 percent of released prisoners (or nearly one in three) were rearrested in the first six months, 44 percent within the first year, and 67 percent within three years of release from prison.²¹ Comparing these recidivism rates with a nearly identical study conducted in 1983,²² rearrest rates increased by 5 percent.²³

Ex-offenders have difficulty finding services such as housing, employment, and child care assistance. Upon release, they often find that the criminal lifestyle is the only alternative to homelessness and hunger. Helping ex-prisoners successfully return to society can greatly improve their chances of staying out of trouble. We must adopt a goal of reintegration, not exclusion. Rehabilitation and reintegration processes must start on day one, the day the inmate is convicted.

Once the facility is running safely and security is maintained, inmate programs must be made available. Today, reentry is more problematic because, while inmate populations are increasing, inmate programs are being cut back due to the unavailability of funding. Inmates participate in fewer programs because fewer programs are available. Low participation rates are likely a symptom of program availability, not a lack of interest or need.²⁴

We must conduct inmate programs to prepare inmates to return to communities as law-abiding citizens. Inmate programs not only keep inmates busy but also help them acquire and maintain skills necessary for law-abiding life on the outside. It is easy to deny inmates free programs such as education, but we must recognize that we need to invest in what is going on in our nation's prisons because every single one of us has a very high stake in what comes out of these prisons.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LARGER CORRECTIONS COMMUNITY

A professional corrections organization has an obligation to participate in its national community. Involvement in the larger community will assist the organization with discussion and debate on current issues, facilitate the sharing of relevant empirical research and influence where grant money goes, increase networking, and distribute current knowledge of issues and solutions.

The corrections field is fortunate to have several professional organizations that offer much valuable support. The following examples are among the many local and national organizations available to enhance correctional professionalism. The list is not inclusive; correctional personnel should seek the organization that best suits their needs.

The American Correctional Association (ACA)

The ACA is the oldest and largest membership organization dedicated to the improvement of corrections. As part of its mission, the ACA conducts

workshops, seminars, exhibits, and networking opportunities. It also hosts two annual conferences that bring correctional personnel from the United States and countries around the world together for a variety of activities.

The ACA's Professional Development Department offers a variety of educational opportunities. One of the most valuable programs is the Corrections Certification Program (described in Chapters 6 and 13). It was first administered to correctional personnel in the summer of 2000 and William Sondervan, director of Maryland's Division of Corrections (DOC), was among the initial group of candidates. Although Sondervan had been in the field for many years, he found the examination to be extremely challenging. Taking the exam affirmed that there is a body of knowledge associated with corrections, knowledge that both separates it from other fields of endeavor and distinguishes it as a true profession.

The Maryland DOC executive team became the first in the nation to consist of a fully certified staff. All wardens and managerial staff were encouraged to sit for the exams. Certification information packets were sent to each facility and each staff member. The number of certified staff steadily increased during Sondervan's five years as commissioner with Maryland ranking second in the nation as far as the number of certified professionals.

It should be noted that the Corrections Certification Program, like those in other fields, requires individual recertification after a period of three years. To do so, the individual must participate in various learning activities and complete a specified number of contact training/education hours. Moreover, the recertification process documents that corrections is a bonafide profession requiring not only the possession but the ongoing enhancement of knowledge and skills throughout one's career.

The ACA's Standards and Accreditation Department develops national standards and accredits prisons and jails (as defined in Chapter 6). To be accredited by ACA, facility staff must carefully review their policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the established standards. The facility must undergo a stringent audit process and meet specified percentages of compliance with both mandatory and nonmandatory standards.

Among the many advantages of being accredited is the sense of pride and accomplishment the staff experiences. A commissioner must strongly support and encourage facilities to apply for accreditation. Commissioner Sondervan was fortunate to witness the first two successful accreditation attempts by facilities in Maryland. At a celebratory ceremony held by one facility, he was overwhelmed by the emotion shown by staff as they realized their achievement. Without question, earning accreditation provided a real sense of purpose and meaning. It also served to strengthen the connection between the basic underlying principles of correctional practice and the day-to-day responsibilities of working in a prison environment.

The Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA)

The ASCA, comprising all state correctional administrators, is dedicated to the improvement of correctional services by promoting:

- the exchange of ideas and philosophies at the top administrative levels;
- public support for the understanding of the corrections systems;
- research in correctional practices;

- the development of correctional standards and accreditation;
- the fostering of appropriate legislation; and
- the exchange of information with international correctional organizational agencies.

The ASCA also conducts training for new directors that helps them survive and excel as they begin their assignments.

National Institute of Corrections (NIC)

The NIC, part of the U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Prisons, provides a variety of services including training, technical assistance, information services, and policy and program development assistance. The NIC also provides leadership to influence professional correctional policy and practice nationwide.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is the lifelong or career-long dedication to quality selection, training, and development of employees. A well-planned, well-executed professional development program is at the core of creating a professional corrections organization. However, it is often neglected in state and county governments because of fiscal issues. This is especially true in times of severe budget constraints.

Correctional leaders must take a systems approach to professional development. System components should include recruitment of quality employees, a well-run training academy, a field training officer program, inservice training, and leadership development. Quality training and development starts from the first day on the job and continues until retirement.

Recruiting is immensely important. Corrections needs individuals with the proper character, background, and temperament for the profession. A considerable amount of time and money is devoted to new employee selection and training. Because turnover is very costly, it is essential to carefully select employees. Components of the recruitment program include:

- a comprehensive application;
- a written examination;
- a local agency check;
- a background investigation;
- psychological screening;
- a personal interview; and
- in some instances, a polygraph. (Polygraphs are often not administered because of time and expense. It is a wise investment that allows the recruiting team to prescreen potential candidates.)

Maintaining a correctional academy provides the basic foundation of new officer training. It is the place where the correctional officer learns the lessons necessary to begin his or her career, where professional attitudes are developed, and where pride in the profession is established. Correctional officers learn about integrity, ethical behavior, proper attitude, competency, the chain of command, and standards of conduct. The essentials of correctional law, inmates' rights, inmate discipline, and correctional philosophy are discussed and instilled. A well-run academy is also essential to protect an agency from litigation.

Field training officer (FTO) programs are conducted after the academy and before an officer assumes duties on his or her own. All correctional organizations should conduct a quality FTO program with training, coaching, experiential activities, and testing as its components. FTOs should be carefully selected and trained to ensure new recruits are instructed properly. Most FTO programs include having officers work on a variety of posts to learn several different functions within the facility. The instructor serves as a mentor and coach during this process. At the end of the FTO program, the new officer should be properly prepared to assume his or her duties.

Inservice training must be offered on an annual basis. The ACA standard is a minimum of 40 hours annually; most executives feel this is adequate. The Adult State Training Director's Network (TDN), sponsored by the NIC, suggests that annual inservice training be based on a needs assessment that reflects an agency's problems and issues, not just on a list of topics given year after year. The training should be performance based and customized and should address such areas as agency-collected data, incident reports, and legislative, judicial, and executive orders. Inservice training can be conducted in the classroom, at roll call, or online. Professional organizations such as the ACA are developing relevant online courses to supplement classroom training and provide additional opportunities for professional development in a cost-effective manner.

Effective communication skills are essential to the decision-making process. Leadership development is also essential. First, career paths must be clearly identified. This means that the correctional organization must show employees how to prepare for future leadership positions, provide an outline of what should and could be done, and encourage employees to excel. The agency must also take an active role in the process. Some of the components include the following.

A College Education

As previously stated, today's correctional environment is complex. Many people come into corrections with a high school diploma. As a result, many correctional employees are adult learners who attend classes while working. Every effort should be made by the correctional organization to support this effort. This may include providing personal recognition, tuition assistance, work schedule accommodation, promotion points, and so on. Colleges and universities, too, can support this effort by encouraging students to start an ACA criminal justice student chapter. Many employees go through college as they progress in rank and responsibility.

The Maryland DOC made arrangements to have community college courses taught on the prison grounds at times convenient to shift personnel. These courses were inexpensive and served to start employees on the path to postsecondary education. Partnerships were also formed with several local community colleges to offer entry-level training. In some Maryland regions, staff actually received their training on the community college campus with access to all amenities including the library. Thus, there was little transition involved as they continued to build on their credits in an atmosphere that already had become familiar.

Rotational Assignments and Collateral Duties

Employees should be rotated through a variety of assignments over the course of their careers in order to learn many different aspects of the career field. Exposing people to numerous assignments develops a variety

of skills that make them more knowledgeable and well rounded as they progress in rank. For example, the lieutenant who has been on the same shift in the same prison for 20 years has learned the same things 20 times over and is consequently limited in his or her ability.

Employees should be assigned to different prisons with different custody levels and missions and should be given different shifts and different responsibilities within the respective prisons. This rotation includes collateral duties such as serving as an investigator, a public information officer, a tactical team member, an equal opportunity officer, and so on.

Leader Development

Again, there are many techniques for conducting this kind of training. One example is the NIC's Management Development for the Future course. The Maryland Division of Corrections conducted this course three times on-site in Maryland. The NIC covered the cost of the instruction and provided the curriculum and instructors. There were 33 participants per class. Potential students applied and were recommended by their respective wardens. The applications were then carefully screened by a board in the DOC headquarters. Care was taken not only to select the best-qualified staff but also to include a diverse group in terms of gender and race and to draw selectees from a wide variety of job classifications, such as security, case management, commitment, administration, food service, and industries.

The curriculum included assessment instruments, leadership, management, ethics, group projects, and senior-level speakers. Courses were three weeks in duration, with a break of several months between sessions. The results of this training were phenomenal. The staff members who completed the training became the foundation of the future leadership of the organization. Not only did they learn a great deal, but also they came away with a different attitude about their careers. Most of them were promoted, some several times. Many went on to complete their degrees and enter graduate school.

Other formal leadership training included sending people to the NIC Academy in Longmont, Colorado; the University of Maryland; the Federal Executive Institute; the American Correctional Association; Leadership Maryland; and the Leadership Challenge Program.

Recognizing that few women were reaching top positions in the corrections field and that only a few states had any specific career and leadership development programs that address the unique challenges of being a woman in a correctional leadership role, the National Institute of Corrections implemented two women-only program offerings: Executive Leadership for Women and Correctional Leadership for Women. Women leaders in the executive program function at the decision-making level of warden/superintendent or above. Women leaders in the correctional leadership program are typically in the ranks of lieutenant, captain, unit manager, or field supervisor. Each woman receives individualized one-on-one assessment feedback with a trained facilitator, and as the program unfolds, she is given learning tasks and activities structured to emphasize the unique leadership styles of women—multitasking, inclusion, and collaboration.²⁵

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

The importance of recognizing staff accomplishments cannot be overstated. When an employee performs his or her duties beyond expectations, receives a promotion, completes a degree program, and so on, that

employee's efforts should be recognized. Such recognition not only helps affirm the employee's commitment to personal growth and development but also inspires other staff to achieve excellence. Recognition can be in the form of a letter or certificate or can involve a more formal procedure.

During Sondervan's last several years in office he conducted "Commissioner Recognition Ceremonies" on a quarterly basis to recognize employee accomplishments. Honorees and their family members received invitations to the ceremony, and coworkers were encouraged to attend. A reception with refreshments would follow, during which the staff member could have pictures taken and mingle with other awardees.

Sondervan also made it a point to hold "Breakfast with the Commissioner" events, generally limited to executives, managers, and supervisors. The one-on-one forum provided the opportunity to discuss specific issues and to cultivate relationships with the key people in the organization. The meetings allowed Sondervan to acknowledge the efforts of those in leadership positions and encourage them to set even higher standards for themselves and their staff

ENDNOTES

1. This material was contributed by William Sondervan, EdD, CCE, with the assistance of Ania Dobrzanska, MS, CCM. Dr. Sondervan is director of Criminal Justice, Investigative Forensics and Legal Studies at the University of Maryland University College. From 2003 to 2006 Sondervan served as director of Professional Development at the American Correctional Association. In 1999, Dr. Sondervan was appointed Commissioner of the Maryland Division of Corrections. He served as commissioner until 2003. Dr. Sondervan earned a BS in business administration from the College of New Jersey, an EdM in counseling psychology from Boston University, an MPA in criminal justice from Jacksonville State University, and an EdD in adult education and human resource development from Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University. Dobrzanska is Program Coordinator with the Moss Group in Washington, DC. She earned a BA in psychology and administration of justice from Rutgers University, and an MS in justice, law, and society at American University.
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