

A PLAN  
FOR  
SELF-EVALUATION AND VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION

AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION  
WOODRIDGE STATION, P.O. Box 10176  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20018  
PHONE (301) 864-1070

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Members of  
Committee on Self-Evaluation  
American Correctional Association

\*Walter Dunbar  
Chairman  
U. S. Board of Parole  
HOLC Building, Room 420  
First & Indiana Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20537

Allen F. Breed  
Director  
Department of the  
Youth Authority  
State Office Bldg. #1, Room 401  
Sacramento, California 95814

Joseph S. Coughlin  
Director  
Division of Corrections  
State Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Robert H. Fosen, Ph. D.  
Executive Scientist  
American Institutes for Research  
8555 16th Street  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Mrs. Elizabeth B. McCubbin  
Superintendent  
North Carolina Correctional  
Center for Women  
1034 Bragg Street  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602

Charles L. McKendrick  
Warden  
Wallkill Prison  
Wallkill, New York 12589

H. G. Moeller  
Assistant Director  
U. S. Bureau of Prisons  
HOLC Building  
First & Indiana Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20537

Abraham G. Novick  
Director  
Berkshire School for Boys  
Canaan, New York

George W. Randall  
Administrator  
State Board of Control  
Corrections Division  
2570 Center Street, N. E.  
Salem, Oregon 97310

B. J. Rhay  
Superintendent  
Washington State Penitentiary  
P. O. Box 520  
Walla Walla, Washington 99362

Dr. A. LaMont Smith  
School of Criminology  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94720

C. Winston Tanksley  
Warden  
Colorado State Reformatory  
Box R  
Buena Vista, Colorado 81211

\*Chairman of the Committee

## INTRODUCTION

The correctional administrators at the institutes held in 1966 made recommendations that the American Correctional Association attempt to provide tools for evaluation of services. The Board of Directors has been interested for a number of years in establishing an accreditation procedure for correctional services.

An OLEA grant was secured in 1968 to prepare and publish a Study Guide for the application of the Manual of Correctional Standards and to provide Corrections Evaluation Reports for each chapter of the Manual. Dr. A. LaMont Smith who had pioneered in this work with the last two revisions of the Manual was engaged to prepare the Study Guide and the Corrections Evaluation Reports.

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information on the present and future plans for self-evaluation and voluntary accreditation. Included in this publication is information relative to the experiences and practices in the fields of education, hospitals and institutions for the mentally retarded.

Acknowledgement is made of the contribution of Dr. Robert H. Fosen, member of the Committee on Self-Evaluation and to Mr. Reed Cozart, Program Director for their work in the preparation of the material for this bulletin.

It is important that the reader understand that the material presented represents current thinking. Actual experience in the application of the self-evaluation procedure will undoubtedly result in changes and refinements.

Suggestions, recommendations and criticisms are solicited from all who make use of this technique.

E. Preston Sharp, Ph. D.  
General Secretary  
American Correctional Association

## PREFACE

The concept of self-evaluation and voluntary accreditation in correctional settings is at the outset a concept of correctional growth and development. It is a grass-roots movement within our field to further strengthen the quality of American correctional services in the interest of maximum public protection and effective restoration of the public offender. As crime rates and the incidence of massive urban disorders continue to rise, there has never been a more propitious time for the correctional field to embark upon a nationwide and systematic program of self-study and appraisal. Self-evaluation and voluntary accreditation is our challenge to apply our own Manual of Correctional Standards to our work. How will it benefit correctional practice and the attainment of correctional objectives? These questions will be answered definitively only through experience in applying and testing the concept. We can, however, anticipate major benefits.

To first line correctional workers in confinement facilities and field programs, application of the Manual of Correctional Standards means a direct partnership with administration in the assessment of correctional programs. It will strengthen lines of communication in the chain of command, and provide first line employees with new opportunities to convey their experience and judgment to top administration. The tools for application of the Manual also provide a simple, direct and effective means of orienting new employees and building the promotional qualifications of all employees. These immediate advantages are apparent in the Corrections Evaluation Reports which have been prepared for testing the Study Guide that is outlined later. For example, Chapter 5, of the Manual concerns correctional camps. Item 27 of the Chapter 5 Evaluation Report states that, "There is a predetermined plan in writing concerning procedures that are to be followed in foreseeable emergencies such as escapes, serious injuries, etc." The use of the item will be instructive as well as evaluative. Effective staff development will occur in discussion of the item and its purposes, in comparing the provisions of the item with actual operations, and in planning and carrying out steps for improvement. Additional Corrections Evaluation Reports concerning such areas as adult probation, parole and other release procedures, community correctional centers, and counseling, casework, and clinical services will provide similar stimulation and benefit. The tools for application of the Manual are tools for staff development as well as operational improvement.

To those correctional employees concerned primarily with the development and implementation of programs in education, vocational training, job placement, clinical services, and other key areas, self-evaluation and voluntary accreditation will provide additional impetus to professional growth and recognition. For example, recruitment of new professionals to correctional service has

traditionally been difficult and frustrating. This has been due in part to failure to communicate effectively our commitments to professional standards and practices. Application of the Manual throughout the wide range of present correctional programming can be expected to aid in this respect, and in making more visible other program needs, such as budgeting, manpower, training and research. Assessment of the quality of correctional programs through the Corrections Evaluation Reports will benefit everyone concerned with the objectives and operations of the correctional field. For the professional in corrections, it will provide a crucial means of communicating program need, of accelerating program development, and of contributing to the further refinement of appropriate program standards for the entire field.

Many correctional administrators have devoted much time and effort in building the present Manual of Correctional Standards. More systematic application of the Manual will immediately recall efforts extending back to at least 1946 when our national organization first proposed needed standards in twelve subject areas. Standards in 35 subject areas are now available, and additional standards and refinements are anticipated through planned "feedback" from the use of Corrections Evaluation Reports. How will administration gain from expanded use of the Manual?

The success of the administrator is determined, to a large degree, on how accurately he is able to study his experience and apply this understanding to current decision requirements. Present day correctional administrators face complex decision requirements in their responsibility for increasingly complex systems. Without adequate information - or the tools to provide it - problems are impossible to comprehend, to say nothing of effective decisions or solutions. The tools developed for application of the Manual are information and decision tools for the correctional manager. He needs them now and he will need them more in the future as correctional agencies extend in responsibility and complexity. Information derived through the Corrections Evaluation Reports will keep the administrator up-to-date in virtually every aspect of his operation. He will be better able to buttress budget requests with facts, and support with evidence his responses to public officials, the public and the press. Voluntary accreditation will eventually underscore the administrator's belief in the professional stature of his field - and he will be able to prove it.

While the significance of correctional services in the United States has continued to increase in the face of unrelenting crime and urban disorder, we have often lamented the absence of adequate public understanding and support. As we know all too well, when this fundamental support is weak or missing, it is reflected in the reporting philosophy of the press, the indifference of educa-

tional institutions, and the lethargy of local and federal government. Correctional self-evaluation and voluntary accreditation will open new relationships with state governors, state legislatures, academic institutions, the press, and the interested public. We cannot expect change to occur immediately - through voluntary accreditation or any other means. But we can expect heightened interest and support to follow our own determination to further strengthen the correctional field to meet the challenges of contemporary society.

## Publication of a Study Guide

A Study Guide for use in self-evaluation has been prepared for the testing of the Manual of Correctional Standards. Dr. A. LaMont Smith has converted the Manual into an action tool by which correctional services and systems may verify their strengths and pin-point their weaknesses, deficiencies and needs. A questionnaire with the answers pointed out and identified by page number and line has been prepared for each chapter of the Manual so it can be used by the staff members with the assistance of consultants to evaluate their services. The Study Guide has been printed and is ready for distribution.

## Preparation of Corrections Evaluation Report Forms for Every Chapter in the Manual

The Study Guide also contains Corrections Evaluation Report Forms for chapters three through thirty-five of the Manual. These chapters are concerned with three areas: Correctional Process in the Community, Central Correctional Administration and Correctional Institutions. Provision has been made for Supplementary Reports, an Evaluation Chapter Report for each chapter and a Corrections Evaluation Report by chapters. By use of rating symbols on these forms, the Evaluators can arrive at a true picture of how the service or system evaluated meets the standards required.

## A Self-Evaluation and Accreditation Committee has been Appointed

At the February 1968 meeting of the Board of Directors at Atlanta, a committee on self-evaluation consisting of twelve members representing the various agencies was authorized. OLEA has made a grant to the American Correctional Association to finance a pilot project to use the Study Guide as a testing tool and the project is being supervised by the Committee.

## Institute for Training Staff Members who will in time Train Evaluators for Self-Evaluation of their Correctional Services

The new OLEA grant provides funds for a three-day institute for twenty agency staff members selected from the various correctional services and on a nationwide basis. It is scheduled for June 6-8, 1968 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Additional agency members may attend at the expense of their own agency. Those attending the institute will be trained to use the Study Guide and the Corrections Evaluation Reports as tools for self-evaluation. They will return to their own agencies to instruct other staff members to use the Study Guide and its Corrections Evaluation Report forms in a self-evaluation program.

A Minimum of Two Correctional Services or Institutions will be Selected and a Consultant will test the Study Guide and its Corrections Evaluation Reports

Different types of institutions or correctional services have been selected in order that the pilot project will provide different experiences for those being trained as evaluators. A consultant will be provided for this orientation and training of staff in the use of the Study Guide and the Corrections Evaluation Report forms as self-evaluation tools. All types of correctional services for juveniles, youth and adults will eventually be included in the self-evaluation initial approach.

Feedback from the Corrections Evaluation Reports can be used for the Purpose of

1. Revision of the Manual
2. Revision of the Study Guide
3. Revision of the Corrections Evaluation Reports

The administrators who choose to use the Study Guide agree to not only make the results of their evaluations known but will also furnish suggestions and criticisms. All evaluations will be confidential. These will point up areas of revision in the Manual, in the Study Guide and also the Corrections Evaluation Reports. This will provide an opportunity to revise, improve and up date all three documents.

Revised Study Guide and Revised Corrections Evaluation Reports Based upon Revised Manual will be Re-Issued

Efforts are being made to secure funds to continue this project as follows. After the Manual has been brought up-to-date and re-issued a revised Study Guide and revised Corrections Evaluation Reports will then need to be issued. The revision will contain all the improvements and benefits gained from the initial testing programs. The new Corrections Evaluation Report forms will include all changes.

Trained Consultants will upon request Evaluate Correctional Services that seek Accreditation

Since self-evaluation is the first step toward accreditation, correctional administrators after having used the Study Guide as a tool for evaluating their services will then request consultants to study their evaluation reports and to evaluate their services in order to ascertain that standards as outlined in the Manual have been met. Funds are being sought to finance a three-year project that would provide trained consultants. Not only will self-evaluation reports be checked but the reports of the consultants would be referred to the accreditation committee or



committees for final action.

### The Experiences and Accreditation Processes used by the other Fields need to be Studied

Other fields such as education, hospitals, mental health, etc. have systems of accreditation that have been arrived at after years of study and experimentation. There is a need for their experiences to be studied to ascertain how problems were pin-pointed and resolved. Much time may be saved by avoiding pitfalls that may have faced these agencies.

### Experiences of Other Agencies in the Field of Accreditation

A preliminary study of the experiences had by the agencies that evaluate and accredit colleges, universities, hospitals, etc. verifies the fact that the American Correctional Association is proceeding in accordance with well established principles. Such a study reveals that self-evaluation is the initial step toward accreditation.

The National Commission on Accrediting was established in 1949 to meet a need in the field of accreditation in higher education and to forestall duplication of efforts in this field. At the present time, the accrediting agencies operate on a regional basis and only one agency may accredit in each geographical area. Under the procedures under which, these agencies operate an administrator asks that his institution be evaluated and it applies for accreditation. A questionnaire or some other type of self-evaluation document is executed and submitted.

A team makes a visit to the institution and verifies the information submitted and makes an independent check on the facilities, the program, its goals and objectives and how such goals are met. The findings of the team are discussed with the administrator and he is given an opportunity to challenge the facts gathered by the team and to submit additional facts or documents.

The teams report and recommendations are submitted to a council. The latter studies the report, considers the recommendations, gives the administrator an opportunity to be heard and to submit additional data. A decision is then reached by the council whether accreditation will be granted or refused. If granted, it may be provisional or for a period of years - usually not to exceed three years. It is the policy to continue to revise standards and to re-examine periodically all accredited institutions.

The emphasis as far as higher education is concerned is on the qualitative factors rather than quantitative. The ultimate goals and how they are to be met receive primary consideration.

There is a Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals that carries on a program to accredit hospitals and three types of non-hospital patient care institutions. Its program is very similar to that of the agencies in the field of accreditation of colleges. A set of standards is set up, then a guideline by which institutions may test themselves is established. The hospital applies for accreditation and completes required forms. A surveyor then makes an on-the-spot check and submits to a Board of Commissioners. The latter determines whether accreditation will be issued or refused.

#### Available Literature on Accreditation

The U. S. Office of Education issued a report compiled by Lloyd E. Blanch, Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education entitled, "Accreditation in Higher Education" but it is no longer in print. In this book, accreditation is defined as follows:

"It is the recognition accorded to an institution that meets the standards or criteria established by a competent agency or association".

The following steps are included:

1. Establishment of standards.
2. Inspection by competent authorities to determine if standards are met.
3. Publication of a list of institutions that meet the standards.
4. Provide reviews to see if standards continue to be met.

Accreditation is either given or refused.

The publication also lists five purposes of accreditation and eleven qualifications an accrediting agency must meet.

In June 1958, Catholic University in Washington, D. C. conducted an eight-day workshop on "Self-Evaluation and Accreditation in Higher Education" and its published proceedings include a paper by F. Taylor Jones, Executive Secretary, Commissioner on Institutions of Higher Education, Middle States Association entitled "General Procedures for Self-Evaluation". Mr. Jones describes the process generally as indicated in the report of the U. S. Office of Education mentioned above and says "Self-evaluation is a thorough analysis and criticism by an institutions' own staff and is the "heart" of the process". He further points out that it is a process designed to clarify a staff's own thinking, to identify the institution's educational assets and liabilities and to hammer

out courses of action to make its future achievements more clearly match its ideals.

In 1959, Rev. John F. Nevins of the faculty of Catholic University published a book entitled "A Study of the Organization and Operation of Voluntary Accrediting Agencies". In this book, he says that "self-evaluation is an excellent device for self-improvement". He also states that the accrediting agencies should evaluate themselves.

The Director of the National Commission on Accrediting recently stated that it is now the policy of the Commission to require such agencies to periodically do just that.

In 1960, a book entitled "Accreditation" was published by William K. Selden. This book, like that of Rev. Nevins, presents a history of the development of the accreditation process in the field of higher education.

Similar Project now Under Way -  
Self-Evaluation Program for Institutions for Mentally Retarded

The American Association on Mental Deficiency in January 1964 published a Manual on Standards for State Residential Institutions for Mentally Retarded. In 1965, this Manual was converted into two instruments (check lists) as tools for use in evaluation of institutional programs and practices. These instruments are (1) a self-evaluation instrument and (2) a team evaluation instrument.

The staffs of the individual institutions use the self-evaluation instrument to evaluate their own programs. This self-evaluation then is followed by a check or inspection by a professional team which uses the team evaluation instrument.

The Public Health Service, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare has made a grant of funds for this program of self-evaluation for a period of three years and all state administrators may request a study to be made of their institutions. This project will provide the basis for an eventual accreditation program.

Thus it may be noted that the American Correctional Association program is following a pattern similar to the one being followed by the American Association on Mental Deficiency. The staff of the American Correctional Association is in frequent communication with the staff of this project in order to benefit from their experiences.

## Special Accreditation Committees who are Experts in Specific Fields of Correctional Services will be Created

Since the correctional field includes many different agencies and services that serve various purposes and perform different functions, it will probably be necessary to have separate special committees to evaluate the separate and different correctional services. Experts in each separate field will evaluate the reports of agencies or services in their own field.

## Sound Beginning Goals for Accreditation in All Types of Correctional Services

Since self-evaluation is the initial step toward accreditation and since the testing of the tools for self-evaluation will bring about improvements in standards and techniques for their testing, it is important that sound and realistic goals for accreditation be set. This means that a limit of time for accreditation should be made because standards will be raised constantly and techniques will be improved. No accreditation should be given for an indefinite period of time.

## All Correctional Services should be Invited to Participate in the Accreditation Process

The American Prison Association became the American Correctional Association in recognition of the fact that prisons alone formed only a part of the entire field of corrections. Many other services are now a part of the Association but many are not active participants at this time. Juvenile probation services and juvenile training schools, youth services, adult probation and many other related services should be invited to participate in the accreditation process.

## The Self-Evaluation Tools will Serve other Purposes as well as for Accreditation

The use of the Study Guide and self-evaluation reports will not only point up strengths and weaknesses of the services evaluated and aid in the revision of the Manual but it will provide an excellent source for staff training and development programs. It will aid in planning for short and long range programs; for preparing budgetary requests; and will pave the way for developing better accreditation programs. The entire process of self-evaluation and accreditation will tend to raise the professional levels of employment in all the services. The professional teams developed in this evaluation process can make a systematic study of the institution or agency's role, its philosophy, program, etc. The information gathered can offer guidelines for future improvements. A basis for measuring progress can be formed. Problems will be

discovered and ways to solve them will emerge. It should be borne in mind that the Manual, the Study Guide, the Corrections Evaluation Reports and all aspects of the process will be subject to constant change and improvement.

#### Data Obtained will be put to Use

The Corrections Evaluation Report forms and the symbols for rating to be used can be processed electronically and computerized. This will provide a storehouse of information to be used in future revisions of the documents and planning for improving methods of evaluation. Provision has already been made for this data processing.

#### Improvements in State Planning are made Possible

The knowledge obtained from the self-evaluation process, especially if assisted by trained consultants will permit the administrators of state systems to plan long range programs and to prepare requests for state and Federal funds to improve their systems.

A subcommittee has been appointed by the Chairman of the Self-Evaluation Committee to clarify needs and procedures in the area of state level correctional planning.