Federal Probation

Corrections: State of the Art

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The Status of Education and Training in Corrections

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Introduction

THE JANUARY 1991 issue of the *Criminal Justice Newsletter* states that the United States leads the world in incarceration. Reportedly, the United States has 426 prison and jail inmates per 100,000 residents. Such rate surpasses that of the second-ranking nation, South Africa, which incarcerates 333 per 100,000, followed by the Soviet Union, with 268 prisoners per 100,000. Further, the figures indicate that the incarceration rate in the United States is 4 to 10 times greater than that of the Western European countries and Japan.

This country's burgeoning offender population draws attention to the need for more corrections facilities, programs, and personnel. The current demand of correctional systems for well-trained employees is unprecedented in correctional experience. Simultaneously, the competition for resources to address facility and operational needs is unsurpassed. However, when correctional managers are forced to make the hard choices between whether funds go to custody staff or training, the decision frequently is made in favor of custody requirements. Unfortunately, such circumstances and the lack of training which results can leave members of the corrections community handicapped in their ability to address their functions in an efficient and effective manner.

At a time when corrections faces increased management complexity and a more diverse correctional population, staff training becomes essential and can ill afford cutbacks. In order to perform their job functions, correctional workers must receive adequate preparation. This includes not only appropriate training and orientation to their job assignments, but on-going in-service training to enable them to assume increasing responsibilities. Moreover, training should go beyond pre-service orientation to the employee's particular job assignment and provide an opportunity for the organization to impart its mission, values, vision, and culture. Too often in corrections, only worker skills are targeted for training, and the organization misses a significant opportunity to communicate its vision and mission.

Participation of Managers

Corrections cannot expect to have a top-notch workforce without having made an investment in top-notch education and training programs. Organizations clearly communicate how they value training and education by the resources directed toward staff preparation, both at the pre-service and in-service levels, and by upper level management's involvement in the training process. In a number of correctional systems, the executives and their immediate staff are intricately involved in the training functions. The involvement of top management in training demonstrates to subordinates the importance placed on the training function.

Other strategies that clearly communicate to employees the importance of training, as well as the importance of the worker's role in the agency, include:

- the regular attendance of the executive at training graduation ceremonies
- the careful selection and promotion of training staff
- the organizational proximity of the training unit to the executive
- the resources dedicated to training.

David T. Kerns, chief executive officer of Xerox, underscores the need for an organization to heavily invest in training initiatives and to intricately involve managers in the training process. Using agency managers as trainers recognizes the talents within the organization and strongly communicates that "no one knows our business like us." Kerns states that training represents one of the company's best vehicles for communication. He reports that since Xerox increased its training initiative and use of the management team in training, staff surveys have reflected a significant increase in recognition of the organization's priorities, at the 94 percent level.

Xerox also found that promotions and assignments sent a clear message about what management thought was important. These were effective in changing the organizational culture. In 1990 Xerox was the recipient of both the 1990 American Society of Training and Development Award and

the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award, recognizing Xerox's initiatives in training.

Correctional training departments need to be on the forefront of new and emerging issues. The correctional population is changing significantly, and new strategies and programs need to be designed. Rapid change creates one of the most complex problems facing trainers: They need to be aware of new ideas and be able to integrate them into training, and do so rapidly. For that reason, the training manager needs to be an integral member of the management team. This capacitates the system to be responsive to change and to be proactive in addressing change.

Educational Programs

At one time organizations only had to address basic job entry training. Increasingly, they need to provide for the educational deficits of their workforce. Harold W. McGraw, Jr., retired chief executive officer of McGraw-Hill, reports that illiteracy costs companies in low productivity, accidents, poor production quality, and lost management time. Xerox chief Kerns reports that American business is already spending $50 billion a year to bring personnel up to the level where they can be trained for specific company work.

Two factors seem to be specifically impacting the workforce. One is changing demographics, and the other is rapidly changing technology. The changing demographics reported in *Workforce 2000* indicate that there will be fewer people educated to perform entry level work in industry, government, and the military. Not unlike the business community, corrections will increasingly experience this same problem, if it hasn't already. Corrections already faces a reduced labor pool, and many within this group do not possess the requisite education skills. Increasingly the responsibility may fall to correctional agencies to provide both pre-service orientation and basic remedial education.

The 1990 *Training*'s Industry Report surveyed organizations and found that there was an increase in the number of organizations that train employees in reading, writing, basic mathematics, and English as a second language. According to the survey respondents, 15 percent of all organizations with 100 or more employees now offer remedial training. That's up from 11 percent in 1989.

Interestingly, the Commission on Skills of the American Workforce released a report during the summer of 1990 indicating that although many employers were concerned about the basic skills shortage among their workforce, especially entry level workers, few of these employers were really talking about a lack of academic skills. "Most (employers) actually are referring to characteristics such as reliability, a good attitude, a pleasant appearance, and a good personality." A review of training concentrations for both correctional and non-correctional organizations does evidence significant training emphasis on interpersonal communications and related courses. This might suggest that many organizations already are dedicating more resources than they realize to basic skills.

Industry and Corrections Comparison

Training's Industry Report cites that about 39.5 million Americans—"roughly one-third of the entire U.S. workforce"—would receive some sort of formal training from their employers during 1990. This was an increase over 1989. These individuals were projected to participate in almost 1.3 billion hours of training during 1990 at an expenditure of more than $45 billion.

Middle managers receive the highest percentage of training in business organizations. Although there isn't readily available data regarding correctional organizations, what information exists would seem to indicate that few correctional organizations approximate that level of training for middle managers. The majority of correctional resources are directed toward pre-service, entry level personnel. The intensity of training in corrections would also be at the pre-service level. Although many states require continuing in-service, this requirement is not rigorously enforced due to the competition for existing resources. This is unfortunate, since these middle level managers and first-line supervisors are in key positions within the corrections community to set the direction and mission of their organizations.

Where do these individuals receive their training? Not unlike businesses, correctional organizations use their own trainers, managers, and technical experts to provide training for entry level personnel. In these instances, training programs and seminars are primarily designed by in-house staff. This pattern changes significantly when you begin to look at training for management staff. While management staff receives a combination of internal and external training, there appears to be a pattern which indicates that the higher the individual is placed in the organization, the more likely he or she is to receive training outside the organization.

Instructional Strategies

The instructional strategies most commonly used by organizations include videotapes, followed by lectures, one-on-one instruction, audiotapes, self-

study programs, video-conferencing, teleconferencing, and, finally, computer conferencing. Although it may seem surprising that videotapes have surpassed lectures, it must be noted that the respondents to the industry survey only indicated if they used a strategy, not how much it was used. Organizations usually incorporate multiple instructional strategies depending upon the desired behavioral outcome of the training.

Although computers are used as teaching devices, most organizations use them to teach computer-related skills. Only 26 percent of businesses using computer-based training reported the use of computers to teach technical skills not related to computer operations. Another 17 percent reported using computers for training non-technical skills such as management and interpersonal skills. Corrections also tends to limit its computer training to computer applications such as management information systems.

Although it is commonly thought that interactive video is frequently used in training, *Training*'s survey indicates that it is not used often as a training intervention. Of those surveyed, only 15 percent of the respondents stated that they used interactive video. This percentage has remained relatively stable over the last 4 years. Among the group that reports use of interactive video, there has been a steady increase in the use of videodisc. Use has grown from 18 percent in 1986 to a current 41 percent. Although this may reflect a rapid growth, videodisc still represents a very small portion of those strategies used in training. Of those using videodiscs, 89 percent are using ready-made programs. Florida Department of Corrections is probably the largest user and developer of videodiscs specifically for correctional use. The Federal Bureau of Prisons and the National Academy of Corrections are also exploring this strategy.

Although correctional training departments continue to expand their use of technology in training, the most common approach continues to be the lecture strategy supported by other approaches. Most agencies have access to basic audio-visual equipment and use it regularly. Such support materials as videotapes, audiotapes, films, case studies, and simulations continue to be widely used. One new strategy being explored by the National Institute of Corrections is the use of telecommunications applications for training. Although corrections can benefit from the lessons learned in business training, corrections uniqueness should be considered. Materials developed for the business world can find application in corrections, but should be modified to reflect correctional examples and circumstances.

Money Spent on Training?

Not unlike other U.S. organizations, correctional agencies are tightening their belts in response to the economy and the competition for resources. This "hold-the-line" posture, or in some cases, cutback mode, is forcing training departments to look at other strategies for delivery of services. Training departments in both the public and private sector are increasingly being asked to do more with less. Although this may originally be viewed as a hardship, it provides the training department with the opportunity to carefully analyze the use of training strategies. All instructional methods do not cost the same amount, nor do they achieve the same behavioral outcomes. Each training department needs to continuously evaluate its training strategies for cost effectiveness.

Organizations are also spending less on external training services and customized training materials. Again, although specific data are lacking on the exact dollars dedicated to training in corrections, many systems report stability, at best. However, the resources are deployed differently. The variety of training programs is more limited, and entry level training programs are consuming an increasing majority of the training budget.

Correctional Training Standards and Requirements

The professionalization of training in corrections has followed a long and strenuous path. In many respects, corrections has been slow to recognize the value of training and the impact it can have on the total organization. Unfortunately, training has frequently been viewed as an avenue to prepare someone to assume his or her first correctional assignment, focusing entirely on the individual's skills rather than the potential development of the organization. Training can have a direct impact on the overall performance of the organization, resulting in improved consistency of operations, increased appropriate implementation of policies and programs, and an opportunity for the communication of organizational values, culture, and ethics.

Historically, staff training functions have been limited both in resources and in staffing. They were isolated from top level management in the process of policy development. And, as current trends demonstrate, the training department is frequently the first hit by budget reductions. Training needs to be viewed not as a frill of an organization, but rather an essential component that facilitates the effective operation of an agency.

It was not until the late 1970's that the American Correctional Association (ACA) Commission on Accreditation specified the first training standards. ACA not only identified specific standards for selected positions within corrections, but also established requirements identifying essential training topics, number of hours for pre-service (120, and annual in-service, 40), and specified basic administrative and policy support requirements for training programs.

In 1979, the American Association of Correctional Training Personnel (AACTP) undertook an initiative to develop standards that specified the critical skills required for effective classroom performance of trainers. These included standards for classroom presentation skills, instructional performance objectives, and written lesson plans. This initiative was further expanded in a second project in 1985 to develop standards for the structural support of staff training programs by correctional organizations. In addition, specific policies and standards were established which included:

1. A designated person with managerial responsibility for training.
2. Adequate resources for training implementation.
3. Use of a training advisory committee(s).
4. A written needs assessment.
5. An agency-wide written training plan based on the needs assessment.
6. Written curriculums based on the results of needs assessments.
7. Systematic scheduling, delivery, and documentation of training.
8. An evaluation plan addressing both training content and delivery methods.

In 1987, AACTP initiated a third project to redefine training programs and to establish standards. A training program was defined as

> a planned training intervention, developed and delivered with the intent of changing, improving, and/or developing job related skills, knowledge and abilities. The intervention may be of varying lengths and include a variety of methods such as self-study programs, classroom training, on the job training, practical exercises and job related practicum.

State and Local Requirements

A review of state and local correctional training requirements evidences a significant discrepancy with stated practices. Not only is there a significant variance among localities and states in the requirements for training, both at the pre-service and in-service levels, but in many instances there appears to be a variance in actual practice. In 1984, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Information Center conducted surveys for state training requirements for probation and parole officers, correctional officers, and jail officers. It should be noted that the state requirements presented in this article may have changed since the original data were collected.

Probation and Parole Officer Requirements

In 1984, when the NIC Information Center completed its survey of state requirements, it found that 41 states required some level of training for both probation and parole officers. In some instances, the training was required by law of all "peace officers," and in other states training was mandated by the department of corrections or the specific agency responsible for probation or parole. Those responding from states where a formal classroom training requirement did not exist indicated that on-the-job training was provided to orient new officers to their responsibilities. In states with combined authority for probation and parole, the training hours required ranged from 0 hours in six states up to 260 hours in Utah.

Several states required this training to occur within the first year or before the job assignment. The majority of the states with combined authority placed a 6-month time limitation in which the training should occur. Several states established unique standards. For example, Wisconsin varied its requirements based on the individual's prior experience and academic achievement, and, in West Virginia, training was delegated to the local authority. States with separate agencies having responsibility for probation and parole tended to vary the requirements. In some instances, more training hours were required for probation than for parole, and in other states, that pattern was reversed. The most commonly stated requirement, 40 hours of training, reflected the ACA standards. Again, the time limit for completion of this training varied, as it did in states with combined authority for probation and parole services.

Forty-four of the states required some in-service training of officers. Most states required the ACA standard of 40 hours of in-service training annually.

Training topics most commonly include probation and parole liability, client supervision, presentence report preparation, criminal law/legal issues, and interviewing. Seventy-five percent of the agencies reporting also identified topics such as the criminal justice system structure, classification, counseling, substance abuse, interpersonal communication, community resource development/management, and special offender treatment. Twenty-five of the 30 states with combined authority for probation and parole require in-service training of all officers annually. Eight states with separate authority

require training of all probation and parole officers, and two states did not require training of either. In the remaining four states reporting, two require in-service training for parole, but not probation, and the reverse is found in the remaining two states. Although many of the states provide the correctional training internally, some contract with private trainers to deliver portions of their training programs.

In 1988, as part of another NIC survey, community corrections administrators were asked to discuss the training offered to managers in their agencies. Of the 55 agencies responding to this question, 43 provided training to managers or agency executives, 12 did not. When asked to identify areas in which training would be most useful, the community corrections administrators identified resource management, time management, action planning, employee motivation, and team building as priority topics.

In a 1991 survey of state and local practices in probation systems, the most common minimum requirement for both pre-service and in-service training is 40 hours. The average number of training hours needed to meet state requirements for pre-service is 116 hours, excluding Oklahoma, which requires 520 pre-service hours.

Correctional Officer Training Requirements

Survey results conducted by the corrections *Compendium* (1990) indicate that virtually every state requires at least a minimum of 120 hours of pre-service training for correctional officers. Many states significantly exceed this requirement. For example, Connecticut requires 13 weeks and Florida 451 hours. More than 50 percent of the states reported a minimum of 40 hours of in-service training required annually of employees. Some states required more, others less, and some did not specify.

In June 1984, the National Institute of Corrections Information Center completed an earlier study of state training requirements for correctional officers. Responses were received from 46 of the 50 states. While each state prescribed a formal training program for new correctional officers, specific aspects of the training programs differed greatly. Most states required the minimum 40 hours established by ACA; however, this varied up to 320 hours, as in the State of Florida. Several states required on-the-job training for new officers, while the majority of the states required training to be completed prior to assignment. Most states provided training internally for correctional officers. Only 14 of the reporting states indicated that they contract with private trainers for portions of their training programs.

Only 33 of the reporting states require in-service training for correctional officers, and usually the number of hours required (40) was based on ACA standards. As discussed earlier, the requirements to provide in-service training do not necessarily ensure that the training will be available. A comparison of the NIC and *Compendium* surveys seems to indicate that states are increasingly requiring more preparation for correctional officers at the pre-service level. This does not appear to be the case for in-service.

Correctional training programs have turned increasingly to technology to deliver or augment existing instructional programs. Increased use has been noted in the areas of videotapes, video discs, and computer-assisted instruction. State training departments vary in the degree to which they utilize technology in their training programs for correctional officers. However, an increase in technology utilization has been reported. For the most part, states appear to be following the ACA guidelines with regard to training topics.

Information regarding the actual expenditures on correctional training is lacking because states account for correctional training costs in a variety of ways. This makes it almost impossible to determine actual expenditures for correctional training.

In 1990, the Center for Study of Crime, Delinquency and Corrections (CSCDC) at Southern Illinois University conducted a survey of personnel training in state prison systems. Of the 50 state prison systems surveyed, 32 responded. Of those states reporting, 21 had established independent academies that served corrections exclusively. Eight states describe an academy model that serves multiple state agencies, and the remaining three programs serve single institutions.

The study conducted by CSCDC indicates that an independent academy has the advantage of providing the prison department control over the training and of ensuring that the curriculum is oriented to its own concept of training. The information collected indicates that many of the programs rely on adjunct instructors. Of these, little data were available regarding their certification of competence.

In some systems, the executives and middle managers provide training for certain categories of trainees. Multi-agency academies demonstrate the largest average number of staff members and also the highest average number of full-time instructors. However, the independent academies, dedicated to

prison training, had easier access to personnel from the department of corrections for the purposes of training. The data uniformally indicated that training technicians, those with specific knowledge in curriculum development and evaluation, were in low supply. This shortage could significantly impact the effective design of training programs. This study also indicated that independent academies averaged the greatest number of hours of instruction (188.98) per trainee.

In summary, it appears that many of the training programs surpass the basic ACA preservice required standards and, in fact, are making a significant effort to expand beyond the security aspects of correctional officer work.

Jail Officer Training Requirements

In August 1982, the National Sheriffs' Association reported on *The State of Our Nation's Jails.* This report cited that "jail training is still extremely low priority in local facilities." This report further emphasized that personnel issues have consistently been the number one problem in jail operations and that most state and local governments have defaulted on their responsibility to give training to jail officers on any consistent basis. Since the 1982 report, jail training has been mandated in 27 states with an additional 5 states developing programs that would require training. Early in 1985, the NIC Information Center conducted a telephone survey of mandated training in local jails.

Programs in 26 of the 50 states responded to the survey, excluding systems with state-operated jails. Of these, 14 states indicated that training was mandated by state law. Respondents in six other states reported that training programs were administratively established in either the department of corrections or by another state agency, four training programs were the direct result of state-developed jail standards, and the remainder appeared initiated due to Federal court orders. Of those states responding, required hours for training ranged from 36 in Texas to 320 in Florida. Most states lacking mandatory training requirements tended to provide training on a voluntary basis. As of the date of the survey (1985), some of those states which did not have legislatively mandated training were making efforts to introduce legislation that would require training of all officers.

The majority of states which required training mandated it within the first year of assignment. Of those states that required training of new officers, only half also mandated in-service training. Training appeared to occur at a variety of sites, including state, regional, or local facilities. The topics that were included in jail officer training were primarily those recommended by ACA in its *Standards for Local Adult Detention Facilities.*

Although the surveys reported are several years old, it appears that most training for correctional professionals has been guided significantly by ACA standards. The majority of state and local requirements seem to address, at minimum, the standards cited for particular constituency groups. ACA affiliate organizations, such as the American Association of Correctional Training Personnel, have enhanced training requirements and standards for their membership. This appears to be a prevalent trend among correctional affiliate groups. Of the three correctional groups addressed, prisons, jails, and community corrections, it appears that the requirements are more actively enforced for professionals entering prison assignments, followed by community corrections and, finally, jails. This outcome is probably due to inmate litigation which has questioned the competency of correctional staff in the prison environment. Many agencies do not require specific standards of knowledge or skill for the assignment as a correctional trainer. No doubt this adversely impacts the effectiveness of programs.

Summary

Current trends would tend to indicate that training budgets in corrections are sustaining significant cuts. As competition for limited resources increases, training tends to be viewed as a less essential task. When these resources become more limited, organizations tend to focus more on preservice rather than in-service activities, and individuals with custody responsibilities receive priority. Realistically, it would be difficult to challenge the choice of providing training directed at custody staff; however, an organization does handicap itself in its future potential by this limitation.

Of significant support to state and local agencies are the services provided through the Federal Government, such as the National Academy of Corrections, and professional organizations responsive to correctional practitioners. Some of the primary organizations, such as the American Correctional Association, National Sheriffs' Association, American Probation and Parole Association, American Jail Association, and the American Association of Correctional Personnel, all provide training opportunities within the context of their conferences as well as individual intensive training programs. These efforts help support training initiatives in the corrections field and assist state and local agencies in attaining their professional goals. Without their support, many agencies would not have access to

training. Ultimately, the training of correctional personnel rests on the management principle that staff are critical to the accomplishment of agency goals.

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Subsequent to the writing of this article, the Training Resource Center, Eastern Kentucky University, presented the paper, *Correctional and Juvenile Justice Training Directory of North America: Establishing a Baseline* (Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, March 5-9, 1991, Nashville, Tennessee). The paper discusses the Center's survey of 223 correctional and juvenile justice agencies in the United States and Canada conducted to determine how, where, and by whom training was provided to the professional staff of the various agencies. For further information, readers may wish to write to the Training Resource Center, Eastern Kentucky University, 217 Perkins Building, Richmond, Kentucky 40475-3127, or call 606/622-1497.

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