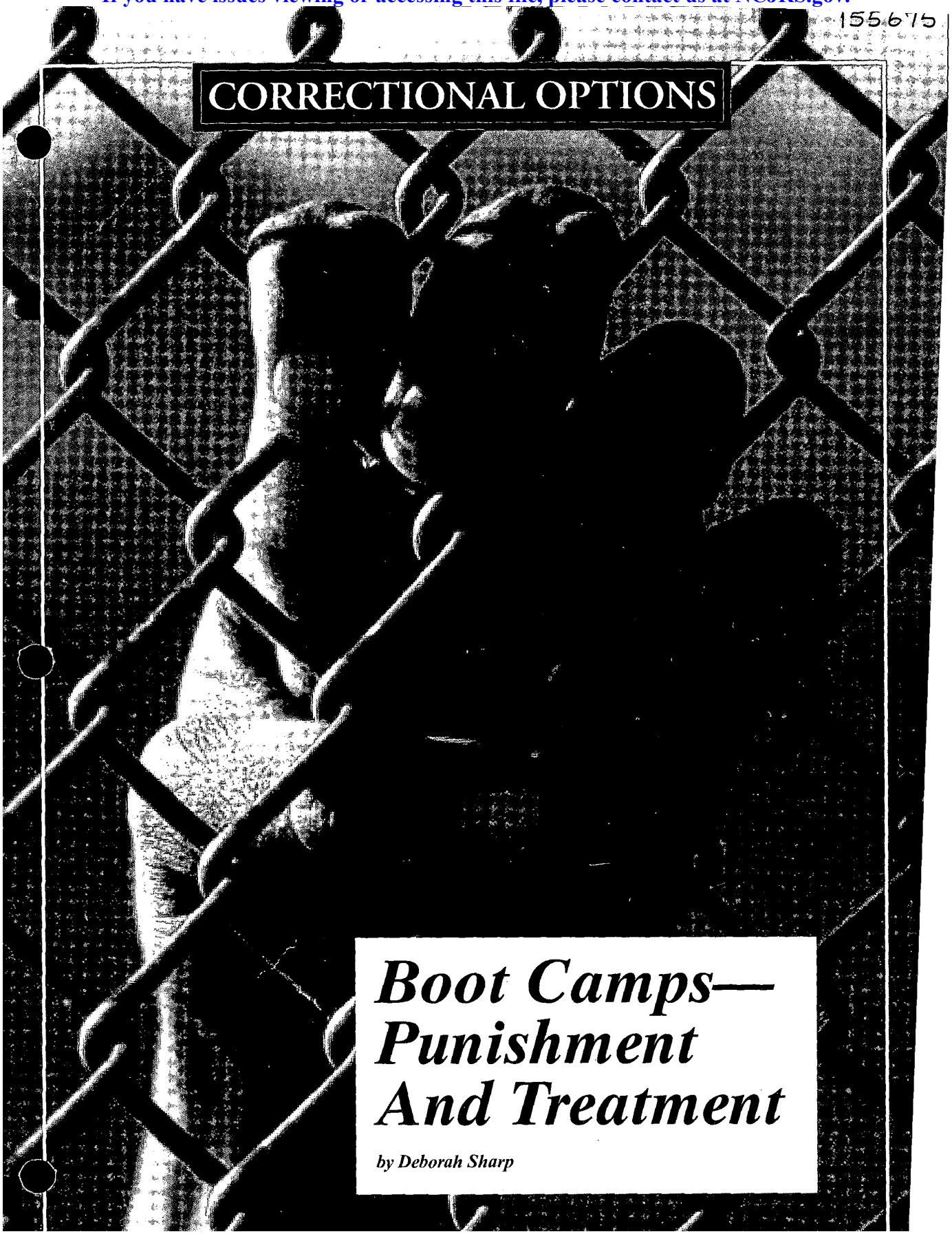
CORRECTIONAL OPTIONS



Boot Camps— Punishment And Treatment

by Deborah Sharp

All is quiet at the Manatee (Fla.) sheriff's boot camp as a van load of teen-aged lawbreakers slowly rolls up the drive to a stop.

Seconds pass. Suddenly, a shrill whistle shatters the silence. A swarm of sheriff's deputies appears from nowhere. Beating their fists on the van, a dozen officers in dark glasses and drill sergeant hats scream orders at the startled youths inside.

The camp's newest recruits are hauled out of the van. Searched and patted down. Subjected to a head-shaving. And it all happens in double-time, with high-decibel deputies barking commands just inches from the young toughs' faces.

"I was scared senseless," recalls a 17-year-old recruit, whose convictions for battery, burglary and car theft brought him a four-month sentence at the Florida camp.

Repeated daily in scores of juvenile and adult camps across the nation, the scared-senseless scene is what comes to mind when most people think of boot camps. But as this correctional trend enters a second decade, awareness is growing over the shortcomings of the strict military model of the first-generation camps. Although Manatee officials say their treatment components are as important as their military trappings, the nation's newest programs are moving beyond the "basic training" model for boot camps.

Photos by Deborah Sharp

Shown here and above are scenes from a typical day at the boot camp in Manatee, Fla., which seeks to instill discipline into its young recruits.

"We basically know the military component by itself doesn't do much," says Tom Castellano, who is heading up a study on the latest trends among camps receiving funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. "Without the treatment and aftercare elements, we shouldn't expect too much."

There is no federal-funding guideline requiring that modern-day boot camps adhere to the military model first fashioned by Georgia and Oklahoma in 1983.

Shaved Heads Not Enough

Despite the public and political popularity of the toughest camps, research shows that shaved heads and push-ups alone haven't a prayer of changing criminal behavior. What is critical: Strong treatment elements inside the camp, coordinated with community-based follow-up once the inmates are out. In fact, recent research indicates that, despite common wisdom holding that nothing works to alter a life of crime, programs can achieve rehabilitation by emphasizing problem-solving skills and anticriminal role-modeling.

"There's a newer generation of boot

camps that do tend to emphasize treatment and aftercare," says Castellano, an associate professor at the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency and Corrections at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. "That's not to say the majority don't continue to have deficiencies in those areas."

From the McNeil Island Work Ethic Camp in Washington State, to Pennsylvania's Abraxas Leadership Development Program, the camps Castellano is looking at are less about calisthenics than about counseling and post-program adjustment.

"We weren't really interested in shaved heads and uniforms," agrees James Walker, program director of correctional options for youth for Washington State's Department of Corrections. His department oversees the innovative Work Ethic Camp. "The thing people like the most about it is that it's a non-military model."

At the McNeil Island camp, the relationship between inmates and their supervisors is closer to the link between employee and employer than between military grunt and drill instructor. Some 125 closely supervised inmates—aged 18 to 28—spend eight-hour days pulling weeds, repairing fences, and cleaning and painting the ferries that travel from island to mainland. After the first month, inmates can then choose from dozens of prison jobs—from working in the recycling yard to cleaning up in the meat-packing center. A vote last year by the council of nearby Steilacoom, Wash., cleared the way for McNeil Island inmate crews to perform labor the town needed, but could not afford.

All that sweat is supplemented by substance: Adult education classes. Anger management. Planning for life after prison. Substance abuse counseling. And victim awareness. Two years old in November, the Work Ethic Camp demands a lot from prisoners: The drop-out rate is 30 percent, even though completing the four-month program can shave a year or more off prison time.

For McNeil Island inmates who break the rules, push-ups aren't a punishment option. Some minor offenses earn extra physical work, but most penalties attempt to make a psychological change. An inmate who uses a racial slur, for example, has to write an essay on the cultural contributions of the ethnic group he demeaned.

Jackie Campbell, superintendent of the camp, explained the focus in *Defense* magazine: "The philosophy . . . is that the behaviors and attitudes that reflect work ethics can be learned and transferred to all areas of an offender's life."

At the Leadership Development Program outside South Mountain, Pa., Executive Director Corby Myers says his staff is more interested in positive change than counting off push-ups: "We don't hire drill sergeants," he says. "Our focus is more on education than work."

More akin to a military school than to basic training, the Leadership Program—for males, 14 to 17 years of age—is divided into three distinct phases. The 15-week program is capped by a final wilderness phase. And that's followed by intense community treatment, lasting at least 60 days.

Although participants are expected to shine their shoes and run obstacle courses,

In 1990, the U.S. Congress authorized the Correctional Options Program in response to the pervasive problem of prison and jail crowding and the high recidivism rate of youthful offenders incarcerated in traditional correctional institutions. With this authorization, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) was charged with providing financial and technical assistance to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to deal with these issues.

BJA has defined correctional options as cost-effective interventions that reduce reliance on traditional modes of incarceration while, at the same time, enhancing the reintegration of offenders into the community. These interventions include community-based alternatives to incarceration, institution-based treatment or training programs, early release for offenders with intensive re-entry services and supervision, or a combination of such programs.

BJA has structured the program in three parts. Part 1 grants encourage the development and implementation of innovative correctional options within existing correctional systems. Part 2 grants support nonprofit organizations providing research, training and technical assistance in coordination with correctional options projects. Part 3 grants support innovative boot camps that further the program's goals.

they also spend seven hours daily in classes. The wilderness part emphasizes teamwork and meeting challenges and tries to instill respect for the natural world.

With 72 beds—slated to expand to 96 this June—the relatively new Abraxas program graduated its first class of 24 students in January. Myers is working with researcher Castellano to develop measures of success. Like other practitioners, he believes a simple toll of graduates' recidivism is a misleading gauge of a program's impact.

"I don't think that's the way to go," says Myers, who would prefer to evaluate improvements in dealing with anger and stress. More important, he says, is "Have we made an impact on this kid, on his ability to cope?"

A fellow at the National Institute of Justice, Castellano is studying how inmates

The New York Model

A veteran of tough state prisons, including New York's Sing Sing, Cal West can easily sum up the difference between other lock-ups and the boot camp he now helps to run.

"It's like a breath of fresh air," says West, deputy superintendent at New York's Lakeview, the nation's largest boot camp. "I'd see people cut—stabbed—over a pair of sneakers. We don't have that violence here."

Thanks to strict regimentation, boot camp backers from Oregon to Florida can tout a low rate of inmate-to-inmate violence. What carries New York beyond that common ground is an equal emphasis on inmates' progress after the boot camp is over. A pioneer and a national model, New York laid the groundwork for the modern generation camps' emphasis on treatment and aftercare.

"We get defensive when people lump us under the boot camp umbrella. We just don't do business that way," says Lakeview Superintendent Ronald Moscicki, a former Vietnam Army ranger once in charge of inmate discipline at Attica. "Some boot camps try to do things the way they did them 25 years ago in the military. Well, the military doesn't even do things that way anymore."

With 1,590 beds in four camps, including the 1,100 at Lakeview, New York's six-month shock incarceration program combines drug treatment, therapy and education components with the more traditional military trappings. Inmates are nonviolent felony offenders, from 16 to 35 years old, serving their first prison term. The camp is followed by six months of aftercare, called "AfterShock." The post-prison portion is run by the parole division and continues the intense supervision begun during incarceration.

"If your program doesn't include an aftercare program, you're only kidding yourself," says Cheryl Clark, who heads up shock incarceration for the New York Department of Correctional Services. "If you don't do follow-up with them, they will continue to screw up."

Adds Doug Millar, who oversees AfterShock as assistant deputy director of New York parole operations: "We mirror in the community as best as we can the components in the program. It's only a transition, not a major change."

Like other programs that have survived over time, the eight-year-old Lakeview camp has been both lauded and lambasted in the popular press. In a story critical of recidivism rates, *The New York Times* last year spotlighted some successes. But the paper also found a Lakeview graduate who still chanted military cadence in the shower—before he set off each day to sell crack.

"All that tells me," says Moscicki, talking about the criticism, "is people want to send inmates to a six-month program and say they're cured for life. Their expectations are not realistic."

In New York's camps, 75 percent of inmates have a history of substance abuse. Considered among the nation's best, the aftercare program is aimed at dealing with that drug history. It features substance abuse treatment, fellowship classes and placement in minimum-wage jobs with leads on better paying employment. Still, the lure of drugs proves too strong for many to ignore. "Crack is a demon," says Millar. "It is demonic in what it does to people."

A strong focus on remedial education helps the New York camps boast the system's highest rate of inmates receiving high school equivalency diplomas, according to Clark. In addition to raising inmates' educational level by one to eight years, the camps see some 75 percent of inmates pass the equivalency test, she says.

"Some boot camps are proud of the fact they don't have any educational components. They say, 'They come here illiterate, and they're going to leave illiterate,'" Clark says. "But if you can't read in this country, you can't get a job."

Boot camp staffers say the post-program encounters they have with graduates can't match anything that occurs in a more traditional setting. Eating lunch once with West at a New York City restaurant, Moscicki recalls a female cook walking up to the table and standing at attention. It was a Lakeview graduate. "She's telling us how great she's doing, then she starts bringing all her co-workers and her boss over to meet us," says the incredulous superintendent. "It absolutely amazed me: Bringing everyone over to meet her prison guards."

A year later, Moscicki returned to the same restaurant. The manager had hired three more Lakeview grads. "If they're all like her, give me all you've got," the boss said to Moscicki, with a nod toward the glowing cook.

are affected by the newest camps' emphasis on treatment and aftercare. He's also looking into the effect of the larger political climate on the establishment and continued survival of boot camps. With his final report due in January 1996, Castellano says he's also helping the jurisdictions design the longitudinal studies that would track program success—or failure—over time.

Like many criminologists, Castellano gives little credence to the currently faddish cry, "Get Tough on Criminals!" Military models still vastly outnumber treatment-oriented programs. Castellano believes the fervor for the harsh discipline and physical rigors of the strictly military camp is mistakenly motivated by punishment and retribution.

"I don't want to come right out and say most of the political rhetoric driving boot camps is foolish," says Castellano, a critic of camps that favor punishment over treatment. "The programs the politicians are lambasting as 'coddling the criminals' have the most promise of success, given available theory and research in criminology."

The new generation shares several features of the earlier, strictly military camps: High impact. A regimented structure. Strict discipline. But the new camps add programs aimed at helping inmates make the transition to life back on the streets: Education. Counseling. Substance abuse programs. Life skills classes. Job training.

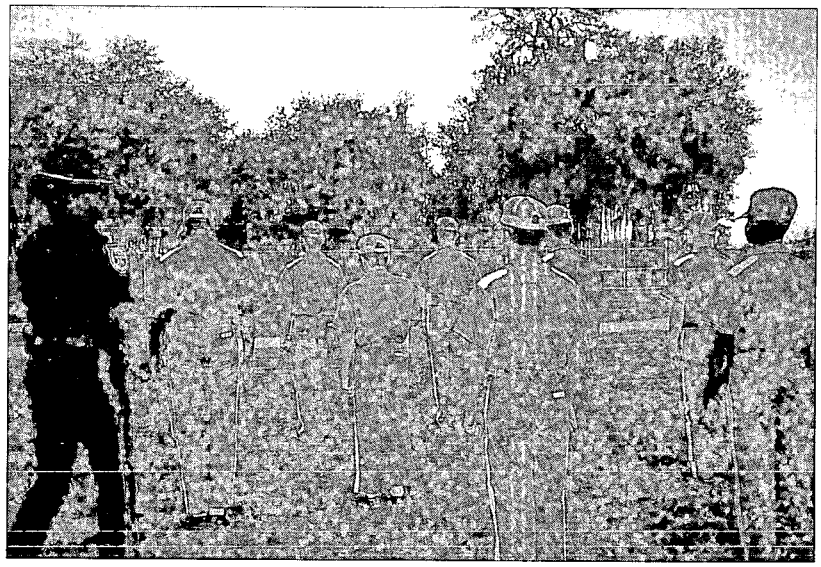
Abt Associates' researchers Dale Parent and Douglas McDonald recently took a hard look at the current state of practice and research in the nation's 60-some adult boot camps. Echoing pioneering studies by University of Maryland criminologist Doris MacKenzie, the two reached less-than-promising conclusions regarding current camps—whose capacity approaches 9,000 offenders.

They also made some suggestions for improving future camps:

- Inmates' attitudes change for the better while they're in boot camps, but there's no persuasive evidence that the changes reduce recidivism rates.
- In locations where inmates did return to prison at lower rates, the camp programs were longer and offered a richer

array of treatments and services.

- Boot camps can reduce the prison population—but only under four specific circumstances: The camps must be large. Drop-outs and post-release failures must be minimized. Inmates must have at least an 80 percent probability of going to prison. And time served in the camp must be substantially less than if the inmate had served a regular prison term.
- In discussing two types of camps—one aimed at treating offenders, the other at reducing prison population—Parent and McDonald offer definitive guidance on how to best mix program elements. In a 16-hour day, for example, the two suggest no more than two or three hours should be given to military components, such as physical training and drill and ceremony. Drug treatment, counseling and therapy aimed at reducing and managing anger or aggression should consume four or five hours. The same amount of time should be given to services such as remedial education, job training or parenting classes.



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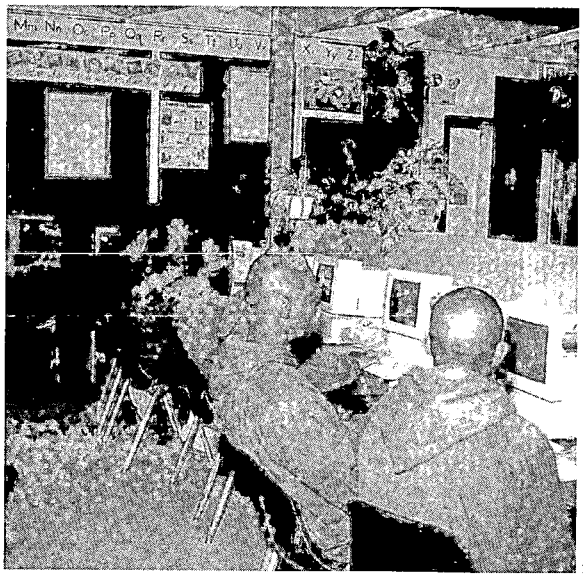

Henry Jones

Researchers Dale Parent and Douglas McDonald stress the importance of balancing military components (above) with drug treatment, counseling and remedial education (below).

Putting into practice some of the suggestions of Parent and McDonald, Illinois officials credit their better-than-average recidivism rate to strong therapeutic elements during boot camp and intense community supervision afterwards. The aftercare program includes electronic monitoring for three to six months and two agents for every 38 parolees—half the usual case load.

"We pay a lot of attention to them once they get out," says Nic Howell, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Corrections. "We try to keep them on the straight and narrow."

Howell says his state spent some time studying the successes and shortcomings of the earliest boot camps before Illinois' first camp opened in 1990. Since then, the state has added two new boot camps, boosting the inmate population from 215 to 630. For inmates aged 17 to 35, the camps' highly structured design is known as the "Impact Incarceration Program." It has so far graduated more than 2,500 inmates.

Illinois graduates' recidivism rate, after three years: 21 percent returned to prison for a new felony offense. The rate for similar inmates who didn't go to boot camp: 34 percent.

The program has saved taxpayers $7.9 million, according to Illinois officials. The savings come mostly from shorter prison stays, Howell says.

10 Tips on Building the Best Camp

As boot camps multiply like mad across the criminal justice map, critics fear some jurisdictions are jumping on the bandwagon with no idea where the road is headed. Carol Shapiro, a consultant who formerly oversaw New York City's two boot camps and other alternative programs as an assistant commissioner in the city's Department of Corrections, says a clear mission is crucial: "It's very important to know why you're doing the programming you're doing. A lot of things can happen under the guise of a boot camp."

Well before building a camp, officials should have firm goals. Is the camp designed to save money? To provide more structure and safety for staff and inmates? To have an impact on future criminal behavior? To help in a lawful transition to community life? To punish?

Shapiro developed for the Bureau of Justice Assistance an outline on designing programs—sort of a blueprint to the best possible boot camp. From the outline and conversation with Shapiro, here is a "Top 10" list of boot camp basics:

1. Be specific in your mission statement. Avoid trying to do a bit of everything.

2. Build in evaluations to measure how well goals are met.

3. Target participants to complement the mission: First time or repeat offenders? Juveniles or adults? Men or women? Drug abusers or not? On what basis are participants chosen? Type or severity of offense? Risk of re-offense?

4. Determine key elements. The goals are familiar, but the methods to meet them are myriad:

- Education: From high school equivalency classes to job skills training. Use on-site classrooms, computers and community resources.
- Substance abuse: Use group or individual counseling. Link to support in the community after release.
- Personal growth and accepting responsibility: Measures include everything from confrontational therapy to talks by victims. Psychological role-playing could be as valuable as physical drill and ceremony.

5. Hold a graduation ceremony. For many inmates and their families it's an important—and unfamiliar—testament to completion.

6. Include a post-release, aftercare plan, coordinated with parole staff if appropriate. Take into account family background, prior substance abuse, employment history and housing. Remember that for many females and juveniles, home is not a safe place to return.

7. Divide the program into phases, tying periods to goals:

- orientation, for adjusting to the regimen and rules;
- team building, for bonding to the group;
- individual development; and
- planning for release.

8. Make staffing policies specific: How will necessary intensive training be given? If it's off-site, is overtime approved? Will abusive staff be fired? Will assignment to a boot camp be mandatory or voluntary? To curb burn-out, will staff rotate to more traditional, less emotionally taxing settings?

9. In planning and operation, involve business and community leaders—not just elected officials—to transcend political tides.

10. Don't just make inmates work; make work meaningful.

Shapiro's New York City charges helped homeless shelters and planted flowers for World AIDS Day. "I don't really believe a boot camp is a boot camp is a boot camp. I don't believe you have to tear people down to rebuild them," says Shapiro. "Some of the programs are designed to be as punitive as they can. All that makes is a good TV image, speaking to the public's sense that, 'This is good.'"

National critics of boot camps say that cost-reduction claims must be examined carefully, because of the effect of widening the net. That means putting more inmates into the correctional system than if the camps had never been opened. The phenomenon occurs when judges send to boot camps inmates who might otherwise have received probation.

But Howell says Illinois' boot camp participants would be bound for prison, not candidates for probation. And the bed that a traditionally incarcerated prisoner would use for a year, he says, is home to three different inmates moving through the four-month boot camp. "We're getting three times the bang for our buck," says Howell.

Media Backlash

At first hailed by the popular media as the answer to the nation's crime problem, boot camps that have been around for any time have suffered lately the backlash that follows an initial splash of positive press. Among the negative media coverage, newspapers in Boston, New York, Atlanta and Florida have run stories critical of the military format or re-arrest rates at camps in their states. Boot camp staffers—previously basking in a friendly media spotlight—find themselves defending the programs to a sometimes hostile press.

"Part of the problem in this country is everybody keeps thinking there's a quick-fix solution. That's like going to a hospital and getting treated one time for a life-threatening disease and expecting to be cured," says Cheryl Clark, director of shock incarceration for the New York Department of Correctional Services. "Anybody can benefit from boot camps. The problem is, we can't guarantee they'll go out and commit no other crimes. And that's what makes people hesitant."

Sheriff's deputy Gail Gethman, director of the Manatee County camp, says her staff try to focus less on negative news stories than on reports from young graduates who say their lives have been changed by the discipline and support of camp instructors.

"The way the staff look at it," says Gethman, "we're doing the best job we can. If I can get even one kid to hesitate before he does something wrong, that's a success."

With backers and detractors lining up over old- and new-generation boot camps, other controversies can get lost in the mix. But there are plenty of other boot camp issues raising ire. Among them: Mixing female and male inmates, or programs developed for men and unmodified for women's needs. Critics argue the motives and make-up of men and women are too different for "one-program-fits-all"—whether that program is military or treatment oriented.

"The issues relating to women cannot be dealt with in a setting with men," says Carol Shapiro, a former assistant commissioner with the New York City corrections department. "Asking a woman to shorn her hair is one of the most humiliating things you can do. It's simply not the same for a man."

Shapiro says the strictly military programs, especially, are no place for a woman who has a history of abuse by men. The last thing such an inmate needs is a male drill instructor screaming in her face, says Shapiro, who is squarely on the side of those who oppose mixed-population boot camps.

Finding ways to deal with alternative punishments presents a special challenge to those seeking new correctional options. From the first military boot camps, through the modern evolution to treatment and aftercare, the going has been slow. But the need to try remains strong.

Deborah Sharp is a correspondent for USA Today.

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