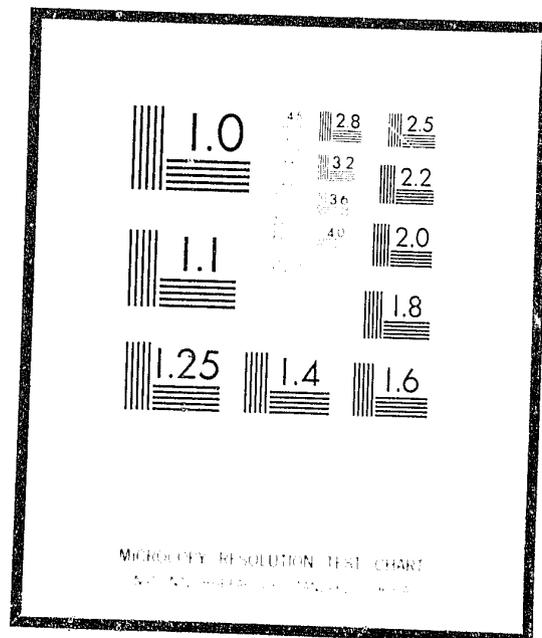


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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531

## THE CHALLENGE: EDUCATION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENDERS

SUMMARY OF  
THE CORRECTIONS EDUCATION PROJECT  
EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

### THE PROJECT

In 1974 the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration designated the Education Commission of the States (ECS) as the grantee for a three-year project to make recommendations for improving educational services for adult and juvenile criminal offenders.

ECS is a private, nonprofit educational organization headquartered in Denver, representing educational and political leaders in 45 states and 2 territories. The Corrections Education Project is 1 of 16 projects administered by the commission to address the most critical needs in American education.

The goals of the Corrections Education Project are:

1. To make recommendations to the states for improvement of educational services delivered to adult and juvenile offenders.
2. To promote cooperation among state, federal and local groups to bring about recommended improvements.
3. To develop plans for implementing alternative educational approaches that take into account differing needs and resources of the states.

Date filmed

7/12/76

## THE PROBLEMS

### Severe Educational Needs of Offenders

- Learning disabilities and educational disadvantage are widespread among juvenile and adult offenders.
- Up to 90 percent of the adult clients in U.S. penal institutions do not have a high school degree at the date of first incarceration. In a majority of adult prisons, more than 50 percent of all inmates have less than an eighth-grade education.<sup>1</sup>
- The Department of Justice, in 1972, reported that among 141,000 adult and juvenile inmates (51,000 awaiting trial, 60,000 facing sentence and 30,000 awaiting some other form of adjudication), two-fifths (40%) were high school dropouts and one-fourth (25%) had only an eighth-grade education.<sup>2</sup>
- While many adults and juveniles are released on parole or given probation to attend schools, they usually must go back to the same kind of environments that helped push them into the criminal justice system in the first place. There exists a lack of "alternative schools" for both groups, and a lack of necessary supportive services at public schools, including colleges and universities.
- Thirty-four percent of the juvenile corrections population is functionally illiterate. Among the adult population, 20 percent are functionally illiterate.<sup>3</sup>

The severe educational problems that exist among offender populations prior to their entrance into the criminal justice system are not adequately addressed by corrections systems.



There are three broad classifications into which clients of corrections systems fall. They are: probation, parole and institutionalization.

### Traditional Community Corrections

Most offenders, both juvenile and adult, are on probation in their communities. Both groups tend to be alienated because of previous experiences, from community school systems. Offenders on probation are often stigmatized by their contact with the criminal justice system. Hardships are imposed in finding employment and returning to school. This is particularly true for those released from institutions or who are paroled. Public schools, including colleges, have failed to provide resources to meet special needs of students who later have contact with the criminal justice system; community and institutional educational systems generally fail to meet these needs after adjudication. Experience with corrections make poor job skills, illiteracy and learning disabilities even more handicapping than before.

### Institutions

In the case of adults, prisons were not originally designed for the delivery of education or other rehabilitative services. These institutions are often located in remote, sparsely populated areas, making the delivery of existing community services extremely difficult. Regardless of location, the physical design and general operations of penal institutions are not oriented toward the delivery of human services.

Education for juvenile offenders is mandatory in all the states and the quality of education is somewhat better than for adults. But, institutions appear to have done more harm than good. Prior social histories and the experience of being institutionalized have tended to act against reducing the chances of a continued life of crime.

## A MAJOR PROBLEM

In the face of chronic and severe educational problems—poor job skills, learning difficulties and illiteracy—only 20 percent of corrections expenditures are for rehabilitative programs including education. Eighty percent goes for custody and administration.<sup>4</sup>

## THE CORRECTIONS PICTURE

Because corrections has been isolated as a separate governmental function, correctional education is denied the best of community and public education resources. Most teachers of adult and juvenile offenders are employees of corrections. Corrections education has been called the "stepchild of corrections."

The cost of corrections, as one part of the criminal justice system, is moderately estimated to be in excess of \$2.5 billion each year, and costs are rising rapidly.<sup>5</sup>

The range of costs to the public to incarcerate one adult prisoner for one year is between \$6,000 and \$12,000. The cost to incarcerate a youthful offender is about twice as much.

Approximately 55,000 families in America are on welfare now because the husband, father or mother is in prison.<sup>6</sup> Thousands of other families are receiving welfare because the head of their household is an ex-offender unable to find or is refused a job. The cost of this comes to hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Jobs are a crucial factor in getting out and staying out of prison. A recent national study indicates that when unemployment of males over 20 goes up, the population of the federal prison system goes up correspondingly, allowing for a 15-month time lag due to judicial processing.<sup>7</sup>

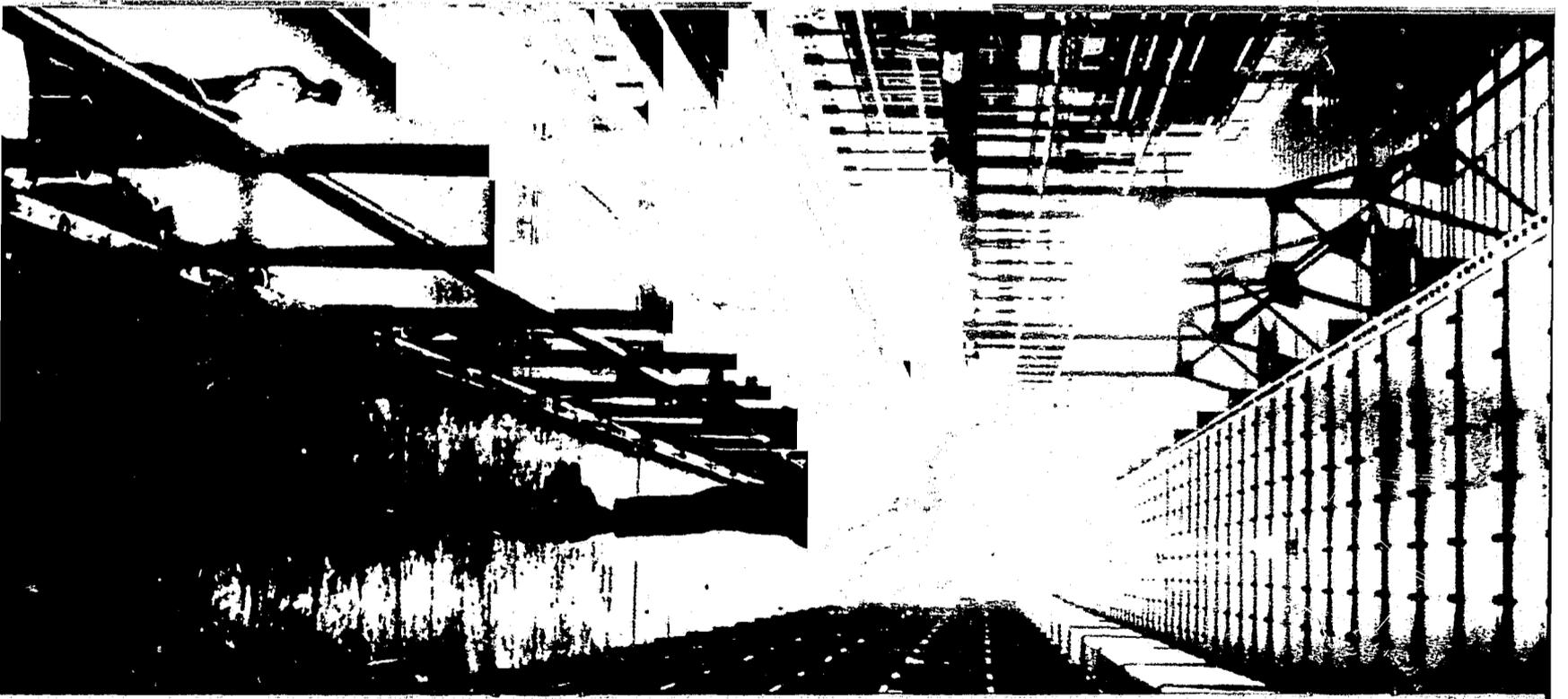
Most adjudicated offenders are in communities. Almost all (95%) institutionalized offenders return to their communities.

### THE POPULATION OF CORRECTIONS (NON-FEDERAL)

JUVENILES(h)	NO OF FACILITIES	(Per Day)		ESTIMATED AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY
		TOTAL PERSONS	MALE	
DETENTION CENTERS	303	11,748	7,912	3,836
SHELTERS	18	363	237	126
RECEPTION OR DIAGNOSTIC CENTERS	17	2,486	1,988	498
TRAINING SCHOOLS	192	35,931	27,839	8,092
RANCHES, FORESTRY, CAMPS AND FARMS	114	5,666	5,376	290
HALFWAY HOUSES AND GROUP HOMES	78	1,045	788	257
JAILS	(k) 3,921	(a) 500,000 (est. per year)	No	(l) 3 days (est.)
PROBATION		(b) 370,000 (est.)	Figures	(l) 13 months (est.)
PAROLE (AFTER CARE)		(c) 100,000 (est.)	Available	(l) a year or more (est.)

ADULTS	NO OF FACILITIES	TOTAL PERSONS	MALE	FEMALE	ESTIMATED AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY (j)
INSTITUTIONS	(i) 600	(d) 204,349	197,665	6,684	24 months
JAILS	3,921	(e) 140,000	No	Figures	No figures available
PROBATION		(f) 670,000	Available		29 months
PAROLE		(g) 150,000			29 months

- (a) *Under Lock and Key: Juveniles in Jails and Detention*. Rosemary C. Sarri. National Assessment of Juvenile Corrections, the University of Michigan, December 1974. There exist a number of studies that cite different figures, as well as different methods of data collection and analysis that reflect differing figures.
- (b) No recent accurate figures are available. This figure is based on a 1966 projection made by NCCD for The President's Commission, *Task Force Report: Corrections*, 1967, p. 8, according to the National Assessment of Juvenile Corrections, the number of juvenile probationers is probably closer to 500,000.
- (c) Ibid.
- (d) *Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions on December 31, 1971, 1972 and 1973*. U.S. Department of Justice, May 1975.
- (e) Op. cit., *Task Force Report*. This is also confirmed in *Survey of Inmates of Local Jails, Advance Report*, 1972, p. 18, although it is not clear in the latter total how many of the jail population are juveniles.
- (f) Op. cit., *Task Force Report*, p. 18.
- (g) Ibid p. 18. LEAA's Standards and Goals Commission uses the same data.
- (h) The figures used for those juveniles in all temporary care and correctional facilities were taken from *Children in Custody; A Report on the Juvenile Detention and Correctional Facility Census of 1971*. U.S. Department of Justice, 1973.
- (i) "State by State Summary of Inmates and Institutions, Jails, Prisons and Juvenile Facilities in the U.S. with Per Capital Detention Rates." National Moratorium on Prison Construction, Washington, D.C.
- (j) Op. cit., *Task Force Report*.
- (k) *Survey of Inmates of Local Jails, 1972 Advance Report*. New York: Praeger Publishing Co., 1975, p. 1.
- (l) There is little reliable data on average sentences for juveniles in jails, on probation or parole. These figures are taken from data in (a), (b) and (h).



### BASIC DIRECTIONS

Wyoming Governor Ed Herschler, chairman of the ECS Corrections Education Advisory Committee, has said:

"If criminal offenders can't at least read and write, or if they don't have marketable job skills, the chances are higher that they will resort to criminal means to cope with society."

Success in education is a primary currency used for entry and mobility in our economic system. Failure in education often leads to vulnerability in the world of work. The combination of failures in both education and work has a direct relationship to criminal activity. Yet, rather than supporting better opportunities for education and work, our corrections system appears to further alienate the individual from access to the tools and skills needed to function successfully in our society. There is a growing amount of evidence that institutions are not an answer to crime control and that except for the most serious offenders, should not be used. There is ample evidence that rehabilitative programs, when provided in traditional custodial settings, simply do not work.

If we expect corrections only to punish, education need not be improved; offenders can be simply isolated from their communities. If we expect corrections to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders, the opportunity is at hand to supply the best of what is known in education to meet critical educational problems in a way that can make a differ-

ence. Through shifting state resources to community programs, the learning disabilities, illiteracy and poor job skills characteristic of criminal offenders can be addressed more effectively.

Crime in America, and all of the attendant costs and problems resulting from crime, should be understood in a larger social, economic and political perspective. Without this broader framework, individual criminal behavior or small facets of the criminal justice system become the public focus.

Remedies for change that come from a microscopic view of society usually generate ineffectual reforms. What is needed is a better understanding of all facets of our criminal justice system and factors related to the problem of crime in our society. A series of alternative strategies for action can then be developed.

**THE CURRENT SITUATION** The public does not support the present corrections system. Offenders, many with severe educational handicaps, receive minimal services offered by community educational resources. The purposes and services of institutions remain much the same as they have for 200 years. Adults serve an average of 24 months in prison. For these people, society will change considerably during this period. They will regress.

For both adults and juveniles, we can continue to place 80 percent of society's corrections resources into custody and administration. From what we know we can expect spiraling costs and little reduction

in recidivism, with little involvement of public and private community service agencies, including educational systems.

**AN ALTERNATIVE** The public might support elected officials who cast their votes for improved corrections system. With concurrent changes to streamline court procedures and provide equitable sentencing, this system would distinguish dangerous offenders from nondangerous offenders. Programs would be developed to incarcerate serious, multiple offenders in secure correction facilities. For the majority of offenders, community resources would be used more extensively and with special focus on critical learning and living skills. The public would be protected from dangerous people and at the same time would assist others in need of a broad range of human services, especially educational services.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

What can be done? What are the most promising directions? What works in correctional education and how can the best programs be implemented at the state and local levels? These are the questions governors, legislators, corrections officials, educators and the public are asking.

It is clear that while there is widespread concern about the failure of corrections to rehabilitate and a high level of frustration about what should be done, there are other pressing problems in the country. During

times of inflation and scarce public monies, some critical human services slip lower and lower in priority. Programs within corrections have usually been of very low priority in the human services field. The development of prevention strategies and programs is all but nonexistent.

Nevertheless, some recent history of corrections and corrections education demonstrates the urgent need for action. Five major commissions in the last 10 years have studied crime and the criminal justice system and have made very specific recommendations for improvement. With evidence that many past recommendations have not been implemented, the following guidelines may be most important to the ECS project and to the people responsible for change in the states:

- The most difficult questions should be systematically analyzed: differing resources in the states, administrative alignments between state agencies, local community priorities and implementation questions.
- Project recommendations should be linked both in how they are derived and how they can be implemented, to existing state political and educational capabilities.
- Work toward solutions should respect as much the findings of research as the realities of politics and administration in the states.

Opportunities do exist for improving educational services in corrections. State officials can be provided with information on the most effective programs. Legislation

can be written to initiate new programs. Expenditures can be re-evaluated based on the shifting assumptions and benefits of corrections. The public and its elected representatives need more and better information, about both the costs and benefits of alternatives for delivery of correctional education services.

## THE INQUIRY

For the first time in the history of corrections, a 30-person advisory committee chaired by a governor will develop recommendations to the states to improve education of adult and juvenile offenders. The committee is comprised of educators, corrections officials, ex-offenders, legislators, representatives of business, Congress, religion, the judiciary, police and labor groups throughout the country. These people will have the specific charge of working with the states to develop comprehensive recommendations and strategies for implementation at the end of 1977.

With ECS project staff, the committee will develop interim reports during 1976 and 1977, aimed particularly at meeting the decision-making needs of legislators, governors, educators and corrections officials. Regional conferences will be conducted to involve state leaders in the process of distilling feasible strategies for improvement of state correctional education. Staff and advisory committee members also will provide limited technical assistance to the states on legislative, program and funding alternatives.

## THE ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The ECS project, through the advisory committee, will develop recommendations in the following areas:

- The nature and significance of offender educational problems
- The relation of educational success to various correctional alternatives and to recidivism
- Alternatives for placement of offenders into appropriate correctional learning environments
- Alternatives for curricula in remedial, high school, vocational and college-level programs
- Standards for teachers, counselors and other staff
- Guidelines for technology, resource materials and other instructional aids
- Evaluation and planning standards
- The role of state and local governments in assuming responsibility for educational effectiveness
- The role of private and public school systems in correctional education
- The responsibility of the federal government and national organizations in implementing improvements
- Model legislation, state administrative and funding changes to implement project recommendations.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact: Project Director  
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From the first year's work with the states, the following papers are available at minimal charge for printing and mailing:

Education for Offenders: A Forgotten Human Service  
Preliminary Report of Findings: Educational Programs for Offenders in the Fifty States  
The Legal Issues in Education of Offenders  
A Summary of the Work of National Commissions and Research Projects About Education for Offenders

Further publications to aid legislators, governors, educators and corrections officials in developing strategies for more effective correctional education services will be available in 1976.

### SOURCES

- 1 *School Behind Bars*, Syracuse University Research Corporation (Syracuse, N.Y.: SURC, 1973), p. v.
- 2 *Survey of Inmates of Local Jails, 1972 Advance Report* (New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishing Co., 1975), p. 1.
- 3 *Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs—Final Report 1974-75*, LEAA grant #73-ED-99-0012.
- 4 *Reform of Our Correctional Systems*, The Select Committee on Crime (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 17.
- 5 *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1973*, U.S. Department of Justice, Government Printing Office, p. 76.
- 6 The U.S. Jaycees.
- 7 *U.S. Bureau of Prisons Report—Correlation of Unemployment and Federal Prison Population*, March, 1975.

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