

A Policy Decision Paper
On
Improving The Turnover Rate
At The
Cook County
Dept. of Corrections

NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

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Abstract

The purpose of this Option Three Project was to find the best method to reduce the high turnover rate among Correctional Officers with two years of service or less at the Cook County Department of Corrections.

The Department of Corrections had been experiencing a problem with high turnover for the past five years. During this time, no effort was made to attempt to alter or reduce the rate of attrition.

For this project, two objectives were chosen, The first was to reduce the turnover among Correctional Officers to an annual rate of ten percent within two years. The second was to achieve a five percent increase in morale and job satisfaction within one year among Correctional Officers.

To achieve the objectives, two alternative courses of action were proposed. An increase in salaries for the Correctional Officers was recommended. The implementation of a change in management principles (MBO), was also recommended.

To test the proposed intervention some hypotheses were developed. Two hypotheses pertained to the need for change. The remaining hypotheses related to the selection of alternative courses of action.

To test the hypotheses, a Data Collection Plan was implemented. A questionnaire was sent to Correctional

Officers that left the department. For most of the hypotheses, a corresponding question was on the questionnaire. While the data collected for the most part supported the hypotheses, it did not fully support the recommended interventions.

This project recommends the implementation of a change in management principles. A change in hiring practices is also suggested. A similar survey should be administered to currently employed Correctional Officers to further realize the needs of the department. Finally, the problem of attrition cannot be systematically resolved until it is measured on an ongoing basis, to permit identification of problem areas, and to assess progress in resolving problems.

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I. Description of the Problem

Section 1: Purpose of Project.

The purpose of the project was to find the best method to reduce the high turnover rate among correctional officers with two years of service or less at the Cook County Department of Correction.

Section 2: The Setting of the Problem.

The organization chosen for this Policy Decision Paper was the Cook County Department of Corrections. The Department is located at 2700 S. California Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. This Department is now under the control of the Cook County Sheriff, James O'Grady.

The Department of Corrections receives its funding from the Cook County Board of Commissioners, which is the taxing authority for all of Cook County. The Department has jurisdiction over all of Cook County to maintain custody of persons awaiting trial for criminal offenses. Currently, the Department employs approximately fourteen hundred personnel. Of these, twelve hundred are Deputy Sheriffs.

All Department personnel are represented by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters as their sole bargaining agent. The Teamster Union represents the officers before the County Board on salary disputes.

As has been stated, the purpose of this organization is to provide custody and control to those awaiting trial in

Cook County. The Department also houses those convicted of misdemeanors which carry a sentence of less than a year. In addition, the Department provides transportation to the outlying courts for those who fail to make bond. There is general agreement among those employed by the Department of Corrections as to the goals of the Department. In addition, officers feel a strong sense of commitment to furthering those goals.

Despite this sense of commitment, most officers view their jobs with the Department as a stepping stone toward higher law enforcement positions. This results in a high annual turnover rate, approximately twenty-five percent.

The Department is a functional organization. It is divided into two main areas. The first, Security, is responsible for the physical control of the institution. This section also includes such areas as transportation, record keeping, and custody.

The second area is Administration. This department deals with the services provided within the institution. Such services include Health Care, Psychiatric Services, and Human Services.

The major problem which has developed within this structure can be described as a fragmentation of authority. As the department is quite large, supervisors have a tendency to avoid decision making as they feel it is not their responsibility. The result is that decisions are very

rarely made, and when they are made, delays hamper any positive effects.

The Department's officers work relationship can best be described as a tolerant one. The officers do not need to work together to complete their required purpose. What has developed is a situation in which small groups or cliques of various officers have formed. Many of these groups also include supervisory personnel.

The Department's administration has a policy of avoiding or suppressing all types of disagreements and confrontations. To achieve this goal they place some of those in favor of their line of thinking in supervisory positions and reward others with favorable treatment.

Section 3: History and Background of Problem.

The Department of Corrections has experienced a problem with turnover for the past five years. During this time span, no effort had been made to attempt to alter or reduce the rate of attrition.

One of the situations that has lead to problems is the reward system that has built-in flaws.

Also, by using a series of step raises from year one to five of employment, an officer reaches the maximum salary level after five years. This can mean that an officer with twenty years of experience may receive the same salary as an officer with only five years. This leaves the officers with more than five years of service with low self-esteem.

Another complaint among the officers is the feeling of unfairness in regard to promotions. The Department operates largely on the patronage system. Promotions are based on "who you know" rather than on what you know or what you have learned on the job.

Due to these two conditions, what has occurred is that the least productive officers have remained with the Department, while the "elite" officers have found better paying jobs in the private sector or working for municipal law enforcement agencies.

The Department of Corrections uses a general orders manual as a helpful mechanism to coordinate policy. This book provides rules and regulations which assist in the overall operation of the Department. All policies, procedures, and methods used in everyday operations are provided for. What has occurred is that the general orders manual regulations are being interpreted differently by each department. Where one department may allow certain actions or behaviors, the same actions are considered a violation in other departments.

The Department of Corrections has an ongoing crisis in leadership. Due to the patronage system, most supervisors are "anointed" rather than appointed by ability.

Because of this, the majority of supervisors never gain acceptance of their right to give orders. Thus they lack credibility, and this lack of credibility is instilled in each new supervisor.

The Department is held accountable for its actions by the Sheriff of Cook County. In return, the Sheriff must answer to the Cook County Board. The Department of Corrections is also accountable to the Federal Courts for jail overcrowding.

The County Board sets the budget for the Department of Corrections, including salary negotiations (where the Correctional Officers are represented by the Teamsters Union).

The Department of Corrections is judged by standards set by the Commission on Accreditation for Correction of the American Correctional Association. Accreditation for the Department is reviewed annually.

The Department also has an Internal Investigations Unit which handles complaints from the general public. These complaints can take the form of either calls or letters to the Department. All complaints are investigated and action is taken when deemed necessary.

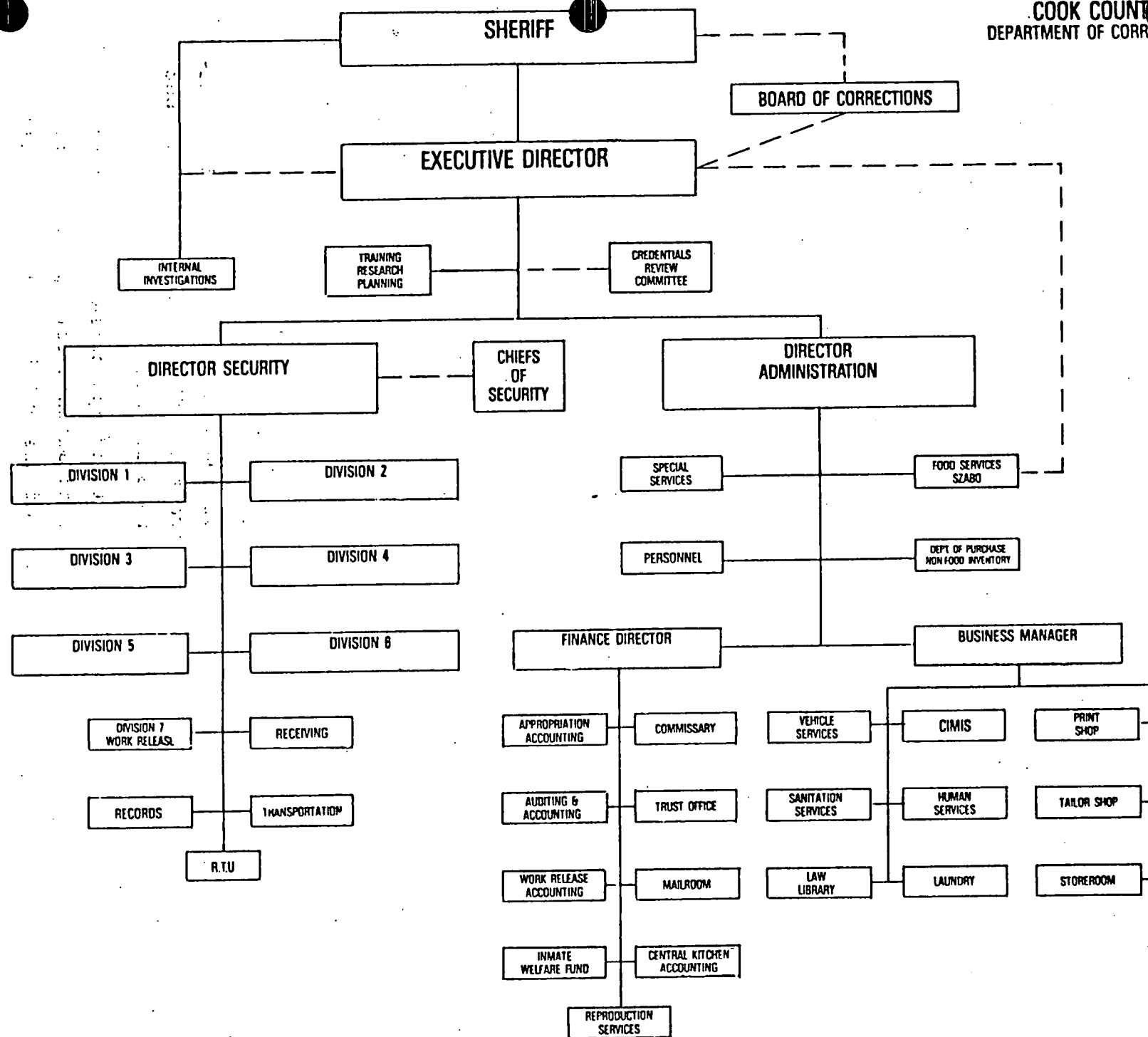
Section 4: Scope of the Problem.

The problem of high turnover is limited to those correctional officers with two years of service or less at the Department of Corrections.

Section 5: Importance/Significance of Project

This project is important because of the nature of the problem. High turnover can lead to other problems like low morale. Costs involved in training and recruiting new officers can place a burden on the Department's budget. All of these factors make it necessary to solve the problem of high turnover.

COOK COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



II. Literature Review

One of the major problems facing correctional facilities today is the increasingly high turnover rate. While much of the focus of this report is specifically on the Cook County Department of Corrections, a review of the available literature, including government reports and recommendations, shows high turnover to be a national problem.

The available reports suggest that these are a number of factors behind the current high turnover rate for employees in correctional facilities who have been employed less than two years. Some of the major factors are easily recognizable, including the promise of higher pay (usually in the private sector). Other problems range from a desire to work closer to home to a lack of upward mobility and difficulty in achieving promotions. A surprisingly important factor seems to be communications with superiors. In some studies, this lack of communication or understanding on the part of supervisors ranks as perhaps the most important factor in the turnover rate, yet this may be the most easily resolved problem of them all.

Joseph Scott and Simon Dinitz in their report, Entry Level Characteristics and Opportunities of State Correctional Security Personnel (1977), conducted a national survey of the characteristics of entry level security positions in state institutions, examining a range of

subjects from starting salaries and benefits to personnel attrition over the first year of employment. They identify the "average" correctional officer as:

The average security officer has a high school education. The typical entry level security officer is over age 30.

Thus, on the whole, correctional officers tend to be older and less educated than comparable groups of people at entry level in business. In many cases, they also found that security officers faced a variety of inequities, including low pay. Monthly salaries could range (as of May 1974) from \$485 to \$938 a month with the highest entry level pay in eastern cities, while the Southeastern states on the whole provided the lowest pay scales, contributing to high turnover rates. One factor in turnover was the availability of higher pay in the private security forces, as compared to the state correctional facilities, but this only applied in certain states.

Kane (1985) reports on the influence management techniques can have on employee turnover and staff morale in the Federal Prison System. Kane's noncopyrighted report, Management Strategies, Morale and Staff Turnover, uses a path analytic statistical procedure to assess the strength of relationships between management activities and morale as well as between morale and commitment.

This study is actually a follow-up to a previous study:

In the previous study, personal observation, interviews and survey findings all revealed that communication is

a problem affecting all levels. An apparent reason for the breakdown is the poor visibility and accessibility of managers. The present analysis supports the findings of the study team and adds weight to their conclusions. To enhance the organizational factors of trust and cohesion ultimately weakens employees' consideration of quitting and their search for alternate employment.

The report, which suggests strongly that managers communicate more openly with employees, goes on to suggest "that managers meet and discuss specific ways to reduce employee concerns." Kane's primary thesis is that through the development of improved management techniques and through a more open and honest relationship with employees, the attrition rate can be reduced.

Is there a background for Kane's belief that management problems are an important factor in turnover rates? Some state-sponsored studies of correctional facility attrition rates suggest that employees' dissatisfaction with superiors does contribute to the current turnover rate.

Benton (1982) suggests that there are a number of factors involved, one of which is managerial:

The high attrition rate among correctional employees appears related to the general areas of benefits and perceived benefits, supervisory style, management practices, and job content.

The study reports that in 1979, state correctional institutions nationwide employed 121,919 people and during that year, more than 29,000 left their jobs. "This results in excessive costs for training and loss in quality production due to the large number of inexperienced employees." Benton's report, Correctional Employee

Attrition, associates low entry level salaries with the high attrition rate. In addition, input from officers is desired. The report shows that:

Officer participation in decisions on post assignments, shift assignments, vacation schedules and overtime assignments contributed to lower attrition rates.

Benton's study makes a number of recommendations:

Institutions with high employee attrition should assess the causes of attrition and monitor progress in reducing it. They should...make salaries competitive with comparable occupational groups in the state...make starting salaries for supervisory personnel at least 124% above the starting salaries for correctional officers...permit employees to select the posts and shifts they will work...increase employee involvement in matters that affect their work...and develop alternate work methods to reduce the negative effects of job tasks associated with attrition.

One study, Patterns of Career Mobility and Retention Among Correction Officers of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, (1979), has implications for Cook County. The study by L.K. Holt, followed 1,168 graduates of the Massachusetts Training Academy for Corrections Officers to determine their retention rates. Within 6 months after graduation, 1 in 10 officers had left the Department of Corrections and within 1 year after graduation 1 in 5 had left. Retention was found to be especially difficult in regard to female personnel. The study found that while all graduates had met or exceeded their job requirements, very few received promotions. Attrition, according to this study, was caused in large part by the attractiveness of other jobs and by the salary policies developed by the correctional facilities.

Jones (1981) reports on the Virginia Department of Corrections using exit questionnaires taken from employees who ended their employment with the department between July 1, 1980 and June 30, 1981. The factors most commonly cited for leaving employment were better job opportunities, salary, and lack of advancement opportunity. In addition:

28% of the terminating employees stated that they had experienced unfair treatment, harassment, favoritism of other employees, or unfair promotional practices while in the department.

Although overall responses were favorable to the Department of Corrections, the favorable responses had decreased from a study made the previous year. Areas where the report found less favorable responses included the level of communication and quality of supervision.

In the previous year's report (Phase Seven), Jones had found that many terminating employees rated their supervisors high in "fair and equal treatment to employees," while they received the lowest scores in the area of "resolving grievances and problems." In both studies job opportunities, salaries and lack of advancement were given as the reasons for leaving by the major of terminating employees.

Lunden (1965) covered the problems surrounding tenure and turnover of corrections officers in the U.S. and Canada. This study, The Prison Warden and the Custodial Staff, was an early attempt to study the problem of turnover. Although written twenty years in the past, it shows how little has actually changed in that time. In fact, many of the results

that Lunden publishes seem surprisingly similar to problems in more recent studies. For example, Lunden found a turnover rate of 25 employees per 100 employed. Reasons for the high employee turnover rate cited include:

Unpleasant working conditions. Inadequate housing facilities. Undesirable prison locations. Inmate disorders. And Political changes.

Similar problems with managerial processes were reported. Lunden's report ended with a list of recommendations for improvements which closely resembled those given in Benton's report. This suggests that changes in the correctional system throughout the U.S. are slow in coming and suggests further that many of the negative conditions contributing to the high turnover rate may be inherent in the institution itself.

III. Option Selection

The option selection for this project is influenced by the nature of the problem and the system in which it is imbedded. The focus of this report is a study on improving the high turnover rate among employees with two years of service or less at the Cook County Department of Corrections. A measurement of two years would be required after a policy implementation. Such a time frame eliminates an applied research option, and thus the policy decision option is the only practical approach considering the time scale.

Another consideration in rejecting the applied research approach is the nature of the Department's funding. The fiscal year begins on December 1st and a budget must be approved by the last day of February. This makes it impossible to fund any policy changes in the fiscal year.

The policy decision option fits the nature of the Cook County Department of Corrections. Policy changes are initiated through recommendations made by the Board of Corrections. Recommendations that are approved by the Board are forwarded to the particular department for development or modification.

The Cook County Department of Corrections as a rule does not participate in grant programs, thus eliminating a grant proposal option. In addition, the Department of Corrections can petition the Cook County Board for

additional funding to implement any programs or policy changes.

The following statements summarize the reasons for selection of the policy decision option.

Action Research - Option One

The time frame required to measure effectiveness, two years or more, precludes the choice of option one.

Grant Proposal - Option Two

The Cook County Board is responsible for funding the Department of Corrections. The Department of Corrections generally does not participate in grant programs.

Policy Decision - Option Three

The policy decision option was selected as it best fits the system at the Cook County Department of Corrections. Policy changes are initiated as recommendations through the Department's Corrections Board.

Although the policy decision option is selected for this report, the applied/action research option would be preferred, but for the time restraints required.

IV. Description of the Alternatives

The purpose of this report is to decrease the high turnover rate among Correctional Officers with less than two years of service at the Cook County Department of Corrections.

The Department of Corrections presently loses approximately three hundred correctional officers a year through attrition. This has been an on-going problem for the past five years.

Section 1: Statement of Objectives

Objective 1: Reduce the turnover among Correctional Officers at the Cook County Department of Corrections to an annual rate of ten percent within two years.

Objective 2: Achieve a five percent increase in morale and job satisfaction within one year among officers at the Cook County Department of Corrections.

Section 2: Description of the Alternatives

Alternative 1: Retain the Status Quo. Do nothing about the high turnover rate. This alternative accepts the high turnover rate and contributing factors to it.

The Department of Corrections has been losing over two hundred officers a year through attrition and trains that many replacements. This has been an ongoing process and is accepted by all parties involved.

Alternative 2: Increase Salaries for Correctional Officers. Higher starting salaries for Correctional Officers were associated with lower levels of attrition. For example, Correctional Centers paying less than \$10,000 in 1979 has total attrition rates for Correctional Officers of 31% while centers paying more than \$10,000 had average rates of 21%.

Higher salaries relative to overall state incomes per capita were also associated with lower levels of attrition. When a starting salary was less than 1.5 times the state per capita income attrition for Correctional Officers averaged 29%, as compared to 18% when starting salaries exceeded the 1.5 times level.

Previous studies, such as the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, have recommended salary adequacy, and the American Correctional Association Commission on Accreditation has recommended comparability, based upon periodic surveys.

An increase in salary for Correctional Officers would require the approval of the Cook County Board. The County Board is responsible for setting the Department of Corrections budget and approving any salary increase.

Alternative 3: Implementation of a change in management principles, which would actively seek to exchange information with employees. (MBO).

A study team of administrators in the New York Department of Corrections produced a lengthy document that discussed many items about employee morale and subordinates' impressions of their superiors' management techniques. The group was concerned about employee morale, sick leave abuse and other problems associated with employee turnover.

A general theme in the study team report was that better management improves pride and morale, which in turn is associated with greater employee commitment. The study group concluded that high attrition rates are reversible and that the effective application of solid management principles would halt excessive attrition.

By exercising good management principles, supervisors ensure that information is transmitted smoothly in a vertical manner (that is, through the chain of command) by giving employees input into the decision-making process. This will induce the following perception in subordinates: (1) that supervisors are fair and accurate in evaluating subordinates; (2) that supervisors are concerned about the well being of subordinates; (3) that supervisors give employees believable information.

A change in management principles at the Cook County Department of Corrections would require no outside intervention. The Department of Corrections is relatively free to implement employee policy changes that require no additional funds.

In summary, the alternatives are: continue with the status quo, improve salaries and implement good management principles. The last two alternatives are the most practical. Ignoring the attrition rate can only make the problem worse.

V. Briefs

This section of the Report describes each of the Alternatives presented in Chapter IV with respect to system impact, the Value of the Alternative, the feasibility of the Alternative, and the way in which the Data Collection Plan evaluates the alternative. The Focus of the Project, to improve the high turnover rate among correctional officers with less than two years of service, is centered at the Cook County Department of Corrections.

The basic Purpose of this Project has been to document the cause of attrition and to identify methods to reduce it. This is accomplished by the Collection of Data, which serves to verify whether the Alternative is important.

Alternative 1: Do Nothing

This alternative assumes that the high turnover rate is an acceptable problem. The Department of Corrections has been experiencing a high rate of attrition for the past few years. By choosing this alternative, Doing Nothing, the likely impact on the system will be a continued high rate of turnover.

In choosing this alternative, Doing Nothing, it is implied that high turnover is an inherent flaw of correctional departments. Any attempt to decrease the high turnover would be either not cost effective or too time consuming.

Implementation of this alternative would require no action at all, as the status quo is simply accepted.

The advantage of this alternative is that Implementation would require no increased costs. By accepting the high turnover rate, the Department would be free to add more officers, in place of a salary increase.

The disadvantage of this alternative is that by Doing Nothing there is an increase in training costs for new Correctional Officers. Such costs include not only direct costs of several weeks of initial training, which according to a detailed study can run between \$500 and \$1,000 per employee; but also participation costs. Participation costs are the costs associated with running a new officer's post while he or she is off at training. Such costs occur as overtime expenses, additional staff costs, or simply lost productivity because a job does not get done which would have been done had the officer or employee been available.

Alternative 2: Increase Salaries for Correctional Officers.

The Cook County Department of Corrections in itself does not set the Correctional Officers' salaries. The Department merely submits a request for funds to the Cook County Board, which acts on the request. The Cook County Board, members of which are elected by the voters of Cook County, have been unwilling to increase taxes in order to pay for a salary increase.

Herein lies the problem with trying to implement a salary increase. The Cook County Board feel more pressure to hold the line on taxes (this pressure coming from the six million voters of Cook County), than to raise them for the fourteen hundred officers employed by the Department.

While there is a desire to maintain an experienced staff, the amount of money saved in training and recruiting costs would not pay for any notable increase in salaries. Implementation of a salary increase depends on the support of many outside forces. Given the nature of the Department, this alternative seems impractical at this time.

Salaries have often been associated with attrition. The questionnaire includes an item asking those who voluntarily left and were attracted to other law enforcement positions, the reasons for their leaving.

The advantage of Implementing this alternative would be an increase in morale among Correctional Officers. This in turn would cause a decrease in attrition, as officers would remain at the Department rather than seek other employment.

The disadvantage of this alternative would be, as correctional officers remain in positions, usually they receive salary increases due to their length of service. Thus, a department with a workforce with greater longevity will cost more in personnel funds than the same department with more new officers. In addition, employees with longer service become eligible for, or vest, other fringe benefits which then add to personnel costs.

Alternative 3: Implementation of a Change in Management Principles

These briefs attempt to verify the viability of the first two alternatives. The third alternative, a change in management principles, deserves mention as the most practical alternative.

Suggestions for changes in management principles require no outside intervention. The Department of Corrections is relatively open to employment policy changes that require no additional funds.

By implementing good management principles, the Department of Corrections would show that it is concerned about its Correctional Officers. This should have the effect of improving morale, which in turn should cause a decrease in attrition.

Implementation of this alternative would be the most cost effective, as far as the Department of Corrections is concerned. No additional funding would be required to implement a policy change. Also, the Department would be free to take as long as necessary for implementing a policy change.

As the Department of Corrections is free to implement any policy change that doesn't require additional funding, this alternative is thought to be the most feasible.

The advantage of this alternative would be a savings in costs associated with the resignation of existing personnel and the subsequent hiring of replacement Correctional

Officers. There would also be an increase in productivity resulting from experienced officers performing work tasks. There also would be a high state of motivation from an increase in overall morale.

The disadvantage of this alternative would be that programs to reduce attrition cost money. Such programs include higher levels of pay, greater opportunities for participation in post and job assignment decisions and other changes. These efforts usually do not come without cost. Also, there could be a decrease in morale among supervisory personnel as they would lose the power they once possessed.

VI. Data Collection Plan

Project:

To recommend alternative ways of improving turnover and morale among Correctional Officers at the Cook County Department of Correction.

Objective 1: To improve the high turnover rate among Correctional Officers with less than two years of service.

Objective 2: Achieve a five percent increase in morale among Correctional Officers within two years.

Alternative 1: Do Nothing.

Probable Impact: Continued low morale and high turnover among Correctional Officers.

Alternative 2: Increase salaries for Correctional Officers. Salaries are very highly associated with attrition. The department may be able to decrease attrition by providing salaries more like those in other areas of law enforcement.

Probable Impact: Immediate increase in morale among Correctional Officers. This in turn would cause a decrease in turnover.

Alternative 3: Implementation of a change in management principles. By implementing good management principles, the department would show that it is concerned about its Correctional Officers.

Probable Impact: This should have the effect of improving morale, which in turn should cause a decrease in attrition.

Data Collection Plan

The hypotheses developed in this report fall into two categories: Needs hypotheses relating to the need for change, and hypotheses relating to the selecting of alternative courses of action.

Needs Hypotheses: Needs hypotheses relating to each Project Objective were established. These hypotheses were:

Hypothesis 1: At least 25 percent of Correctional Officers leave the department before completing two years of service.

Hypothesis 2: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers will rate morale as less than good.

The two hypotheses relate to the objectives and reflect this project's belief that a change in Department Policy is needed. This data was collected from Correctional Officers who left the department during August of 1986.

Hypotheses Relating to Alternative Courses of Action

Hypothesis 3: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would remain with the Department if salary was improved.

Hypothesis 4: At least 90 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would remain with the Department if the pay and benefits were improved.

Hypothesis 5: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would support a change in communication within the Department.

Hypothesis 6: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would support an improvement in supervision.

Hypothesis 7:

At least 50 percent of Correctional Officers would support an increase in the supervision level.

The hypothesis relating to the alternative courses of action receive their support from the questions in the survey. This project presents the alternative courses of action as an alternative to the status quo.

By using the available data in the literature review, this questionnaire was developed to obtain information from the terminating Correctional Officers. This questionnaire was designed to more closely fit the Cook County Department of Corrections. The findings support the continued use of this instrument in obtaining information from terminating Correctional Officers. This type of instrument has never been used in the State of Illinois.

Data Collection

The research design used in this report was the survey approach. Many research studies in a variety of settings have demonstrated relationships between employees' statements on surveys (i.e., morale, job satisfaction, perceptions of superiors) and job performance, commitment, or turnover. Therefore, the survey approach was considered appropriate.

In other Correctional Institutions, administrators have instituted procedures for obtaining information

from individuals terminating employment with their Correctional Departments. The literature review was used to develop this Correctional Exit Interview Questionnaire. This instrument was used in collecting data for this report. A copy of the questionnaire appears at the end of this chapter.

The population used in the survey can most adequately be described as a nonrandom, subsample of former Correctional Officers terminating their employment during the Fiscal Year 1986. Of the three-hundred Correctional Officers that left the department, thirty were given the questionnaire, yielding a rate of ten percent.

The data were obtained from the Correctional Officers by means of a survey. The survey was mailed to them during August of 1986.

Precautions were taken to remove bias from the data by omitting the name of the respondent from the questionnaire. This was done to better insure anonymity.

Data Analysis

For each question on the survey, four categories are used. Comparing the responses of each category as compared to the total number of responses for each group gave a percentage level which was used to test the corresponding hypothesis.

Because of the small population size, this method was chosen to analyze the data, rejecting more advanced methods such as T-Test or Chi-squared.

Limitations of the Data Collection Plan

The original purpose of the Data Collection Plan has been to produce a device that would reflect separated Correctional Officer's opinions concerning their employment at the Department of Corrections. However, Correctional Officers fear a lack of anonymity could have created a bias in the responses. Individuals may not want to disclose any negative feelings for fear of repercussions in their new employment.

By using this Questionnaire, some of the Hypotheses in the alternative courses of action may not be fully tested.

The problem of attrition cannot be systematically resolved until its causes are measured on an ongoing basis, to permit identification of problem areas and to assess changes needed in resolving the problem.

CORRECTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

In our efforts to reduce turnover in our Department and correct situations which contribute to it, we ask your cooperation in helping us determine what some of those situations might be. The responses to this questionnaire will remain completely anonymous. You do not have to identify yourself unless you wish to. Please be as honest as possible. When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it in the envelope provided.

Date _____

1. In what unit were you employed? _____
2. How long have you worked for the Department of Corrections? _____
3. How long have you been in your present position? _____
4. How were the physical working conditions in your department?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

With what specific working conditions in the department, if any, were you dissatisfied? _____

5. Was your job explained to you clearly before you were employed?

Yes No

Explain _____

6. How would you rate communications in the following area:

Excellent Good Fair Poor No Opinion

Policies, Procedures
and Guidelines

General Orientation
to the Department

Specific Knowledge
of Your Job
Between You and Your
Supervisor

7. How did you feel about your rate of pay and the employee benefits by the Department of Corrections?

Excellent Good Fair Poor No Opinion

Rate of Pay for
Your Job

Paid Holidays

Annual Leave

Retirement Plan

Tuition Reimbursement

Life Insurance

Health Insurance

Sick Leave

8. How would you rate your supervisor in the following areas:

Almost
Always Usually Sometimes Never

Demonstrates Fair &
Equal Treatment

Follows Policies &
Practices

Communicates Well With
Subordinates

Resolves Complaints,
Grievances & Problems

Provides Recognition
On the Job

9. Was your decision to leave the Department of Corrections influenced by any of the following? (Please check all those applicable.)

Illness/Physical Condition

Type of Work

Family Circumstances

Return to School

(Continued on next page)

Better Job Opportunity

Commuting Distance

Lack Opportunity Advancement

Retired

Self Employment

Terminate/Asked to Resign

Salary

Other

Supervision

10. How would you rate the following in your job or department?

Excellent Good Fair Poor No Opinion

On-The-Job Training

Equipment Provided

Friendliness & Cooperation of Fellow Employees

Cooperation Within the Department

Cooperation With Other Departments

Comments: _____

11. Was your workload usually:

Too Great

About Right

Too Light

12. Would you want your job back if certain conditions were changed? What conditions? _____

13. How would you rate morale in your unit or institution?

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

14. Do you feel that your chances for advancement were:

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

15. If you are going to another job will you be doing the same type of work?

Yes

No

If "No", what type of work will you be doing? _____

16. What does your new job offer that your job with the Department of Corrections did not? _____

17. Evaluate the position you are leaving:

Yes No

Did it make proper (adequate) use of your education and experience?

Was it still interesting work?

Was it challenging?

18. Did you experience any of the following while working in this department?

Yes No

Harassment

Favoritism of other employees

Unfair promotional practices

Unfair treatment

19. Rate the level of supervision:

Too Much About Right Too Little

20. Would you recommend the Department of Corrections to a friend as a place to work?

Yes, definitely

Yes, with reservations

No

VII. Summary of Results

This chapter contains results of the data collected from the questionnaire that was sent to Correctional Officers that left the Department. In all cases, the population was thirty. For most of the Hypotheses, a corresponding question on the survey can be found. The first two Hypotheses pertain to the need for change.

Hypothesis 1: At least 25 percent of Correctional Officers leave the Department before completing two years of service.

Hypothesis one was supported by the data gathered from question two on the survey. How long have you worked for the Department of Corrections? All thirty Correctional Officers surveyed answered that they had left the Department after less than two years of service.

N = 30

100%

Hypothesis 2: At least 20 percent of Terminating Correctional Officers will rate morale as less than good.

Hypothesis two was supported by the data gathered from question thirteen on the survey. How would you rate morale in your unit? Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor. Twenty Correctional Officers answered that morale was Fair to Poor.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	8	11	9
N = 30		66%	

The first two hypotheses relate to the objectives of this Project; and support the belief that a change in Department Policy is needed. The following hypotheses relate to the selection of alternative courses of action.

Hypothesis 3: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would remain with the Department if salary was improved.

Hypothesis three was not supported by the data gathered from the questionnaire. There were three questions on the survey relating to this Hypothesis. While a majority of Correctional Officers rated pay as poor, and as a reason for leaving the Department, they would not remain if it was improved.

7. How did you feel about your rate of pay?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
0	3	5	22

N = 30

Poor = 73%

9. Was your decision to leave the Department of Corrections influenced by the following?

N = 30

Salary 19 = 63%

12. Would you want your job back if certain conditions were changed? What conditions.

N = 30

Salary 7 = 23%

Hypothesis 4: At least 90 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would remain with the Department if pay and benefits were improved.

Hypothesis four was not supported by the data as it was related to Hypothesis three, which was also not supported. Again, while a majority of Correctional Officers rated pay and benefits unfavorable, they would not remain if improved.

-
7. How did you feel about employee benefits at the Department of Corrections?

Paid Holidays	Poor 30 = 100%
Retirement Plan	Poor 24 = 80%
Life Insurance	Poor 17 = 56%

-
12. Would you want your job back if certain conditions were changed? What conditions?

The only benefit mentioned, was the Retirement Plan.

N = 30	Retirement Plan = 3	10%
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Hypothesis 5: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would support a change in communication within the Department.

The Hypothesis was not fully tested, due to the nature of the questionnaire used. While a majority of Correctional Officers rated communication within the Department as less than good, the survey failed to mention specifically, what effect a change would have on terminating Officers.

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6. How would you rate communications in the following area:

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines	N = 30	Fair to Poor = 23	76%
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Hypothesis 6: At least 50 percent of terminating Correctional Officers would support an improvement in supervision.

Hypothesis 7: At least 50 percent of Correctional Officers would support an increase in the level of supervision.

Hypothesis six and seven are related and supported by the data. In both cases, Correctional Officers rated supervisors and the level of supervision as in need of improvement.

8. How would you rate your supervisor in the following areas:

Demonstrates Fair & Equal Treatment	Sometimes - Never 19	63%
Follows Policies & Practices	Sometimes - Never 17	56%
Communicates Well With Subordinates	Sometimes - Never 22	73%
Resolves Complaints, Grievances & Problems	Sometimes - Never 23	76%
Provides Recognition on the Job	Sometimes - Never 26	86%

19. Rate the level of supervision:

Too Much	About Right	Too Little
11	5	13
36%	16%	43%

In the next chapter, this data is interpreted. Conclusions are presented with recommendations based upon the analysis of the data.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to decrease the high turnover rate among Correctional Officers with less than two years of service at the Cook County Department of Corrections.

This project has two evaluation objectives. The first was to reduce the turnover among Correctional Officers to an annual rate of ten percent within two years. The second, to achieve a five percent increase in morale and job satisfaction within one year among Correctional Officers.

To gather data for this project, hypotheses were developed. The hypotheses developed fall into two categories: Needs hypotheses relating to the need for change, and hypotheses relating to the selection of alternative courses of action.

This chapter presents an interpretation and discussion of the projects' findings and a discussion of recommendations which stem from those findings.

Section 1: Conclusions

The first two hypotheses developed pertained to the need for change. The first predicted that twenty-five percent of Correctional Officers leave the department before completing two years of service. Hypothesis one was supported by the data gathered. All Correctional Officers surveyed had left the department before completing two years of service. These findings are similar to those of Holt (1979) who found that in a study of Massachusetts Correction Academy Graduates, that within one year after graduation, one in five had left. Attrition, according to this study, was caused in large, by the attractiveness of other jobs and by the salary policies of the Correctional Facilities.

The second hypothesis predicted that fifty percent of the Correctional Officers would rate morale as less than good. Hypothesis two was supported by the data gathered. Over sixty percent of the Correctional Officers rated morale as less than good. In Kane's (1985) report on morale and staff turnover, a relationship between management activities and morale was found. Employee dissatisfaction with superiors was found to contribute to the turnover rate.

The first two hypotheses related to the objectives of this project; and support the belief that a change in Department Policy is needed. Benton (1982) suggests that the high attrition and low morale among Correctional Officers appears to be related to the general areas of

benefits, supervisory style, management practices, and job content. The hypotheses relating to the section of alternative courses of action were developed, based on Benton's study.

The third hypothesis predicted that fifty percent of the Correctional Officers would remain if salary was improved. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. There were three questions on the survey relating to this hypothesis. In Scott and Dinitz's report (1977) one factor sighted in turnover was the availability of higher pay in private security. While a majority of Correctional Officers rated pay as poor, and as a reason for leaving the department, they would not remain if pay was improved. This hypothesis shows that while salary rates poor, more serious problems exist.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that ninety percent of the Correctional Officers would remain if pay and benefits were improved. Hypothesis four was not supported by the data as it was related to hypothesis three, which also was not supported. Again, while a majority of Correctional Officers rated pay and benefits unfavorable, they would not remain if improved.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that fifty percent of the Correctional Officers would support a change in communication within the department. This hypothesis was not fully tested due to the nature of the questionnaire

used. While a majority of Correctional Officers rated communication within the department as less than good, the survey failed to mention specifically what effect a change would have on terminating Officers. The questionnaire used was developed by Research of the literature review.

Since its development, improvements need to be added. The findings support the continued use of this instrument with improvement. Finally, this type instrument has never been used in Illinois.

Hypotheses six and seven are related as they pertain to supervision. Both hypotheses predicted fifty percent of the Correctional Officers would support an improvement in supervision. Hypotheses six and seven were supported by the data. In both cases, Correctional Officers rated supervisors and the level of supervision as in need of improvement. Kane (1985) reported on the influence management techniques have on employee turnover and morale in the Correctional System. Kane's primary thesis is that through the development of improved management techniques and through a more open and honest relationship with employees, the attrition rate can be reduced. Benton (1982) suggests that the high attrition rate among Correctional Officers appears related to the areas of supervisory style, management practices, and job content. Benton's study makes a number of recommendations: Permit employees to select the

post and shifts they will work . . . increase employee involvement in matters that affect their work methods to reduce the negative effects of job tasks associated with attrition. Alternative three, implementation of a change in Management Principles (MBO), was developed from this information presented in the Literature Review.

In summary, the Literature Review and the hypotheses support the implementation of alternative three.

Section 2: Force Field Analysis

Alternative 1: Retain the status quo. Do nothing about the high turnover rate. This alternative accepts the high turnover rate and contributing factors to it.

Driving Force

- Programs to reduce attrition cost money.
- Has been an ongoing problem and is accepted.

Restraining Force

- Increase in training costs for new Officers.
- Overtime Expenses.
- Low Morale because of short staff.
- Lost Productivity.

Alternative one, the status quo is clearly unacceptable. Ignoring the attrition rate can only make the problem worse.

Alternative 2: Increase salaries for Correctional Officers. This alternative suggests that a change is needed.

Driving Force

- Increase in morale.
- Decrease in attrition.
- Greater longevity among Officers.

Restraining Force

- Increased cost.
- County Board approval required.

Implementation of a salary increase depends on the support of many outside forces. The hypotheses developed failed to fully support this alternative. Given the nature of the department, this alternative seems impractical at this time.

Alternative 3: Implementation of a change in Management Principles (MBO). This alternative deserves mention as the most practical.

Driving Force

- Most cost effective.
- Improved morale.
- Decreased attrition.
- Increase in productivity.
- No outside intervention needed.

Restraining Force

- Programs to reduce attrition cost money.
- Decrease in morale among supervisors.

The Literature Review and the hypotheses support the implementation of this alternative. A change in management principles at the Cook County Department of Corrections would require no outside intervention. The Department of Corrections is relatively free to implement policy changes.

Section 3: Policy Recommendation

This project recommends the implementation of alternative three, Implementation of a Change in Management Principles. The data gathered from the hypotheses along with the information researched in the literature, support this alternative.

A general theme in this project was that better management improves pride and morale, which in turn is associated with greater employee commitment. The research shows that high attrition rates are reversible and that the effective application of solid management principles would halt excessive attrition.

By exercising good management principles, supervisors would ensure that information is transmitted smoothly in a vertical manner (chain of command) and by giving employees input into the decision-making process.

A written procedure should be developed to provide the opportunity for Correctional Officers to participate in the selection of posts and shifts they will work, as well as their assignment to overtime. Such participation should be based upon criteria which include capacity to perform the duties of the post, seniority, and organizational needs.

By implementing good management principles, the Department of Corrections would show that it is concerned about its Correctional Officers. This would have the effect of improving morale, which in turn, should cause a decrease in attrition.

Implementation of this alternative would be cost effective, as far as the Department of Corrections is concerned. No additional funding would be required to implement a policy change. Also, the Department would be free to take as long as necessary for implementing a policy change.

The advantage of implementing this alternative would be a savings in cost associated with the resignation of existing personnel and the subsequent hiring of replacement Correctional Officers. There would also be an increase in productivity resulting from experienced Officers performing work tasks. There also would be a high state of motivation from an increase in overall morale.

Finally, with regards to the selection process, a number of personal characteristics have been found to

correlate with a higher level of turnover. There is a strong negative correlation between age and turnover; that is, younger workers turnover more frequently than older workers do. Individuals who are more highly educated are also more likely to leave. These factors need to be addressed to improve the hiring process.

Section 4: Recommendation for Further Research

The problem of attrition cannot be systematically resolved until its causes are measured on an ongoing basis, to permit identification of problem areas and to assess changes needed in resolving the problem.

A similar survey should be administered to currently employed Correctional Officers to further realize the needs of the department.

Finally, the measurement instrument should be reexamined to ascertain whether it is measuring what it proposes to be measuring.