



Corrections Management

By Paul Knudstrup

The prison population in the U.S. has grown 10-fold in the past 30 years. Of the offenders currently in prison, 98% will be living back in our communities within the next 4 years. This year 700,000 people will be released from prison; within 3 years 66% of them will be back in prison.

Education is a key factor in preventing incarceration. Of those currently in Federal prisons, 40% are high school dropouts. In State prisons, 50% are dropouts while 60% of those inmates on Death Row failed to complete high school.

Some states, Michigan included, will budget more for their Corrections department than they will spend on higher education. As we have pushed the mentally ill out of mental health facilities into the community, a high percentage of them end up in prison. Often they cannot cope with living in the community and commit crimes resulting in their re-institutionalization. The cost to house an offender in prison continues to increase every year, running upwards of \$25,000 annually.

Recruiting, hiring, and training new correctional officers takes months and costs millions across the country, yet the turnover rate among first year COs is often nearly 50%.

Not a pretty picture. And really some scary statistics, to be sure. So, what is the solution? There are two keys to changing these trends. They are:

1. Better Training for Corrections Supervisors, Managers, and Administrators – a major portion of the very high turnover among correctional officers can be placed directly at the door of their own supervisors and managers. Corrections is a difficult business; it certainly is not a field for everyone. If recruiting and hiring practices are up to standards, then why do so many correctional officers quit within the first 2 years? Simply put, it is because they are not managed effectively by their boss. People “vote with their feet” and when mis-managed will simply take their training and experience and go work someplace else.
2. Understanding What Works – criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, and clinical professionals have studied corrections for decades. We actually do know what works when it comes to reducing recidivism. And yet the number of re-offenders continues to grow. The definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again expected to get different results. Evidence-based best practices can improve criminal justice outcomes.

At Midwest Consulting Group we have been helping Corrections departments develop their future leaders for nearly a decade. Comprehensive management development programs for high-potential correctional officers, probation and parole staff, and agency administrators have helped to reduce turnover, increase morale, and improve the organizational culture.

To learn more about our approach to Corrections Management, please contact us.