

TODD R. CLEAR | MICHAEL D. REISIG | GEORGE F. COLE

American Corrections



TWELFTH EDITION

American Corrections

T W E L F T H E D I T I O N

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BRIEF CONTENTS

PART ONE CORRECTIONAL CONTEXT

- CHAPTER 1 The Corrections System 4
- CHAPTER 2 The Early History of Correctional Thought and Practice 30
- CHAPTER 3 The History of Corrections in America 46
- CHAPTER 4 Contemporary Punishment 70
- CHAPTER 5 The Law of Corrections 98
- CHAPTER 6 The Correctional Client 128

PART TWO CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES

- CHAPTER 7 Jails: Detention and Short-Term Incarceration 164
- CHAPTER 8 Probation 194
- CHAPTER 9 Intermediate Sanctions and Community Corrections 228
- CHAPTER 10 Incarceration 256
- CHAPTER 11 The Prison Experience 278
- CHAPTER 12 The Incarceration of Women 300
- CHAPTER 13 Institutional Management 322
- CHAPTER 14 Institutional Programs 350
- CHAPTER 15 Release from Incarceration 382
- CHAPTER 16 Making It: Supervision in the Community 402
- CHAPTER 17 Corrections for Juveniles 436

PART THREE CORRECTIONAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

- CHAPTER 18 Incarceration Trends 474
- CHAPTER 19 Race, Ethnicity, and Corrections 492
- CHAPTER 20 The Death Penalty 510
- CHAPTER 21 Immigration and Justice 532
- CHAPTER 22 Community Justice 550
- CHAPTER 23 American Corrections: Looking Forward 570

PART 1 CORRECTIONAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1 The Corrections System 4



FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Great Experiment in Social Control 6

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: High U.S. Crime Rates 7

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: If Crime Starts to Rise, Then What? 8

The Purpose of Corrections 10

A Systems Framework for Studying Corrections 12

Goals 12

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Interconnectedness of Jail and Prison

Population Counts 12

Interconnectedness 13

Environment 13

Feedback 13

Complexity 14

The Corrections System Today 15

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Federal Corrections System Dials Back on Its Agenda of Reform 16

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Big Three in Corrections 17

Key Issues in Corrections 20

Managing the Correctional Organization 20

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 21

Working with People 23

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Doing What Works 24

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: What Does the Great Experiment in Social Control Cost? 25

DO THE RIGHT THING 26

Upholding Social Values 26

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: What Happened in New York, and What Does It Mean for the United States? 27

Summary 27

CHAPTER 2 The Early History of Correctional Thought and Practice 30



From the Middle Ages to the American Revolution 32

Galley Slavery 33

Imprisonment 33

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Early Methods of Execution 34

Transportation 36

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 36

Corporal Punishment and Death 37

On the Eve of Reform 38

The Enlightenment and Correctional Reform 39

Cesare Beccaria and the Classical School 39

Jeremy Bentham and the “Hedonic Calculus” 40

John Howard and the Birth of the Penitentiary 41

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 42

What Really Motivated Correctional Reform? 43

Summary 43

CHAPTER 3 The History of Corrections in America 46



The Colonial Period 48

The Arrival of the Penitentiary 49

The Pennsylvania System 50

The New York (Auburn) System 51

Debating the Systems 52

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 53

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: From Eastern State to Pelican Bay:

The Pendulum Swings 54

The Development of Prisons in the South and the West 55

Southern Penology 55

DO THE RIGHT THING 55

Western Penology 56

The Reformatory Movement 57

Cincinnati, 1870 57

Elmira Reformatory 58

Lasting Reforms 59

The Rise of the Progressives 59

Individualized Treatment and the Positivist School 59

Progressive Reforms 60

The Rise of the Medical Model 61

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 62

From Medical Model to Community Model	62
The Crime Control Model: The Pendulum Swings Again	64
The Decline of Rehabilitation	64
The Emergence of Crime Control	64
Where Are We Today?	65
Summary	66

CHAPTER 4 Contemporary Punishment 70



The Purpose of Corrections	72
Retribution (Deserved Punishment)	72
Deterrence	73
Incapacitation	74
Rehabilitation	74
New Approaches to Punishment	75
Criminal Sanctions: A Mixed Bag?	76
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	76
Forms of the Criminal Sanction	77
Incarceration	78
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Three Strikes and You're Out	80
Intermediate Sanctions	81
Probation	81
Death	82
Forms and Goals of Sanctions	83
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	85
The Sentencing Process	85
The Administrative Context	85
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: A Trial Judge at Work:	
Judge Robert Satter	86
Attitudes and Values of Judges	87
The Presentence Report	88
DO THE RIGHT THING	88
Sentencing Guidelines	89
The Future of Sentencing Guidelines	90
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	91
Unjust Punishment	91
Sentencing Disparities	91
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Politics and Sentencing:	
The Case of Crack Cocaine	93
Wrongful Convictions	93
Summary	95

CHAPTER 5 The Law of Corrections 98



The Foundations of Correctional Law 100

- Constitutions 100
- Statutes 100
- Case Law 101
- Regulations 101

Correctional Law and the U.S. Supreme Court 102

- The End of the Hands-off Policy 102
- MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS:** Habeas Corpus 103
- Access to the Courts 103
- The Prisoners' Rights Movement 104
- FOR CRITICAL THINKING 105**

Constitutional Rights of the Incarcerated 106

- The First Amendment 106
- The Fourth Amendment 109
- The Eighth Amendment 110
- FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY:** The Impact of *Ruiz v. Estelle* 112
- The Fourteenth Amendment 113
- A Change of Judicial Direction 115
- FOR CRITICAL THINKING 116**
- The Impact of the Prisoners' Rights Movement 118

Alternatives to Litigation 118

- Grievance Procedures 119
- The Ombudsman 119
- Mediation 119
- Legal Assistance 119
- FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS:** The Best Jailhouse Lawyer in America? 120

Law and Community Corrections 120

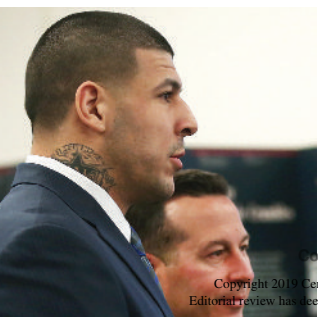
- Constitutional Rights of People on Probation or Parole 121
- Revocation of Probation and Parole 122

Law and Correctional Personnel 122

- Civil Service Laws 122
- Liability of Correctional Personnel 123
- DO THE RIGHT THING 124**
- FOR CRITICAL THINKING 124**

Summary 125

CHAPTER 6 The Correctional Client 128



- FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY:** Inmates, Offenders, Prisoners, Probationers, and Parolees—They Are All People 130

Selection for the Corrections System 131

Types of Clients 134

Situational Clients	134
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Julie's Story	135
Clients with Careers in Crime	135
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Archie's Story	136
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Violence by People Who Commit Sex Crimes	137
Clients Convicted of Sex Crimes	137
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Nevin's Story	139
Substance Abusers	140
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Mary Lou's Story	141
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Henry's Story	144
Clients with Mental Illnesses	144
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Johnnie's Story	145
Clients with Developmental Disabilities	147
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Donald's Story	148
Clients with HIV/AIDS	149
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Mike's Story	150
Elderly Clients	152
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Dennis's Story	152
Long-Termers	153
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Michael's Story	154
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	154
Military Veterans	155
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Christopher's Story	155
Classifying People in the Corrections System: Key Issues	156
Overlap and Ambiguity in Classification	156
Offense Classifications and Correctional Programming	156
Behavioral Probabilities	157
Sociopolitical Pressures	157
Distinctions in Classification Criteria	157
Summary	158

PART 2 CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES

CHAPTER 7 Jails: Detention and Short-Term Incarceration 164

The Contemporary Jail: Entrance to the System 166

Origins and Evolution	167
Population Characteristics	167
Administration	169
The Influence of Local Politics	170

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 170

CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Correctional Officer—Local Jails	171
---	-----



Regional Jails	171
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Jimmy's First Day in Jail	172
Pretrial Detention	173
Special Problems of People Held for Trial	174
Release from Detention	177
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The District of Columbia Sets the Standard for Pretrial Justice	178
The Bail Problem and Alternatives	178
Release on Recognizance	179
Pretrial Diversion	180
Conduct During Pretrial Release	180
Preventive Detention	181
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Jails Are for People Convicted of Misdemeanors	181
People Sentenced to Jail	181
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Jails' Frequent Flyers	182
Issues in Jail Management	183
Legal Liability	183
Jail Standards	183
Personnel Matters	184
Jail Crowding	184
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Closing Rikers Island—One of America's Most Famous Jails	185
The Jail Facility	186
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Women in Jail	188
The Future of the Jail	189
DO THE RIGHT THING	190
Summary	190

CHAPTER 8 Probation 194



The History and Development of Probation	196
Benefit of Clergy	196
Judicial Reprieve	197
Recognizance	197
The Modernization of Probation	197
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Who Is on Probation?	199
The Organization of Probation Today	200
Should Probation Be Centralized or Decentralized?	200
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Probation Officer—Federal	200
Who Should Administer Probation?	201
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: California Public Safety Realignment	202
Should Probation Be Combined with Parole?	202

The Dual Functions of Probation: Investigation and Supervision	202
The Investigative Function	204
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Sample Presentence Report	206
The Supervision Function	207
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The “Client-Funded” Model for Probation	208
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Probation Officer: State and County	211
The Effectiveness of Supervision	212
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The New York City Opportunity Probation Model	213
Case Management Systems	213
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Sample Supervision Plan	214
Evidence-Based Supervision	214
Specialized Supervision Programs	215
Performance-Based Supervision	216
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Robina Institute Reimagines Probation	216
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: RECLAIM Ohio?	217
Is Probation Effective Regardless?	217
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Machines Running Probation Supervision	218
Revocation and Termination of Probation	219
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Sample Revocation Form	219
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Is There Hope for HOPE Probation?	221
DO THE RIGHT THING	222
Probation in the Coming Decade	222
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	223
Summary	223

CHAPTER 9 Intermediate Sanctions and Community Corrections 228



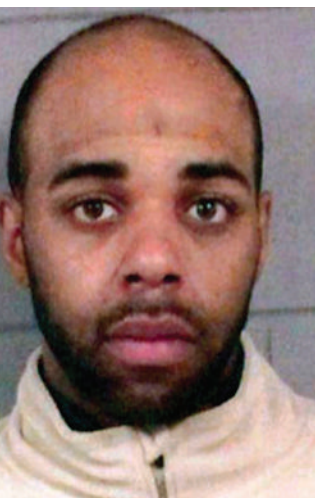
Intermediate Sanctions in Corrections	230
The Case for Intermediate Sanctions	231
Unnecessary Imprisonment	231
Limitations of Probation	232
Improvements in Justice	232
Continuum of Sanctions	233
Problems with Intermediate Sanctions	234
Selecting Agencies	234
Selecting People	234
Widening the Net	234
Varieties of Intermediate Sanctions	235

Sanctions Administered by the Judiciary	235
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Hopeless Cases	235
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	236
Sanctions Administered by Probation Departments	237
Sanctions Administered by Correctional Departments	240
Making Intermediate Sanctions Work	241
Sentencing Issues	241
Selection Issues	242
Using Surveillance and Control in Community Corrections	243
Drug Controls	244
Electronic Controls	244
Human Surveillance Controls	244
Programmatic Controls	245
The New Correctional Professional	245
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: CASES: Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services	246
Community Corrections Legislation	246
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Addiction Treatment Specialist	247
Reducing Reliance on Prison	247
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Using Cost–Benefit Analysis to Decide on Correctional Programs	248
Evaluation of Community Corrections Legislation	249
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Community Corrections Today	250
The Future of Intermediate Sanctions and Community Corrections	251
Summary	251

CHAPTER 10 Incarceration 256

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Realization 258

Links to the Past	259
The Goals of Incarceration	260
Organization for Incarceration	261
The Federal Bureau of Prisons	261
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	261
State Prison Systems	263
The Design and Classification of Prisons	264
Today's Designs	265
The Location of Prisons	266
The Classification of Prisons	266
Private Prisons	268
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Private Versus Public Prisons	269



FOR CRITICAL THINKING 270

Who Is in Prison? 270

The Elderly 271

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Implementing Prison Hospice Programs 272**FOR CRITICAL THINKING 273**

People with Mental Illnesses 274

Military Veterans 274

Individuals Serving Long-Term Sentences 274

Summary 275

CHAPTER 11 The Prison Experience 278**FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE:** Going In: The Chain 280

Prison Society 281

Norms and Values 282

Prison Subculture: Deprivation or Importation? 283

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 284

Adaptive Roles 284

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: How Are You Going to Do Your Time? 286

The Prison Economy 287

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Prison Commissary Items 288**FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS:** Carnalito 289

Violence in Prison 289

Violence and Inmate Characteristics 290

DO THE RIGHT THING 291

Prisoner–Prisoner Violence 291

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Sexual Victimization in State Prisons 293

Prisoner–Officer Violence 294

Officer–Prisoner Violence 295

Ways to Decrease Prison Violence 295

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 297

Summary 297

CHAPTER 12 The Incarceration of Women 300

Women: The Forgotten Offenders 302

Historical Perspective 304

The Incarceration of Women in the United States 304

The Reformatory Movement 305

The Post–World War II Years 306

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 307

Women in Prison 307

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Excerpts from a Prison Journal 308

Characteristics of Women in Prison 309

The Subculture of Women's Prisons 311

Male Versus Female Subcultures 312

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 313

Issues in the Incarceration of Women 313

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Sexual Victimization in Prisons for Women 313

Sexual Misconduct 313

Educational and Vocational Programs 314

DO THE RIGHT THING 314

Medical Services 315

Mothers and Their Children 315

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Maria's Story 316

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 317

Release to the Community 317

Summary 318

CHAPTER 13 Institutional Management 322

Formal Organization 324

The Organizational Structure 325

The Impact of the Structure 328

CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Correctional Officer: State 329

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 329

Governing Prisons 330

The Defects of Total Power 331

Rewards and Punishments 332

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Prison Disorder and Mass Incarceration 332

Gaining Cooperation: Exchange Relationships 333

Informal Leadership 333

Discipline in Prison 334

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 334

Leadership: The Crucial Element of Governance 335

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: A Model Prison 336

Correctional Officers: The Linchpin of Management 337

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: A Day on the Job—in Prison 338

Who Becomes a Correctional Officer? 339

Role Characteristics 340

Job Assignments 341

CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Correctional Officer: Federal Bureau of Prisons 341

Problems with the Officer's Role 342



Job Stress and Burnout	343
Boundary Violations	344
DO THE RIGHT THING	345
Use of Force	345
Collective Bargaining	346
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	346

Summary	347
---------	-----

CHAPTER **14** Institutional Programs 350



Managing Time	352
Constraints of Security	353
The Principle of Least Eligibility	354
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Education in Prison	355
Classification	355
The Classification Process	355
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Correctional Treatment Specialist	357
Objective Classification Systems	357
DO THE RIGHT THING	357
Rehabilitative Programs	358
Psychological Programs	358
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Prison and Rehabilitation	359
Behavior Therapy	361
Social Therapy	361
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	362
Educational and Vocational Programs	362
Substance Abuse Programs	363
Sex Offender Programs	364
Religious Programs	365
The Rediscovery of Correctional Rehabilitation	366
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: How to Make Prisons Better	366
Prison Medical Services	368
Prison Industry	370
The Contract Labor, Piece Price, and Lease Systems	371
The Public Account System	371
The State-Use System	371
The Public Works and Ways System	372
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Pay People in Prison Minimum Wage	372
Prison Industry Historically and Today	373
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Prison Blues	374
Prison Maintenance Programs	374
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Correctional Industry Competes with the Private Sector	375

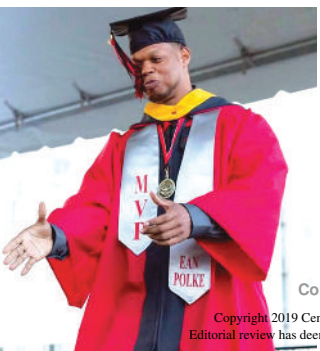
Recreational Programs	376
Prison Programming Reconsidered	376
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Evidence Base for Prison Programs	377
Summary	377

CHAPTER 15 Release from Incarceration 382



Release from One Part of the System to Another	384
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: <i>Kansas v. Hendricks</i>	385
Origins of Parole	385
Release Mechanisms	387
Discretionary Release	387
Mandatory Release	387
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: A Roomful of Strangers	388
Probation Release	388
Other Conditional Release	388
Expiration Release	389
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	389
The Organization of Releasing Authorities	390
Consolidated Versus Autonomous	390
Field Services	390
Full Time Versus Part Time	390
Appointment	391
The Decision to Release	391
The Discretionary Release Process	391
DO THE RIGHT THING	393
Structuring Parole Decisions	394
The Impact of Release Mechanisms	395
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	396
Release to the Community	397
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Jacksonville Re-Entry Center	399
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Revolving Doors?	399
Summary	400

CHAPTER 16 Making It: Supervision in the Community 402



Overview of the Postrelease Function	404
Community Supervision	405
Revocation	407
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Parole Hearing Officer	408
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Should People Serving Long Sentences Be Released Early?	409

The Structure of Community Supervision	411
Agents of Community Supervision	411
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Parole Officer	413
The Community Supervision Bureaucracy	413
Residential Programs	416
The Experience of Postrelease Life	417
The Strangeness of Reentry	417
Supervision and Surveillance	418
The Problem of Unmet Personal Needs	418
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Making It: One Person's Story	419
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Vouchers for Parole	420
Barriers to Success	420
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	422
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Services or Jobs to Reduce Recidivism of People on Parole?	423
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Should We "Ban the Box"?	424
Expungement and Pardon	425
FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: Coming Back After Being Wrongfully Convicted	426
The Person on Parole as "Dangerous"	426
DO THE RIGHT THING	427
The Elements of Successful Reentry	429
Postrelease Supervision	430
How Effective Is Postrelease Supervision?	430
What Are Postrelease Supervision's Prospects?	432
Summary	432

CHAPTER 17 Corrections for Juveniles 436



The Problem of Youth Crime	438
The History of Juvenile Corrections	439
Juvenile Corrections: English Antecedents	439
Juvenile Corrections in the United States	439
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: The Age of Delinquency	442
Why Treat Juveniles and Adults Differently?	445
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Increasing the Age of Adult Responsibility	445
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	446
Differences Between Adults and Juveniles, in Perspective	447
The Problem of Serious Delinquency	447

Sanctioning Juveniles	449
Overview of the Juvenile Justice System	449
Disposition of Juveniles	450
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Evidence in Juvenile Justice Programs	454
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Probation Officer—Juveniles	456
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Reducing Incarceration for Juveniles	458
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Juvenile Group-Home Counselor	461
DO THE RIGHT THING	462
The Special Problem of Gangs	464
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Prevalence of Gangs	464
MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Juvenile Gangs	465
The Future of Juvenile Justice	465
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Four Rs of Juvenile Justice Reform	466
Summary	466

PART 3 CORRECTIONAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER 18 Incarceration Trends 474



Explaining Prison Population Trends	476
Increased Arrests and More Likely Incarceration	478
Tougher Sentencing	478
Prison Construction	479
The War on Drugs	479
State and Local Politics	480
Public Policy Trends	481
DO THE RIGHT THING	481
FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Reducing America's Correctional Populations	482
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	482
Dealing with Overcrowded Prisons	482
The Null Strategy	483
The Construction Strategy	483
Intermediate Sanctions	483
Prison Population Reduction	484
The Impact of Prison Crowding	484
Does Incarceration Pay?	485
CAREERS IN CORRECTIONS: Research Analyst, State Department of Corrections	487
FOR CRITICAL THINKING	487
Summary	487

CHAPTER **19** Race, Ethnicity, and Corrections 492



Race in the Correctional Context 494

The Concepts of Race and Ethnicity 495

Visions of Race and Punishment 495

Differential Criminality 496

A Racist Criminal Justice System 498

DO THE RIGHT THING 499

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Do Evidence-Based Decision-Making Systems Reinforce Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System? 501

A Racist Society 502

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: Incarceration and Inequality 503

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 504

Which Is It: Race or Racism? 504

The Significance of Race and Punishment 505

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Incarceration of Young Fathers 505

Summary 506

CHAPTER **20** The Death Penalty 510



The Debate over Capital Punishment 512

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 514

The Death Penalty in America 514

Death Row Population 514

Public Opinion 515

FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN CORRECTIONS: The Deathman 516

The Death Penalty and the Constitution 517

Key U.S. Supreme Court Decisions 517

Continuing Legal Issues 520

DO THE RIGHT THING 521

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: They May Kill Again 524

Individuals on Death Row 524

Who Is on Death Row? 524

Where Was the Crime Committed? 525

Who Was the Prosecutor? 525

Was Race a Factor? 527

A Continuing Debate 527

Summary 528

CHAPTER 21 Immigration and Justice 532



Illegal Immigration 534

Immigration History 535

Types of Immigrants Under the Law 536

The Immigration Justice System 538

Policing 538

Courts 539

Corrections 540

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 540

Issues in Immigration Justice 541

Immigration and Crime 541

Immigration and Terrorism 542

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Sanctuary Cities 543

Children and Families of Undocumented Immigrants 544

Cooperation with Local Justice Authorities 544

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: DACA and DAPA 545

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Illegal Mexican Immigration 545

DO THE RIGHT THING 546

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: A Path to Citizenship for the Law-Abiding 546

Summary 547

CHAPTER 22 Community Justice 550



The Need for a New Approach 552

Definition of Community Justice 553

A Philosophy of Justice 553

A Strategy of Justice 554

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Common Justice 555

Justice Programs 556

How Community Justice Differs from Criminal Justice 556

Neighborhoods 556

Problem Solving 557

Restoration 557

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 558

Justice Reinvestment 558

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: Community Justice and Violence—Common Justice 559

DO THE RIGHT THING 559

Overview of Differences 559

Arguments for Community Justice 560

Crime and Crime Problems Are Local 560

Crime Fighting Too Often Damages the Quality of Life 561

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: What Do They Want? 563

Proactive Rather Than Reactive Strategies Are Needed 563

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Social Impact Bonds 564

Problems of Community Justice 564

Impingement on Individual Rights 564

Social Inequality 565

Increasing Criminal Justice Costs 565

The Future of Community Justice 566

Summary 566

CHAPTER **23** American Corrections: Looking Forward 570

American Corrections Today 572

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: What Does the Public Want? 573

Five Correctional Dilemmas 573

Mission 574

Methods 574

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Is Recidivism Inevitable? 575

Structure 575

DO THE RIGHT THING 576

Personnel 576

Costs 577

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: How Much Does Corrections Cost Our Society? 578

Four Current Trends in the U.S. Corrections System 579

Evidence-Based Practice 579

Techno-Corrections 580

Falling Crime Rates 581

FOCUS ON CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Size of the Prison Population 581

Professionalization 582

Three Challenges for the Future of Corrections 582

Reinvigorate a New Correctional Leadership 583

Refocus Our Investments in What Works 584

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Success Funding 584

Reclaim the Moral and Ethical High Road 585

FOR CRITICAL THINKING 585

Changing Corrections: A Final View 586

MYTHS IN CORRECTIONS: Can Corrections Change? 586

Summary 587

GLOSSARY 590

INDEX 598



The publication of the twelfth edition of a textbook is a cause for celebration. This is especially true if the book is *American Corrections*, which has been a leader in the field for more than 30 years and has introduced more than half a million students to this most interesting portion of the U.S. criminal justice system.

The first edition of *American Corrections* was inspired by our shared belief that undergraduate students must be exposed to the dynamics of corrections in a manner that captures their attention and encourages them to enter the field. The twelfth edition continues this tradition.

We celebrate this milestone, but we also recognize that, as authors, we have a responsibility to provide readers with the most up-to-date factual material, policy trends, and changes in correctional practices.

Since 1986, when *American Corrections* was first published, this dynamic field has undergone many revolutions of both policy and practice. For example, the shift to mass incarceration was already under way then, with state and federal prisons holding 463,000 people—equal to a rate of 188 per 100,000 Americans. At that time, few policy makers would have dreamed that the rate would continue to rise to more than 600 per 100,000 in 2010, until it began to decline as a result of declining crime and changes in correctional policy. We also note the shift away from the goal of rehabilitation, dominant in the 1970s, to the primacy of crime control goals since the 1980s. During the past quarter-century, corrections has also seen the rise and fall of boot camps, the growth of privately owned and operated prisons, interest in community and restorative justice, and the present emphasis on evidence-based decision making. *American Corrections* has kept pace with these and countless other shifts.

Corrections is so rich in history, innovative in practice, and challenged by societal problems that it deserves to be taught in a way that is both interesting and accurate. Fortunately, our teaching and research cover different areas of corrections so that each of us can focus on our strengths while challenging the other to do his best work. We hope that this book reflects our enthusiasm for our field and the satisfaction we have found in it.

The 2008 economic recession placed great fiscal burdens on public agencies, and many have been slow to recover. At all levels of government—federal, state, and local—budgetary deficits have greatly affected corrections. As criminal justice students know, corrections has little to no control over the inflow of people to community corrections, jails, and prisons; nonetheless, correctional budgets also often face cuts imposed by fiscally strapped governments. To operate with the resources mandated, some corrections systems have had to release prisoners, cut back rehabilitative programs, expand community supervision caseloads, lay off staff, and take other actions to save money.

To address these problems, correctional professionals and the public are increasingly focusing their attention on research by scholars who have demonstrated the shortcomings of correctional practices and have urged alternatives. In the twelfth edition, we thus not only examine the history of corrections and the exciting changes that have occurred to make the field what it is today, but we also look to the future of corrections by examining research-based solutions to current problems.

In *American Corrections*, twelfth edition, we offer an accurate analysis of contemporary corrections based on up-to-date research. By acknowledging the problems with the system, we hope that our exposition will inspire suggestions for change. We believe that when human freedom is at stake, policies must reflect research and be formulated only after their potential effects have been carefully considered. In other words, we hope that any changes we inspire will be good ones. We also hope that a new generation of students will gain a solid understanding of all the aspects of their complex field.

The Approach of This Text

In learning about corrections, students gain a unique understanding of how social and political forces affect the way that organizations and institutions respond to a particular segment of the community. They learn that social values come to the fore in the correctional arena because the criminal sanction reflects those values. They also learn that in a democracy, corrections must operate not only within the framework of law but also within the boundaries set by public opinion. Thus, as a public activity, corrections is accountable to elected representatives, but it must also compete politically with other agencies for resources and “turf.”

Two key assumptions run throughout the book. One is about the nature of corrections as a discipline; the other concerns the best way to analyze correctional practices:

- **Corrections is interdisciplinary.** The academic fields of criminal justice, sociology, psychology, history, law, and political science contribute to our understanding of corrections. This cross-fertilization is enriching, yet it requires familiarity with a vast literature. We have structured our text with a strong focus on coherence to make this interdisciplinary approach comprehensive yet accessible.
- **Corrections is a system.** In our book the concept of a system serves as a framework for analyzing the relationships among the various parts of corrections and the interactions between correctional professionals and their clients. The main advantage of this perspective is that it allows for dispassionate analysis of correctional practices.

Organization

Correctional officials and political leaders are continually asking “Where is corrections headed?” In this twelfth edition of *American Corrections* we explore the context, practices, and special issues of corrections in three major sections. Each part opens with a guest perspective by a recognized expert who discusses correctional innovations and ideas related to the topics presented in that part. Marc Mauer, Executive Director of the Sentencing Project, opens Part 1: The Correctional Context by assessing criminal justice reform. Mauer notes that we are currently on the cusp of significant changes in corrections, changes that could result in a major policy reformulation for the entire corrections system. Part 2: Correctional Practices opens with a guest perspective by Glenn Martin, founder of JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA). Among the most respected correctional reformers in the nation, Martin explains why it is crucial to have people who have been affected by the justice system engaged in reform debates. To open Part 3: Correctional Issues and Perspectives, Fatimah Loren Muhammad, Director of the Trauma Advocacy Initiative, Equal Justice USA, describes the importance of understanding how trauma affects both the victims of violent crime and the people who engage in that violence. Each of these guest perspectives lays the groundwork for the chapters that follow.

In Part 1 we describe the historical issues that frame our contemporary experience of corrections. We examine the general social context of the corrections system (Chapter 1) and the early history of correctional thought and practice (Chapter 2). We also focus on the distinctive aspects of correctional history in the United States (Chapter 3), analyze current theory and evidence regarding methods of punishment (Chapter 4), and survey the impact of law on corrections (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 we portray the correctional client. We consider the correctional client in relation to criminal legislation, criminal justice processing, and larger societal forces that are associated with crime. Part 1 thus presents the foundations of American corrections: context, history, goals, organizations, and correctional clients.

In Part 2 we look at the current state of the major components and practices of the system. The complexity of correctional organization results in fragmentation and ambivalence in correctional services. Jails and other short-term facilities are scrutinized in Chapter 7, probation in the community, by which most correctional clients are handled, in Chapter 8, and the new focus on intermediate sanctions in Chapter 9. Because imprisonment remains the core symbolic

and punitive mechanism of corrections, we examine it in detail. We discuss incarceration (Chapter 10), the prison experience (Chapter 11), the incarceration of women (Chapter 12), institutional management (Chapter 13), and educational, industrial, and treatment programs in correctional institutions (Chapter 14). In being both descriptive and critical, we hope to raise questions about current incarceration policies. In Chapters 15 and 16 we examine the process of releasing people from incarceration and the ways that formerly incarcerated people adjust to supervised life in the community. In Chapter 17 we describe the separate system of corrections for juveniles. Thus, in Part 2 we focus on the development, structure, and methods of each area of the existing corrections system, portraying them in light of the continuing issues described in Part 1.

In Part 3 we analyze those current correctional issues and trends that deserve individual attention: incarceration trends (Chapter 18), race, ethnicity, and corrections (Chapter 19), the death penalty (Chapter 20), immigration (Chapter 21), and community justice (Chapter 22). In Chapter 23, “American Corrections: Looking Forward,” we take both a retrospective view of American corrections and a view of its future. These chapters are designed to raise questions in the minds of readers so that they can begin to grapple with important issues.

Special Features

Several features make this book an especially interesting introduction to corrections. Each of these features has been revised for the twelfth edition.

- **Opening vignettes:** Each chapter opens with a description of a high-profile correctional case. Taken from today’s headlines, each vignette dramatizes a real-life situation that draws the student into the chapter’s topic. Instructors find these “lecture launchers” an important pedagogical tool to stimulate interest. We have made special efforts to provide new vignettes for this edition. For example, Chapter 17, “Corrections for Juveniles,” describes Connecticut’s impending changes to its juvenile justice laws. This leads into a discussion of the distinctions applied to the juvenile corrections system.
- **Critical Thinking:** Each chapter includes critical-thinking boxes that pose questions linked to the opening vignette. We believe that this feature will prompt students to reexamine their initial thoughts about the vignette.
- **Focus on . . . :** In this feature the real-world relevance of the issues discussed in the text is made clear by vivid, in-depth accounts by correctional workers, journalists, formerly incarcerated persons, people on parole, and relatives of those who are in the system. In this twelfth edition we have increased the number and variety of these features, which are placed into three categories: People in Corrections, Correctional Policy, and Correctional Practice. We believe that students will find that the material in each feature enhances their understanding of the chapter topic.
- **Thinking Outside the Box:** Corrections needs new ideas, and some of the most significant new ideas propose major changes to the way that the corrections system does its work. This feature draws attention to today’s most innovative evidence-based practices or programs, designed to get students thinking beyond traditional aspects to new possibilities. Examining these new ideas provides fresh insight regarding the future prospects of corrections.
- **Do the Right Thing:** Correctional workers are often confronted with ethical dilemmas. In each of these boxes we present a scenario in which an ethical question arises. We then provide a writing assignment in which students examine the issues and consider how they would act in such a situation.
- **Evidence-based practice:** Correctional professionals are being encouraged to base decisions on research evidence. This is especially true in probation, intermediate sanctions, and parole. Implementation of this approach is presented in the relevant chapters.

- **Myths in Corrections:** Faculty have told us that they spend much of their classroom time debunking popular myths about corrections. In this new edition, most chapters contain a special boxed feature presenting research that challenges correctional myths.
- **Careers in Corrections:** In appropriate chapters throughout the book, students will find one or more boxes in which a particular correctional occupation is described. The material includes the nature of the work, required qualifications, earnings and job outlook, and a source of more information.
- **Glossary:** One goal of an introductory course is to familiarize students with the terminology of the field. We have avoided jargon in the text but include terms that are commonly used. Such indispensable words and phrases are set in bold type, and the term and its definition have been placed in the margin. A full glossary with definitions of all terms is located at the back of the book.
- **Graphics:** We have created tables and figures that clarify and enliven information so that it can be perceived easily and grasped accurately. For this twelfth edition, tables and figures have been fully updated wherever possible.
- **Photographs:** The twelfth edition contains an enlarged program of dynamic photographs spread throughout the book. These reveal many aspects of corrections ordinarily concealed from the public eye. The photographs provide students with a real view of correctional policies and practices.
- **Other student aids:** The beginning of each chapter includes an outline of the topics to be covered, followed by a set of learning objectives. These tools are designed to guide students as they progress through the chapter. Many chapters also offer brief biographies of people who have made an impact on the field of corrections. At the end of each chapter, students can find a summary keyed to the learning objectives, a list of any key terms presented in the chapter, discussion questions, and suggestions for further reading.

Other Changes in the Twelfth Edition

As textbook authors, we have a responsibility to present current data, provide coverage of new issues, and describe innovative policies and programs. Toward this end we have completely updated and rewritten this edition, line by line. We have been assisted by the comments of an exceptionally knowledgeable team of reviewers who pointed out portions of the text that their students found difficult, suggested additional topics, and noted sections that should be dropped. Among the new or expanded topics found in this twelfth edition are the following:

- **Death penalty:** Public support for the death penalty is declining, partly because the regular exonerations of people on death row erode public confidence in the accuracy of death penalty verdicts. Juries in many states now seem to prefer life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Still, 2016 saw 20 executions. But many problems with the death penalty remain, including difficulties with lethal injection, effectiveness of counsel, execution of people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities, execution for crimes not involving murder, and erroneous convictions (issues examined in Chapters 4 and 20). The death penalty continues to provide a major source of debate.
- **Incarceration trends:** After rising almost continuously for the past four decades, incarceration rates have dropped over the last seven years. This seems not to be related to a drop in violent crime—which for many years has been at 1973 levels—but rather because of doubts about the wisdom of mass incarceration and budgetary pressures at all levels of government. In many states, prisons have been closed, and judges are under pressure to incarcerate fewer people convicted of a felony. One result is that parole is having to deal with higher supervision caseloads.
- **Reentry:** Each year more than 600,000 people are released from prison and returned to their communities. Disturbingly, the largest group of new admissions to prison in some

states is made up of recidivists. A concerted effort by both liberal and conservative policy makers is now focused on ways to reduce recidivism. Assisting people convicted of a felony in the reentry process has become a major focus of correctional policy, and a plethora of new programs are being proposed to make reentry more successful. The problems encountered by people on parole as they adjust to the community are dealt with extensively in Chapters 15 and 16.

- **Evidence-based practice:** There has been a growing movement for “evidence-based” practice in dealing with those under community supervision. Probation and parole officers are encouraged to make decisions based on methods that have been shown to be effective by well-designed research methods. Public statements by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the development of programs within the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Justice Programs have spurred this thrust. The Justice Department maintains a website called “Crime Solutions” that contains information and research on “what works” for all aspects of the criminal justice system.
- **Incarceration of women:** Reflecting important ongoing research on the impact of maternal incarceration on children, correctional administrators have revisited the importance of programs for women. In particular, several states have devised programs to provide opportunities for women to maintain contact with their children. Chapter 12 describes the “Residential Parenting Program” at the Washington Corrections Center for Women.
- **Privatization:** Since the advent of private prisons in the 1970s, questions have been raised about whether they are more cost-effective than public prisons. Until recently, research on this question has been lacking. As states deal with severe budgetary problems, the future of private prisons remains uncertain. However, the privatization movement has now carried over into nonprison areas, with proposals for private contracts for community-based correctional methods. Chapter 22 discusses the advent of social impact bonds, which attempt to create fiscal incentives for privately funded innovation in corrections.
- **Corrections as a profession:** With all these changes in correctional policy and practice, there is a need for a “new correctional professional.” Throughout this book we describe the challenges that the changes in corrections pose for people who work in the field, and we offer new ideas about the skills and knowledge that correctional professionals will have to bring to their work in order to be successful.
- **Immigration justice:** No issue has been more at the forefront than problems related to immigration. The corrections system is called upon to deal with immigration issues, of course, but the response to immigration illustrates the systems aspect of all justice actions—we describe how law enforcement and adjudication interact with corrections to produce an immigration justice system. We also show how evidence bears on policies regarding immigration.
- **Language:** In this twelfth edition we have made a shift in language. People who have been caught up in the corrections system—people whose voices we repeatedly turn to in this book—tell us that terms such as “inmate” and “offender,” even though they are commonly used, promote painful stereotypes and make reintegration to society harder. To the extent we can, we have edited our language in this edition to move away from these labels and refer to those caught up in the justice system as “people.”

Ancillary Materials

For the Instructor

MindTap for *American Corrections* MindTap from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student’s learning tools—readings, multimedia,

activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides the student through the curriculum. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools for their students, allowing instructors to seamlessly introduce their own content into the Learning Path via digital applications that integrate into the MindTap platform. Additionally, MindTap provides interoperability with major learning management systems (LMS) via support for open industry standards, and fosters partnerships with third-party educational application providers to provide a highly collaborative, engaging, and personalized learning experience.

Online Instructor's Resource Manual and Lesson Plans for *American Corrections* Revised to reflect new content in the twelfth edition, the instructor's manual includes learning objectives, key terms, a detailed chapter outline, a chapter summary, lesson plans, discussion topics, student activities, "what if" scenarios, media tools, and a sample syllabus. The learning objectives are correlated with the discussion topics, student activities, and media tools.

Online Test Bank The expanded test bank includes 30 percent more questions than the prior edition. Each chapter of the test bank contains questions in multiple-choice, true/false, completion, essay, and new critical-thinking formats, with a full answer key. The test bank is coded to the learning objectives that appear in the main text and includes the section in the main text where the answers can be found. Finally, each question in the test bank has been carefully reviewed by experienced criminal justice instructors for quality, accuracy, and content coverage so instructors can be sure they are working with an assessment and grading resource of the highest caliber.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero This assessment software is a flexible, online system that allows you to import, edit, and manipulate test-bank content from the *American Corrections* test bank or elsewhere, including your own favorite test questions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

PowerPoint® Lectures for *American Corrections* Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your visually oriented students, these handy Microsoft PowerPoint® slides outline the chapters of the main text in a classroom-ready presentation. The PowerPoint® slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text, are tagged by a chapter learning objective, and feature additional examples and real-world cases for application and discussion.

For the Student

MindTap for *American Corrections* MindTap from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student's learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides the student through the curriculum. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools for their students, allowing instructors to seamlessly introduce their own content into the Learning Path via digital applications that integrate into the MindTap platform. Additionally, MindTap provides interoperability with major learning management systems (LMS) via support for open industry standards, and fosters partnerships with third-party educational application providers to offer a highly collaborative, engaging, and personalized learning experience.

Acknowledgments

In writing this twelfth edition of *American Corrections*, we were greatly assisted by people who merit special recognition. Instructors and students who used prior editions were most helpful in pointing out strengths and weaknesses; we took their comments seriously and hope that new readers will find their educational needs met more fully.

We have also been assisted in writing this edition by a diverse group of associates. Chief among them is Carolyn Henderson Meier, Product Team Manager, who supported our efforts and kept us on course. Chelsea Logan, Content Developer, reviewed our efforts and made important suggestions in keeping with the goals of this revision. Mark Linton, Senior Marketing Director for Criminal Justice, has skillfully guided the presentation of *American Corrections*, twelfth edition, to faculty and students. The project has also benefited much from the attention of Christy Frame, Senior Content Project Manager. The talented Ted Knapke of Ke Design designed the interior and cover of the book. Many other people worked hard on the production of the twelfth edition of *American Corrections*, including Production Manager Greg Hubit, Copy Editor Donald Pharr, and Proofreader Debra Nichols. Ultimately, however, the full responsibility for the book is ours alone.

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American Corrections

PART ONE

Correctional Context

Part 1 of *American Corrections*—"The Correctional Context"—describes the corrections system, its history, the way people are punished for crimes, the law as it relates to prisons and correctional workers, and the clients of corrections. As you study these chapters, consider the new ideas for sentencing reform offered by Marc Mauer. What do you think these reforms might accomplish? What are some of the difficulties that must be overcome for these reforms to be put in place?

GUEST PERSPECTIVE

Making Meaningful Headway on Corrections Reform

MARC MAUER

Executive Director, The Sentencing Project

In 2016 the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that state prison populations had declined by 5 percent over the previous five years. Notably, this development came after nearly four decades of record prison expansion that had seen the total incarcerated population in the United States grow from 300,000 to 2.2 million. The recent reductions in the prison population are a product of several factors, including declines in crime, fiscal imperatives facing state governments, and growing policy-maker interest in evidence-based sentencing and correctional initiatives. Although these developments have the potential to challenge the world-record rate of incarceration in the United States, it remains to be seen whether the change in the political climate on these issues is significant enough to produce substantial long-term reductions in imprisonment.

Changes in sentencing and correctional policy can be traced back to the late 1990s, a moment when the emerging concept of "reentry" first gained attention. Based on the simple premise that 95 percent of the people in prison will one day come home, the idea quickly gained traction and has now come to be broadly embraced by corrections systems



Slaven Vlasic/Getty Images

around the country. Coincident with those developments was a growing critique of the law enforcement focus of the "war on drugs," and in particular the dramatic rise in incarceration of individuals convicted of lower-level involvement in the drug trade. This led to growing public support for a range of diversion and treatment options, most notably the drug-court movement, now with some 3,000 such programs nationally.

Policy change in sentencing has been slower to develop but has made significant strides in recent years. At the

CHAPTER 1

The Corrections System

CHAPTER 2

The Early History of Correctional Thought and Practice

CHAPTER 3

The History of Corrections in America

CHAPTER 4

Contemporary Punishment

CHAPTER 5

The Law of Corrections

CHAPTER 6

The Correctional Client

federal level the notorious sentencing disparity between crack cocaine and powder cocaine offenses was substantially reduced with bipartisan support in Congress in 2010. Similarly, New York's "Rockefeller Drug Laws," a forerunner of the mandatory sentencing movement, were significantly scaled back in 2009, as was California's "three strikes and you're out" policy through a ballot initiative in 2012. California voters also approved Proposition 47, a measure that reclassified certain low-level property and drug crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, so that persons convicted of these offenses will no longer be sentenced to state prison.

Significant as these changes are, they have still had only a modest impact on the scale of mass incarceration. The U.S. rate of incarceration remains at five to eight times that of other industrialized nations. Although many factors contribute to this situation, a key issue regards the severity of sentences. Persons sentenced to prison for both property and violent crimes spend considerably more time behind bars than in comparable nations. This has led to a situation where 159,000 people—one of every nine people in prison today—are serving a life sentence, and nearly a third of them have no possibility of parole. Such sentences are both costly and contribute little to public safety. Research has demonstrated that excessively lengthy sentences provide little additional deterrent effect and have a diminishing impact on public safety as individuals "age out" of crime.

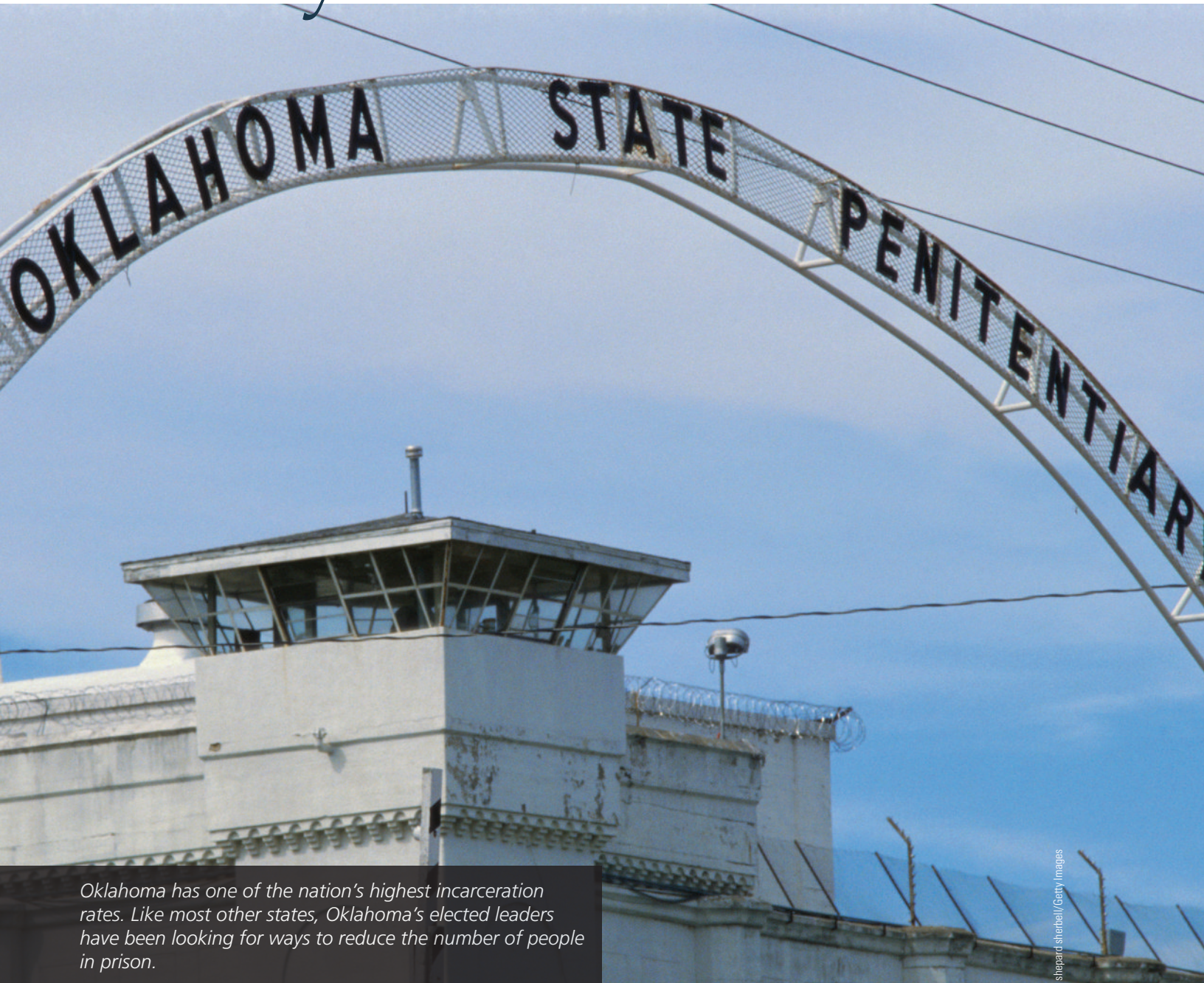
What would it take to achieve a substantial and sustainable reduction in the use of imprisonment in the United States? Continuing the momentum on day-to-day policy

and practice changes is clearly important. This includes such initiatives as enhancing the diversion potential of drug and mental health treatment programs, establishing sentence-reduction incentives for program participation in prison, and providing a range of graduated sanctions to reduce the numbers of people sent back to prison for technical parole violations.

But fundamentally, mass incarceration represents the outcome of an enormous imbalance in our approach to producing public safety. Creating safe communities is a complex process, one that involves family support, social networks, economic opportunity, treatment for those in need, and also criminal justice interventions. But in recent decades, political initiatives have championed harsh criminal justice policies, often to the exclusion of these other areas, and particularly in regard to the problems of disadvantaged communities of color. Changing this political environment is therefore key to both reducing mass incarceration and lifting up opportunity for all. A newly energized movement to challenge mass incarceration, with leadership emerging from formerly incarcerated individuals, the Black Lives Matter movement, and many others, holds the potential for creating a new dialogue on crime and justice. In addition, the developing concepts of restorative justice and justice reinvestment provide us with the beginning of a framework to shift from punishment to problem solving and from penal institutions to community building. The challenge going forward is to build on these ideas and to create a new approach to public safety that is both effective and compassionate.

CHAPTER 1

The Corrections System



Oklahoma has one of the nation's highest incarceration rates. Like most other states, Oklahoma's elected leaders have been looking for ways to reduce the number of people in prison.

shepard shethel/Getty Images

■ THE PURPOSE OF CORRECTIONS

■ A SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING CORRECTIONS

Goals
Interconnectedness
Environment
Feedback
Complexity

■ THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM TODAY

■ KEY ISSUES IN CORRECTIONS

Managing the Correctional Organization
Working with People
Upholding Social Values

WITH THE SECOND-HIGHEST INCARCERATION RATE IN THE UNITED STATES,

Oklahoma has been at the forefront of the nation's "tough-on-crime" agenda. The state's elevated incarceration rate is now 78 percent higher than the national average and is projected to grow another 25 percent in the coming decade. Oklahoma already spends half a billion dollars annually on corrections, and the projected growth will more than double the state's yearly operating budget for prisons and cost more than \$1.2 billion in new construction, on top of that. The state is now changing course. Seeking a Better Return on Investment, a 21-member, bipartisan and multi-sector select group, was appointed by Governor Mary Fallin to "develop comprehensive criminal justice and corrections reform policy recommendations designed to alleviate prison overcrowding and reduce Oklahoma's incarceration rate while improving public safety."¹

Oklahoma is not alone in wanting a more cost-effective corrections system. Political leaders all over the country, once the loudest voices for ever-tougher penal policies, are suddenly instead looking for ways to control the cost of the corrections system. One census of prison-related reforms found that 46 of the states have passed legislation designed to reduce the number of people going to or returning to prison and jail.² This pattern is true in traditionally conservative states, such as Texas, which has actually closed three prisons,³ to more-liberal states such as Michigan, which reduced the prison population by 12 percent and closed more than 20 prisons.⁴ During 2015 almost half the states in the United States had actual reductions in the number of people in prison.⁵ Since 2010, in fact, more than half the states have reduced both their imprisonment rates and their crime rates.⁶

These changes come after nearly *four decades* of uninterrupted prison growth (see "The Great Experiment in Social Control" on pages 6–7). The scope of America's long-term commitment to a big corrections system has been described as one of the greatest policy experiments in modern history. In 1973 the prison incarceration rate was 96 per 100,000 Americans. For 38 consecutive years after that, the number of people in prison increased—during periods when crime went up, but also during periods when crime

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to . . .

- 1** Describe the range of purposes served by the corrections system.
- 2** Define the systems framework and explain why it is useful.
- 3** Name the various components of the corrections system today and describe their functions.
- 4** Identify at least five key issues facing corrections today.
- 5** Discuss what we can learn from the "great experiment in social control."



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Great Experiment in Social Control

Almost two-thirds of the members of the current U.S. population, including most of the readers of this book, were born after 1971. For them it has been entirely normal to see yearly increases in the number of Americans in prison, in jail, and under correctional supervision. This group of citizens has seen corrections grow every year—in good economic times and bad, during periods of rising crime and of dropping crime. This growth trend began with the “baby boom” generation: When Americans born in the two decades after World War II hit their twenties and thirties, the peak crime-prone age, they clogged the criminal justice system.

The large and growing correctional populations that seem so normal have not always been so. From 1900 until about 1970, U.S. prison populations were quite stable, hovering between 90 and 120 per 100,000 citizens. After more than 35 years of steady growth, the rate of incarceration is now five times as high as it was in 1973. In 2007 the correctional population reached its highest point in U.S. history—by most accounts the largest correctional population in the world, with more people in prison than China, which has four times more citizens.

This period of U.S. history could be called the “great experiment in social control,” for it has defined a generation of Americans who have witnessed the greatest expansion in government control ever undertaken by a democratic state. Researchers have tried to explain the sources of this growth. Some of it stems from increases in crime, but most of this crime growth occurred during the first half of the “experiment.” Some is because of increased effectiveness at apprehending, arresting, and convicting criminally involved people. But this aspect of the “experiment” is minor compared with changes in punishment policy. In the United States the chances of a person convicted of a felony getting a prison sentence instead of probation have increased steadily for several decades, to the point where the chance of getting a probation sentence is now a fraction of what it used to be.

Therefore, more people are going to prison, and they are serving longer terms as well. Further, the strictness of postrelease supervision has also increased so that more people on probation than before are being sent back to prison because of a failure to abide by strictly enforced rules. This triple whammy—less probation, longer prison terms, and stricter postsentencing supervision—has fueled a continuing increase in correctional populations, especially prison populations, even when crime rates are dropping.

Some scholars have tried to explain the unprecedented punitiveness of the late-twentieth-century U.S. policy (see “For Further Reading” on page 28). They discuss the

importance of U.S. politics and culture, and they expressly point to the effects of two decades of the “war on drugs.” This is certainly a part of the explanation, but nationally only 16 percent of people in prison are there for a drug crime.⁷ Yet *why* this punitiveness occurred is far less interesting than *what* its results have been. Over the coming years, researchers, scholars, and intellectuals will begin to try to understand what we have learned from this great experiment.

The effects of this experiment in social control fall into three broad categories: its effects on crime, on society, and on the pursuit of justice. First, and most important, how has the growth of corrections affected rates of crime? Because so many factors affect crime, we cannot easily distinguish the effects of a growing corrections system from those from other factors, such as the economy or times of war. Researchers who have tried to do so have reached divergent conclusions, but even the most conservative scholars of the penal system now seem to agree that further growth will have little impact on crime.⁸ Others note that because the crime rate today is about the same as it was in the early 1970s, when the penal system began to grow, the corrections system has not likely had a large effect on crime.⁹

Second, there is a growing worry that a large corrections system—especially a large prison system—damages families and communities, and increases racial inequality. For example, almost three million children have a parent in prison or in jail, including more than 10% of African American children.¹⁰ How do these experiences affect their chances in life? And what does it mean that more than one in four male African Americans will end up in prison?

Third, how does a large penal system affect the pursuit of justice? Do people feel more confidence in their justice system? Is it right to have people who break the law end up punished the way that America punishes them? In this great experiment in social control, have we become a more just society?

One theme in this book is that things are not as simple as they look. New laws and policies seldom achieve exactly what they were intended to do, and they often have unintended consequences. In this text we explore the most important issues in penology, from the effectiveness of rehabilitation to the impact of the death penalty, with the knowledge that each has more than one side.

We begin with a seemingly simple question: What is the purpose of corrections? In exploring the answer to this question, you will discover a pattern that recurs throughout the book. Any important correctional issue is complicated and controversial. The more you learn about a given issue, the

more you will see layers of truth, so your first findings will be bolstered by evidence and then challenged by further investigation and deeper knowledge.

In the end, we think you will see that there are few easy answers but plenty of intense questions. Near the

beginning of each chapter we present questions for inquiry that each chapter will explore. We hope that these will help focus your exploration of corrections and serve as a study guide, along with the summary at the end of each chapter.

declined; during good economic times and bad; during times of war and times of peace. (See “Myths in Corrections.”) By 2010, the U.S. prison incarceration rate had grown to exceed 500 per 100,000 Americans—more than a fivefold increase—and many people thought that this generation-long trend had become a more or less permanent feature of U.S. penal policy.

During this time, correctional budgets grew by over 600 percent. The United States now has almost 3,000 people on death row¹¹ and another 206,000 serving life sentences, nearly a third of them ineligible for any parole.¹² Counting **prisons** and **jails**, almost 2.3 million citizens are incarcerated, making the total incarceration rate more than 920 per 100,000 citizens, a stunning 1 percent of all adults.¹³ When all forms of corrections are taken into account—including probation, parole, and community corrections—nearly 3 percent of all adults are under some form of correctional control.¹⁴ The extensive growth of the correctional population since 1980 is shown in Figure 1.1.

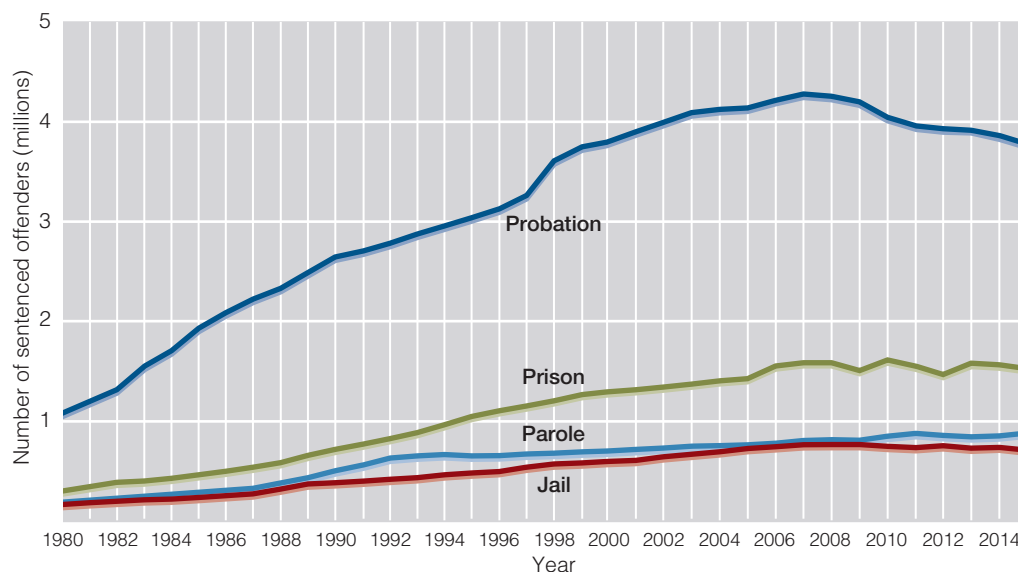


FIGURE 1.1 Correctional Populations in the United States, 1980–2015

Although the increase in prison population receives the most publicity, a greater proportion of correctional growth has occurred in probation and parole.

Sources: Latest data available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics correctional surveys, www.ojp.usdoj.gov: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Probation Survey, Annual Parole Survey, Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jail Inmates, and National Prisoner Statistics Program, 2000 and 2005–2015.

MYTHS in Corrections

High U.S. Crime Rates

THE MYTH: The United States has such a large prison system, compared with the prison systems of other countries, because it has much more crime.

THE REALITY: Based on surveys of citizens conducted at the height of the U.S. prison population, the rates of burglary and robbery in Australia, England, and Canada are all higher than in the United States. When it comes to crimes reported to the police, U.S. rates of burglary and robbery have been falling faster than those in Australia, England, and Canada, and fall in between the highest and lowest of those countries. The U.S. incarceration rate is at least four times higher than any of those countries.

Source: David P. Farrington, Patrick A. Langan, Michael Tonry, and Darrick Joliffe, “Introduction,” *Cross-National Studies in Crime and Justice* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

prison An institution for the incarceration of people convicted of crimes, usually felonies.

jail A facility authorized to hold pretrial detainees and sentenced misdemeanants for periods longer than 48 hours. Most jails are administered by county governments; sometimes they are part of the state government.



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL POLICY: If Crime Starts to Rise, Then What?

There are many indications that the corrections system is undergoing historic changes. After nearly four decades of correctional growth in all its sectors—jails, prisons, and the community—the trend line is edging down. There is a political consensus on the left and the right that we have too many people behind bars. A growing movement supports reentry programs to help people succeed after they have been to prison, and policy makers have been expanding treatment alternatives to prison for people convicted of drug crimes.

The impetus for this change comes from several sources. State and local governments are straining to deal with the fiscal realities of corrections costs. A growing literature has questioned the effectiveness of prison, and growing public attention to the problems that people face in reentry has softened attitudes about people with criminal records. Public polls show that the number of people who think the justice system is “not tough enough” has been declining for more than a decade and that this is now a minority view.

In some ways, the most important trend is that crime has been dropping for more than two decades and is now the lowest it has been in a generation—about what it was in the late 1960s. The sustained drop in crime rates has meant that fear of crime lost its usual place at or near the top of the list of public concerns, having been replaced by other factors such as the economy and terrorism. As fear of crime waned, the prospects for major reform in the justice system improved.

Some people now believe this long-term pattern is changing. Nationally, murder rates rose more than 10 percent in 2016, although most of this increase was concentrated in a few large cities. Nevertheless, misleading claims about a new crime wave in America during the 2016 presidential election have driven a new public unease about safety, and a strong majority of Americans now falsely believe that crime is up over the last ten years. Perhaps it is no surprise that the most recent opinion poll shows concern about crime to be rising again, and is today at a 15-year high. Will the national mood that seems to have supported so much correctional reform suddenly change?

Possibly. Social scientists point out that the last couple of years may be a “blip” in what has been a 25-year, sustained drop in crime, especially violent crime. They emphasize that the big story is how much safer we are now than a generation ago. But people are starting to get worried again, despite this long-term trend.

What will happen to correctional policy?

Sources: Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Preliminary 2015 Crime Statistics* (Washington, DC: Author, 2016). Gallup, “Americans’ Views Shift on Toughness of Justice System,” October 20, 2016; Gallup, “In US, Concern About Crime Climbs to a 15-Year High,” April 6, 2016; Matthew Freidman, Ames C. Grawert, and James Cullen, *Crime in 2016: A Preliminary Analysis* (New York: Brennan Center, 2016); Ryan J. O’Reilly and Ariel Edwards-Levy, “Most Americans (Incorrectly) Believe Crime Is Up. That’s Great News for Donald Trump,” *Huffington Post Politics*, August 8, 2016.

Some say that when prison populations grow, crime rates decline because prisons prevent crime. But between 1973 and the early 1990s, we saw both imprisonment growth *and* increases in crime. Most observers concluded that when more people commit crime, more people end up behind bars. This suggests that as crime declines, so will correctional caseloads. But studies show that, aside from the 1970s, there has been little relationship between the nation’s crime rate and the size of its prison population. Since 1990, for example, the swelling prison population seems to be entirely caused by tougher criminal justice policies rather than changes in crime rates.¹⁵

In 2010 the U.S. government announced that for the first time in more than 30 years, the corrections system, including prisons, held fewer people than the year before.¹⁶ By 2015, the prison incarceration rate had fallen to 480 per 100,000, a 5 percent reduction from the peak a few years earlier.¹⁷ The number of people in local jails had also dropped about 1 percent each year since 2007.¹⁸ For the first time in more than a generation, then, it seems that the long-term pattern of correctional growth may be changing. (See “If Crime Starts to Rise, Then What?”) And by any measure, the U.S. corrections system has seen a sustained period of remarkable, steady growth for more than a generation.

Yet things are changing, as a new liberal–conservative consensus emerges. A conservative coalition led by former Congressman Newt Gingrich recently produced a series of recommendations about criminal justice reform called *Right on Crime*.¹⁹ A few months earlier, a more-liberal coalition of 40 organizations had released its report, called *Smart on Crime*.²⁰ These two groups could be expected to differ on justice priorities, but their reports reflected strong consistencies. Both groups think that most people who are convicted of nonviolent crimes need not end up in prison. Both groups see a need for expanded treatment programs and strong community-based sentences as options for judges.²¹

This new consensus centers on a growing idea that the penal system, especially prisons, has grown too much. Some believe that “mass incarceration” has become a problem in its own right, but concerns about burgeoning probation caseloads and high jail counts have arisen as well. Both liberals and conservatives rightfully worry that the expansion of corrections has affected some groups more than others. African Americans are five times more likely to be in prison than whites; in some states, 5 percent of all black men are in prison.²² Nearly 12 percent of all African American men 20–40 years old—the age of most fathers—are now locked up. One in six male African Americans has been to prison.²³

Both liberals and conservatives also share a concern that the cost of corrections, nearly \$80 billion per year, is out of line. Prison budgets—by far the most expensive portion of the penal system—grow even when monies for education and other services lag.²⁴ Probation caseloads and daily jail populations have also grown, and they cost money, too. With growing public concern about the quality of schools and health care, people of all political persuasions are tempted to ask if so much money is needed for corrections. They are especially leery about continuing to invest in what many political leaders, especially conservatives, see as a system that is not as effective as it ought to be.²⁵

Corrections, then, is a topic for public debate as never before. A generation ago, most people knew very little about corrections. Prisons were alien “big houses,” infused with mystery and located in remote places. The average American had no direct knowledge of “the joint” and no way of learning what it was like. Most people did not even know what probation and parole were, much less have an opinion about their worth. However, more than 6.7 million Americans are now in the corrections system. This number includes one-third of all African Americans who have dropped out of high school; in fact, 70 percent of this group will go to prison during their lifetime.²⁶ Add to these numbers the impact on fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and husbands, wives, and children, and you have an idea of how pervasive corrections is today—especially for poor Americans and people of color.

Further, crime stories dominate our news media. Read any local newspaper or watch any local nightly newscast, and you will encounter a crime story that raises questions about corrections: Should the person have been released? Is the sentence severe



JeffG/Alamy Stock Photo

▲ One out of every 43 Americans is under some form of correctional control. Most of them live among us in the community.



▲ Nearly two million children have a parent in prison. What message does this fact send to the younger generation?

enough? Should laws for this type of crime be tougher? In short, corrections now maintains a profound place, not only in the public eye, but also in the public experience. But are the images we form—based on media reports and our own experiences—accurate? Do they tell us all we need to know about corrections?

The coming years will be an exciting period for people interested in corrections. A growing consensus, crossing the political divide, places us on the verge of a new era in correctional policy, characterized by a search for innovative strategies to deal with crime that are more effective and less costly—financially and socially—than the policies that have dominated the landscape for almost 40 years. This is a time when those who study corrections can help shape a new generation of policies and practices. The demand for correctional professionals will continue to grow, but openness to new ideas will be greater than ever before.

People who study corrections want to learn more about the problems that rivet attention. They want to see beyond the three-minute news story, to understand what is happening to people caught in the system. And they suspect that what seems so simple from the viewpoint of a politician arguing for a new law, or from the perspective of a news reporter sharing the latest crime story, may in fact be far more complex for the people involved.

The Purpose of Corrections

It is 11:00 A.M. in New York City. For several hours, a five-man crew has been picking up trash in a park in the Bronx. Across town on Rikers Island, the view down a corridor of jail cells shows hands gesturing through the bars as people converse, play cards, share food—the hands of people doing time. About a thousand miles to the south, almost 400 people sit in isolated cells on Florida's death row. In the same state a woman on probation reports to a community control officer. On her ankle she wears an electronic monitoring device that tells the officer if she leaves her

home at night. On the other side of the Gulf of Mexico, sunburned Texans in stained work clothes tend crops. Almost due north in Kansas, a grievance committee in a maximum-security prison reviews complaints of guard harassment. Out on the West Coast, in San Francisco, a young man on his way to work checks in with his parole officer and drops off a urine sample. All these activities are part of **corrections**. And all the central actors are under correctional authority.

Punishing people who break society's rules is an unfortunate but necessary part of social life. From the earliest accounts of humankind, punishment has been used as one means of **social control**, of compelling people to behave according to the norms and rules of society. Parents chastise their children when they disobey family rules, groups ostracize individuals who deviate from expected group norms, colleges and universities expel students who cheat, and governments impose sanctions on those who break the law. Of the various ways that societies and their members try to control behavior, criminal punishment is the most formal, for crime is perhaps the most serious type of behavior over which a society must gain control.

In addition to protecting society, corrections helps define the limits of behavior so that everyone in the community understands what is permissible. The nineteenth-century sociologist **Emile Durkheim** argued that crime is normal and that punishment performs the important function of spotlighting societal rules and values. When a law is broken, citizens express outrage. The deviant thus focuses group feeling. As people unite against the law violator, they feel a sense of mutuality or community. Punishing those who violate the law makes people more alert to shared interests and values.

Three basic concepts of Western criminal law—offense, guilt, and punishment—define the purpose and procedures of criminal justice. In the United States, Congress and state legislatures define what conduct is considered criminal.

The police, prosecutors, and courts determine the guilt of a person charged with a criminal offense. The postconviction process then focuses on what should be done with the guilty person.

The central purpose of corrections is to carry out the criminal sentence. The term *corrections* usually refers to any action applied to people after they have been convicted and implies that the action is “corrective,” or meant to change them according to society's needs. Corrections also includes actions applied to people who have been accused—but not yet convicted—of criminal offenses. Such people are often waiting for action on their cases and are under supervision—sitting in jail, undergoing drug or alcohol treatment, or living in the community on bail.

When most Americans think of corrections, they think of prisons and jails. This belief is strengthened by legislators and the media, which focus much attention on incarceration and little on community corrections. As Figure 1.2 shows, however, more than two-thirds of all people under correctional supervision are living in the community on probation or parole.

corrections The variety of programs, services, facilities, and organizations responsible for the management of individuals who have been accused or convicted of criminal offenses.

social control Actions and practices, of individuals and institutions, designed to induce conformity with the rules and norms of society.

BIOGRAPHY

EMILE DURKHEIM (1858–1917)

Important French scholar, known as the “Father of Sociology,” who argued that criminally involved people and their punishment are functional in society, helping define norms and demonstrating to the public the nature of societal expectations for conformity.

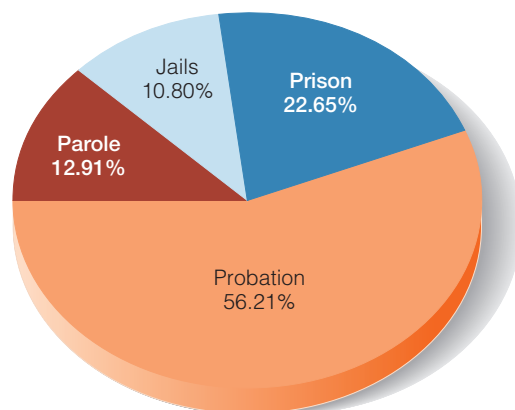


FIGURE 1.2 Percentage of People in Each Category of Correctional Supervision

Sources: Latest data available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics correctional surveys, www.ojp.usdoj.gov: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Probation Survey, Annual Parole Survey, Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jail Inmates, and National Prisoner Statistics Program, 2000 and 2005–2015.

Corrections thus encompasses all the legal responses of society to some prohibited behavior: the variety of programs, services, facilities, and organizations responsible for managing people accused or convicted of criminal offenses. When criminal justice researchers, officials, and practitioners speak of corrections, they may be referring to any number of programs, processes, and agencies. Correctional activities are performed by public and private organizations; involve federal, state, and local governments; and occur in a variety of community and closed settings. We can speak of corrections as a department of the government, a subfield of the academic discipline of criminal justice, an approach to the treatment of those who have broken the law, and a part of the criminal justice system.

Corrections is all these things and more.

A Systems Framework for Studying Corrections

Because it reflects social values, corrections is as complex and challenging as the society in which we live today. Corrections is a legal intervention to deter, to rehabilitate, to incapacitate, or simply to punish or achieve retribution.

Having a framework will help you sort out the complex, multidimensional nature of corrections. In this book we use the concept of the corrections system as a framework for study. A **system** is a complex whole consisting of interdependent parts whose operations are directed toward common goals and are influenced by the environment in which they function. For example, interstate highways make up a transportation system. The various components of criminal justice—police, prosecutors, courts, corrections—also function as a system.

system A complex whole consisting of interdependent parts whose operations are directed toward common goals and are influenced by the environment in which they function.

Goals

Corrections is a complicated web of disparate processes that, ideally, serve the goals of fair punishment and community protection. These twin objectives not only define the purpose of corrections but also serve as criteria by which we evaluate correctional work. Correctional activities make sense when they seem to punish someone fairly or offer some sense of protection. The thought of an unfair or unsafe correctional practice distresses most people.

When these two functions of punishment and protection do not correspond, corrections faces goal conflict. For example, people may believe that it is fair to release people on parole once they have served their sentences, but they may also fear any possible threats that the person poses to the community. Further, such goal conflicts can cause problems in the way the system operates.



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL POLICY: The Interconnectedness of Jail and Prison Population Counts

In 2015 the number of people in jail—as opposed to prison—decreased nationally after three years of fluctuation and is now the smallest total in more than a decade. This continues a national trend of reducing jail incarceration numbers, even after accounting for the additional people in jail in California, where the Public Safety Realignment Act resulted in large

numbers of people moving from the state prison system to the county corrections system (see “The Big Three in Corrections” on pages 17–19). As the nation’s jail populations continue to drop, there will be a natural tendency for prison populations to also decline, as the flow into prison from jail wanes.

Interconnectedness

Corrections can be viewed as a series of processes: sentencing, classification, supervision, programming, and revocation, to name but a few. Processes in one part of the corrections system affect, in both large and small ways, processes in the rest of the system.

For example, when a local jail changes its policies on eligibility for work release, this change will affect the probation caseload. When a parole agency implements new drug-screening practices, the increased number of violators uncovered by the new policy will affect jails and prisons within the system. When writers fail to check their facts for a presentence investigation report, poorly reasoned correctional assignments may result.

These processes all affect one another because people pass through corrections in a kind of assembly line with return loops (see “The Interconnectness of Jail and Prison Population Counts”). After a person is convicted, a selection process determines which ones go where, and why. This sifting process is itself uncertain and often hard to understand. Most, but not all, people convicted of a violent crime are sent to prison. Most, but not all, people who violate probation or parole rules receive a second chance. Most, but not all, people who are caught committing crimes while supervised by correctional authorities will receive a greater punishment than people who were not under supervision during the crime. Figure 1.3 shows examples of interconnections among correctional agencies as they deal with people who have been given different sentences.



▲ *Corrections links with other criminal justice agencies. The police, the prosecution, and the judiciary all play roles with regard to the clients of corrections. What are some of the problems that develop out of these necessary links?*

Environment

As they process people through the system, correctional agencies must deal with outside forces such as public opinion, fiscal constraints, and the law. Thus, sometimes a given correctional agency will take actions that do not seem best suited to achieving fairness or public protection. At times, correctional agencies may seem to work at odds with one another or with other aspects of the criminal justice process.

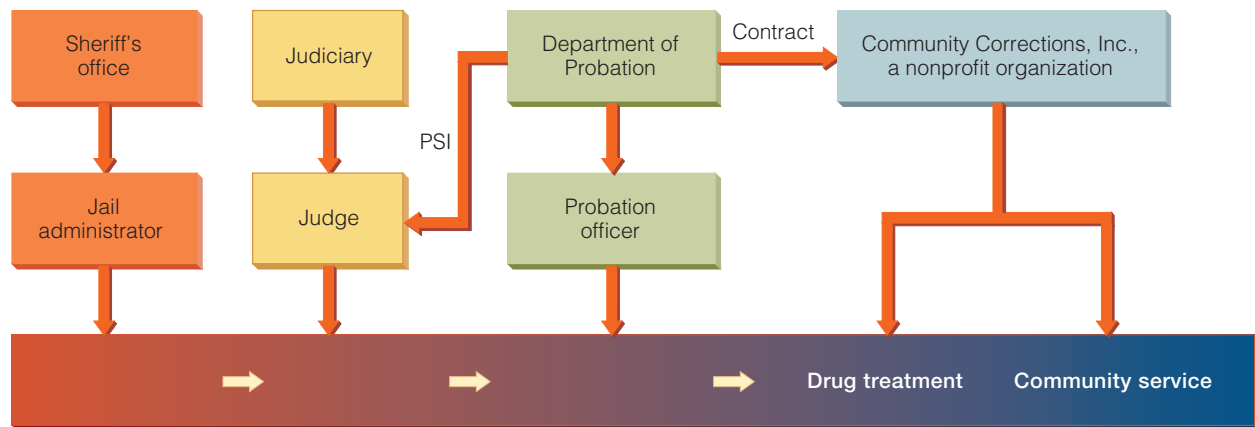
Corrections has a reciprocal relationship with its environment. That is, correctional practices affect the community, and community values and expectations in turn affect corrections. For example, if the prison system provides inadequate drug treatment, people return to the community with the same drug problems they had when they were locked up. When citizens subsequently lose confidence in their corrections system, they tend not to spend tax dollars on its programs.

Feedback

Systems learn, grow, and improve according to the feedback they receive about their effectiveness. When a system's work is well received by its environment, the system organizes itself to continue functioning this way. When feedback is less positive, the system adapts to improve its processes.

Although feedback is crucial for corrections, this system has trouble obtaining useful feedback. Success in corrections is best indicated by absence, such as no new crimes or no prison riots—that is, something that *might* have occurred but did not. Recognizing these absences is difficult at best. By contrast, when corrections fails, everybody knows: The media report new

Case 1: Two years of probation, drug treatment, and 50 hours of community service.



Case 2: Two years of incarceration to be followed by community supervision on parole.

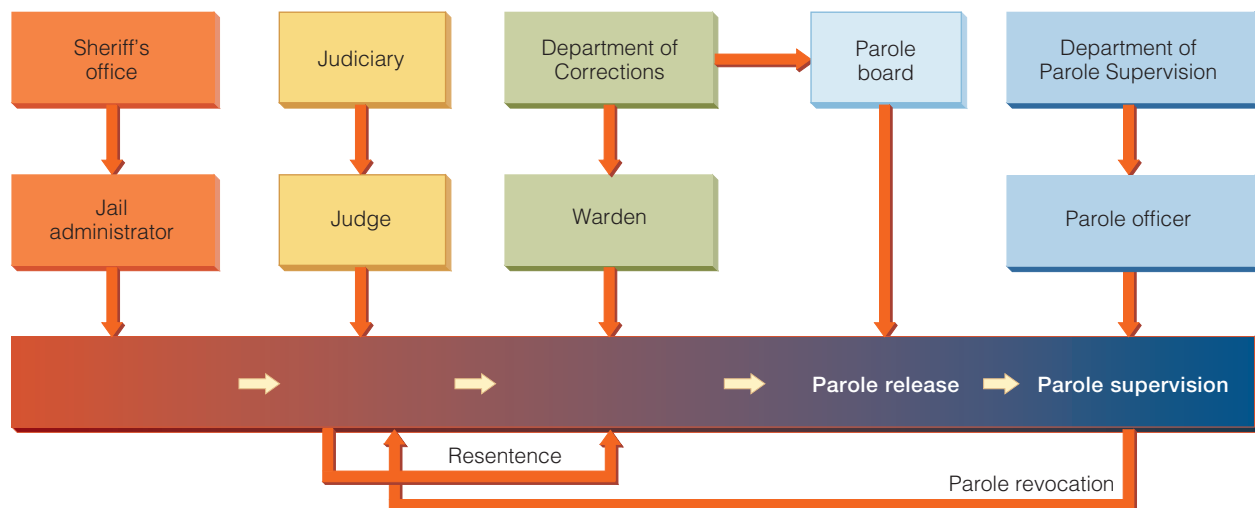


FIGURE 1.3 Interconnectedness of Correctional Agencies in Implementing Sentences

Note the number and variety of agencies that deal with these two cases. Would you expect these agencies to cooperate effectively with one another? Why or why not?

crimes or expose scandals in administration. As a result, corrections systems and their environments tend to overrespond to correctional failure but remain less aware of success.

Complexity

As systems grow and mature, they tend to become more complex. Thirty years ago, the “three Ps”—probation, prisons, and parole—dominated correctional practice. Today, all kinds of activities come under the heading of corrections, from pretrial drug treatment to electronically monitored home confinement, from work centers, where people can earn money for restitution, to private, nonprofit residential treatment programs.

The complexity of the corrections system is illustrated by the variety of public and private agencies that compose the corrections system of Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, as Table 1.1 shows. Note that correctional clients are supervised by various service agencies operating at different levels of government (state, county, municipal) and in different branches of government (executive and judicial).

TABLE 1.1 The Distribution of Correctional Responsibilities in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Note the various correctional functions performed at different levels of government by different agencies. What correctional agencies does your community have?

Correctional Function	Level and Branch of Government	Responsible Agency
Adult Corrections		
Pretrial detention	Municipal/executive	Department of Human Services
Probation supervision	County/courts	Court of Common Pleas
Halfway houses	Municipal/executive	Department of Human Services
Houses of corrections	Municipal/executive	Department of Human Services
County prisons	Municipal/executive	Department of Human Services
State prisons	State/executive	Department of Corrections
County parole	County/executive	Court of Common Pleas
State parole	State/executive	Board of Probation and Parole
Juvenile Corrections		
Detention	Municipal/executive	Department of Public Welfare
Probation supervision	County/courts	Court of Common Pleas
Dependent/neglect	State/executive	Department of Human Services
Training schools	State/executive	Department of Public Welfare
Private placements	Private	Many agencies
Juvenile aftercare	State/executive	Department of Public Welfare
Federal Corrections		
Probation/parole	Federal/courts	U.S. courts
Incarceration	Federal/executive	U.S. Bureau of Prisons

Sources: Taken from the annual reports of the responsible agencies.

The Corrections System Today

The U.S. corrections system today employs more than 700,000 administrators, psychologists, officers, counselors, social workers, and others. The federal government, the 50 states, more than 3,000 counties, and uncounted municipalities and public and private organizations administer corrections at an average annual cost of more than \$81 billion, according to one recent estimate.²⁷

Corrections consists of many subunits, each with its own functions and responsibilities. These subunits—probation offices, halfway houses, prisons, and others—vary in size, goals, clientele, and organizational structure. Some are administered in institutions, others in the community. Some are government agencies; others are private organizations contracted by government to provide specific services to correctional clients. A probation office is organized differently from a halfway house or a prison, yet all three are part of the corrections system and pursue the goals of corrections.

However, there are important differences among subunits of the same general type. For example, the organization of a five-person probation office working closely with one judge in a rural setting differs from that of a more bureaucratized 100-person probation office in a large metropolitan system. Such organizational variety may either help or hinder the system of justice.

Federalism, a system of government in which power and responsibility are divided between a national government and state governments, operates in the United States. All levels of government—national, state, county, and municipal—are involved in one or more aspects of

federalism A system of government in which power and responsibilities are divided between a national government and state governments.



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Federal Corrections System Dials Back on Its Agenda of Reform

The federal corrections system is larger than any of the state systems, and it handles all violations of federal law. Community corrections, including pretrial services, probation, and parole, are provided by the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services, which is a part of the U.S. court system. Institutional corrections is operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, a part of the U.S. Department of Justice. There are 92 federal probation offices serving district courts; the U.S. Bureau of Prisons has 110 institutions and 25 residential reentry facilities.

Unlike the situation with state corrections systems, until very recently there has been little pressure to stem the growth of the federal corrections system. Today there are 128,400 people under the supervision of U.S. probation officers, an increase of 10 percent over the last four years. People on parole represent less than 10 percent of the total number supervised by probation. There are 209,600 people incarcerated in the federal system, and since 1990 the federal prison system has grown more rapidly than almost any of the 50 state systems. Just under 20 percent of those who are confined in federal prisons are housed in private facilities or local jails under contract with the federal system.

Concerned about this growth, former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced in 2013 the first significant reform of the federal justice system since the establishment of sentencing guidelines in 1984: “We need to ensure that incarceration is used to punish, deter and rehabilitate—not merely to convict, warehouse and forget.” Under these guidelines, federal prosecutors asked for lower penalties for people convicted of drug crimes, enabling judges to impose less severe sentences. The number of people in federal prisons dropped nearly 10 percent.



AP Images/Alex Brandon

▲ Since Jeff Sessions became the U.S. Attorney General, some federal criminal justice reform proposals have been put on hold.

Under President Trump, with Jeff Sessions as attorney general, this has changed. When he was a U.S. senator from Alabama, Sessions opposed many of the changes that Holder put into play. In his first major policy announcement as the new attorney general, Sessions directed his federal prosecutors to pursue the most-severe penalties possible, including mandatory minimum sentences for people convicted of drug-related crimes. Overturning his predecessor's policy directives signals a return to more of a “get-tough” ethic in the federal justice system.

Sources: Dannielle Kaeble and Lauren E. Glaze, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2015* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016); Sari Horwitz and Matt Zapposky, “Sessions Issues Sweeping New Criminal Charging Policy,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 2017.

the corrections system. The national government operates a full range of correctional organizations to handle people convicted of breaking federal laws; likewise, state and local governments provide corrections for people who have broken their laws. However, most criminal justice and correctional activity takes place at the state level. Less than 3 percent of individuals on probation and parole, and 9 percent of those in prison, are under federal correctional supervision.²⁸ (See “The Federal Corrections System Dials Back on Its Agenda of Reform.”)

Despite the similarity of behaviors that are labeled criminal, important differences appear from state to state among specific definitions of offenses, types and severity of sanctions, and procedures governing the establishment of guilt and subsequent treatment. In addition, many variations in how corrections is formally organized appear at the state and local levels. The corrections systems in California, Florida, and Texas handle almost one-third of all people in state prisons and about one-fourth of all those who are under correctional control in the United States, but each state has developed different organizational configurations to provide corrections (see “The Big Three in Corrections”).



FOCUS ON

CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Big Three in Corrections

Three states from three different regions in the United States dominate the corrections scene: California, Texas, and Florida. They account for 30 percent of all people in state prisons and one-fourth of those under any form of correctional control (see Table 1 for a breakdown of the key numbers).

TABLE 1 The Big Three by the Numbers

	Prison	Probation	Parole
California	129,593	285,681	63,919
Florida	94,481	227,540	5,140
Texas	149,501	388,101	100,699

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, most recent reports for each state.

CALIFORNIA

California used to have the largest state prison system in the country, by far. No longer. The state has undertaken a historically unprecedented policy designed to reduce dramatically the number of people incarcerated in the state's prison system. In the process, California has dropped its prison count by more than one-fourth since the peak in 2007, a reduction of almost 46,000 people—more than the entire state prison populations of all but seven states. The California story is not only an exemplar in what is possible from a prison-reduction standpoint, but it also offers a lesson in the public-policy consequences of a change of this magnitude. The system is still large, housing about one in every ten people in state prisons, but the state has gone from an incarceration rate well above the national average to one of the lowest rates in the West (329 people in prison per 100,000 adult residents, as compared to the national average of 402).

The California adult corrections system is administered by the Adult Authority, and juvenile institutions are administered by the Youth Authority. Both the Adult Authority and the Youth Authority are part of the state government's executive branch. Adult and juvenile probation services are provided by the executive branch at the county level and administered by a chief probation officer. For many years, a portion of the county probation costs was subsidized by the state, but the size of these subsidies started declining in the 1980s. Local taxes pay for jails and probation services, but these taxes have been capped for more than a decade. Local corrections capacity became overloaded when case-loads grew without increases in funding. State correctional facilities were no better off, overcrowded at more than 180 percent capacity. Californians seemed to want to be tough on law violators but didn't want to pay for the repercussions.

In 2006, with every aspect of the corrections system desperately overcrowded, operating with daily chaos, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a "state of emergency." Yet his proposed reforms faced intractable political resistance, especially from law enforcement. So in 2009 the federal courts stepped in and declared the California system unconstitutional, citing chronic overcrowding, woeful health care, and routine violence. The courts ordered newly installed Governor Jerry Brown to reduce the California prison population by at least 40,000, a requirement affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court (*Brown v. Plata*). In response, the legislature enacted the California Public Safety Realignment Act in 2011, which devised a new system of sentencing and correctional policies designed to strengthen local correctional capacity and divert a large number of people from the prison system.

Realignment has changed California's correctional numbers. The prison population has dropped by more than 20 percent since 2011. But probation, parole, and local jail counts have also decreased, and the system's overall numbers are down 43 percent since Schwarzenegger's original declaration of emergency.

Critics of realignment argue that it has made the public less safe, having put some 18,000 people on the streets who would otherwise have been in prison or jail. These fears have fueled by a small, statewide increase in crime in 2016 as well as a handful of heavily publicized new crimes committed by people released from custody because of realignment. Even so, several careful studies show that violent crime has not been affected by realignment and that the only change seems to be a small (2 percent or so) increase in auto thefts stemming from the changes. Overall, crime is down since realignment took effect, and Californians appear to support it. Momentum for cutting down on prisons is so strong that in 2014 Californians overwhelmingly passed Proposition 47, which reduced a list of nonserious felonies to misdemeanors so that people found guilty of them cannot be sent to prison. The fact that felony arrests dropped by more than 50,000 (almost 30 percent) in 2016 foretells continuing reductions in the number of Californians who end up behind bars.

TEXAS

Texas supplanted California with the nation's largest prison system in 2012. Not only is the Texas prison system the biggest; everything about Texas criminal justice is "big." The rate of Texans under correctional control is higher than that of any other state in the Union except Georgia. Nearly one in nine of the nation's people on probation lives in Texas. But the story in Texas is changing, and Texas is among the

(continued)

CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE: The Big Three in Corrections (*continued*)

vanguard of states that seek to reduce the number of people in their prisons.

All adult corrections in Texas are housed under the Department of Criminal Justice, which is supervised by a nine-person board appointed by the governor. This department administers corrections through three separate divisions: institutions, parole supervision, and probation. In addition, the parole board reports to the Board of Criminal Justice. The Institutional Division manages all state custodial facilities and monitors the local jails. The Texas Youth Commission handles all juvenile institutions and aftercare. Organized on a county basis, adult probation and juvenile probation are run separately by chief probation officers locally appointed by the county judiciary. Standards for both probation functions are established and monitored by state authority. Adult probation is monitored by the Department of Criminal Justice; juvenile probation is monitored by the Juvenile Probation Commission. Because Texas has more than 200 counties, coordinating the work of these commissions is extremely complicated.

The Texas imprisonment rate was roughly stable during the 1980s. Then, because of a round of punitive sentencing reforms, the Texas incarceration rate doubled between 1990 and 1996, leading the nation. During this time, Texas corrections operated under something of a siege mentality. After losing a series of lawsuits, Texas prisons had a tight population cap, forcing the rest of the system to absorb growing numbers. But decision-making fragmentation made it nearly impossible to develop a coordinated response to the prison overcrowding problem. A federal judge eventually threatened to fine the state more than \$500,000 per day if it failed to comply with court-ordered standards. In 2010, when Texas's prison population peaked, the Texas Department of Corrections floated a plan to add 17,000 more prison beds at the cost of almost \$1 billion. That led conservatives around the state to take the lead in a broad agenda of criminal justice reform. Since then, the Texas prison population has declined each year, and is now down about 5 percent from the 2010 peak—a number that many Texans are proud of but is roughly the national average drop for that same period. For juvenile justice, though, the numbers are almost astonishing: a 76 percent reduction in confinement in the last decade. Texas has now closed four adult prisons and almost all of its juvenile prisons.

Reforms continue to be on the table in Texas, growing from a coalition that includes the “right-on-crime” conservatives and the ACLU liberals. Recent public opinion surveys show strong support for rehabilitation instead of punishments and nonprison alternatives for people convicted of drug crimes and other nonserious felonies. A bipartisan “Cut50” campaign advocates for reducing Texas

prison numbers by half. The campaign will try to reduce penalties for low-level drug crimes, and there is talk of raising the age of juveniles from 17 to 18. As oil revenues continue to decline, pressure to constrain the costs of corrections remains high. There is strong public support for reform, which has been helped by substantial drops in Texas crime rates. Texas is “big,” not just in size but also in ideas.

FLORIDA

Florida's age demographics make it a bellwether state, meaning the age profile of Florida's residents looks like where the nation is headed: a large number of retirees and a large number of young people. In terms of imprisonment, Florida is certainly following the broader national trend. Since the peak year of 2010, Florida's prison population has declined about 3 percent, as is true for many states. Yet there are two differences for Florida. First, Florida makes prison a priority in sentencing more than other states do. It ranks ninth in prison incarceration rates, but in total correctional population, including probation, parole, and jail, Florida is well below the national average. Second, Florida policy makers have been latecomers to the national debate on how to reduce incarceration.

The state of Florida administers all institutional and community-based correctional services regionally, and regional directors have considerable autonomy. The five regional administrators for adult corrections report to the secretary of the Department of Corrections and manage all institutional and field services. Juvenile corrections is housed within the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and operates in 11 districts. Thus, Florida unifies corrections under the executive branch, with separate adult and juvenile functions. Parole supervision was all but abolished in 1984, when Florida enacted its determinate-sentencing system.

Florida's incarceration rate grew steadily between 1980 and 2010, more than doubling. To stem the growth, Florida administrators created the Community Control Project, providing close supervision (often with electronic monitoring) to divert people from prison. That may be one of the reasons why Florida's prison admissions have been dropping for almost two decades. Yet prison populations have stayed stubbornly high because, without parole, people are serving much longer prison terms than before.

Florida Governor Rick Scott was elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility. Fiscal conservatives in Florida have now started to confront the expensive implications of their burgeoning prison system. The Charles Koch Institute, a conservative think tank, has been publicizing recent polls in Florida that show strong support for prison reform: Three-quarters of the respondents believe that the prison system is too expensive; two-thirds think that too many nonviolent

people are behind bars. The realization that most Floridians are ready for significant changes in the way the justice system works has created momentum for reform. There has been something of a moratorium on new get-tough legislation that would add to the prison population, and in 2016 the legislature removed aggravated assault from the list of crimes subject to the state's mandatory 10/20-life sentence statute. In 2017 the Senate passed a bill that would eliminate mandatory prison sentences for people convicted of nonviolent crimes.

Sources: California: Most recent data available from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics; U.S. Department of Justice; Public Policy Institute of California; *California's Historic Corrections Reforms* (San Francisco: Public

Policy Institute of California, 2016); Jody Sundt, Emily J. Salisbury, and Mark G. Harmon, "Is Downsizing Prisons Dangerous? The Effect of California's Realignment Act on Public Safety," *Criminology & Public Policy*, 15 (no. 2, 2016): 315–41; *Brown v. Plata*, 563 US 2011. Texas: Prison Policy Initiative, www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/TX.html, 2016; Scott Henson, "Raising the Bars: What's Next for Texas Criminal Justice Reform?" *The Observer*, www.texasobserver.org/raising-the-bars-criminal-justice-reform, March 21, 2016; Angela Thielo, Frances T. Cullen, Derek M. Cohen, and Cecilia Chouhy, "Rehabilitation in a Red State: Support for Correctional Reform in Texas," *Criminology & Public Policy*, 15 (no. 1, 2016): 137–71. Florida: Charles Koch Institute, *New Poll: Strong Majority of Floridians Agree the Time for Criminal Justice Reform Is Now*, www.charleskochinstitute.org/majority-floridians-agree-criminal-justice-reform-now, September 19, 2016; Prison Policy Initiative, www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/FL.html, 2016; Mary Ellen Klas, "In Major Tallahassee Reversal, Mandatory Sentences Called a Waste of Taxpayer Money," *Miami Herald*, February 21, 2017.

The extent to which the different levels of government are involved in corrections varies by state. The scope of the states' criminal laws is much broader than that of federal criminal laws. Almost 200,000 adults are under federal correctional supervision in more than 100 federal prisons.²⁹ The last official count of U.S. prisons listed 110 federal prisons and about 1,000 state prisons. Jails are operated mainly by local governments, but in six states they are integrated with the state prison system.

As noted in Figure 1.4 on the next page, criminal justice costs are borne by each level of government, with well over 90 percent of correctional costs falling on state and local governments. In most states the agencies of community corrections—probation and intermediate sanctions—are run by the county government and are usually part of the judicial branch. However, in some jurisdictions the executive branch runs them, and in several states this part of corrections is run by statewide organizations.

That the United States is a representative democracy complicates corrections. Officials are elected, legislatures determine the objectives of the criminal law system and appropriate the



Andrew Mangan/The New York Times/Redux

▲ *Correctional policies and practices are affected by a number of outside forces. Supreme Court decisions can impose major changes on corrections, for example, and those changes take place immediately.*

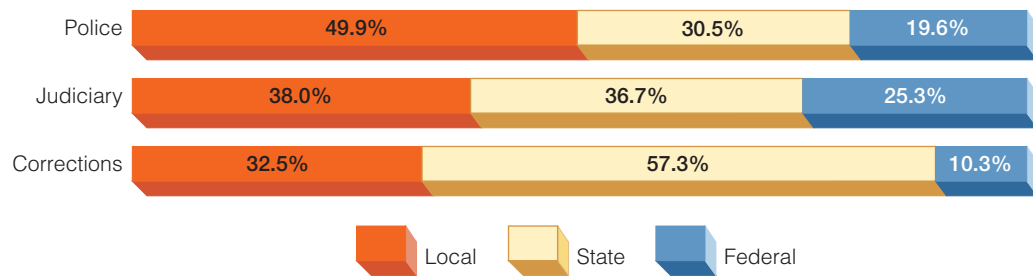


FIGURE 1.4 Distribution of Justice System Expenditures by Level of Government

State and local governments bear the brunt of the costs of correctional activities.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Percentage Distribution of Expenditure of the Justice System by Type of Government, Fiscal 2012* (preliminary findings).

resources to carry out those objectives, and political parties channel public opinion to office-holders on such issues as law and order. Over time the goals of correctional policies have shifted. For example, between 1940 and 1970, corrections was oriented toward liberal rehabilitative policies; since about 1970, conservative, get-tough crime control policies have influenced corrections. Questions of crime and justice are thus inescapably public questions, subject to all the pressures and vagaries of the political process.

Clearly, corrections encompasses a major commitment on the part of U.S. society to deal with people convicted of criminal law violations. The increase in the number of people under supervision in the past decade has caused a major expansion of correctional facilities, staff, and budgets; some might say that corrections is now a big business.

Key Issues in Corrections

Like all other government services, corrections is buffeted by frequently shifting social and political forces that greatly complicate administration. These forces are also part of what make corrections so interesting to examine. In this section we describe some of the controversies, issues, and themes that arise in the study of corrections. These are divided into three main areas: managing the correctional organization, working with people, and upholding social values.

Managing the Correctional Organization

The ways in which different correctional organizations are managed depend on various factors, including goals, funding, bureaucracy, and interagency coordination.

Goals The theory inherent in the term *corrections*, the assumption that people who have broken the law can be “corrected,” faces much dispute. For example, some people believe that most of them can never be rehabilitated, that only social maturation can convince most people to abide by the law. Others argue that the penal system should not be concerned with the future behavior of people who have committed a crime, that the only appropriate response to wrongdoing is punishment. Yet from the end of World War II until the 1970s, the corrective function was so widely accepted that treatment and reform were virtually the only issues in criminal justice deemed worthy of serious attention.

Corrections has constantly faced the challenge of deciding which goals to emphasize. Conflict over goals stems precisely from the shifting forces that directly influence corrections. For example, political ideology often colors the analysis and development of correctional policy. Liberals believe that corrections should follow one path; conservatives prefer another. Goals set by conflicting interests do not usually mesh.

In response to conflicting political forces, correctional leaders offer conflicting (or at least divergent) justifications for a given policy in order to maintain an appearance of consensus. For



Andy Cross/Getty Images

▲ Corrections operates under a system of values, and these values can vary from one corrections system to another. How is policy affected by having different values guide different corrections systems?

instance, a program of private-industry employment for people in prison can be commended to liberals as rehabilitative training, to free-enterprise advocates as expansion of the private sector, and to conservatives as a get-tough policy designed to make people put in prison pay the costs of their incarceration. Although this tactic helps preserve support for the prison's industrial operations, it also creates managerial problems for correctional leaders because when the program is implemented, the goals of treatment, profit, and punishment may well conflict.

Further, correctional leaders who state precise objectives risk alienating various important groups or constituencies. Thus, they tend to frame goals as vague generalities, such as “to protect” or “to rehabilitate.” The effects of this vagueness extend well beyond public relations; often it is difficult for correctional staff members to make goal-oriented choices because they are unsure of what the leaders want. This conflicted situation has led some observers to argue that corrections does not work to achieve an overriding goal but rather seeks to balance stated and unstated goals so that no single goal is sacrificed.

Funding At all political levels, corrections is only one of many services operated by government and paid for by tax revenues. Thus, corrections must vie for funding not only with other criminal justice agencies but also with agencies supporting education, transportation, social welfare, and so on (see “For Critical Thinking”). Per capita spending on all criminal justice activities ranges from less than \$100 in West Virginia to more than \$400 in Alaska and New York.

Understandably, corrections does not always receive the funding it needs; people may want garbage collected regularly more than they want quality correctional work performed. Recall, too, that corrections is largely invisible until a problem occurs, such as when a person on parole commits a heinous crime or a prison riot breaks out. An even greater difficulty stems from the perceived undesirability of those corrected; it is not easy to win larger budgets to help people who have broken the law.



FOR CRITICAL THINKING

For many people, the huge cost of corrections, especially prison, is the main reason that it seems like the time has come to reduce the corrections system. But is money alone a sufficient justification for this view? After all, the corrections system is an important public investment through which we achieve justice and promote public safety.

1. Is it fair to let financial pressures determine how much we are willing to spend to promote justice and public safety?
2. Do we need to consider other issues to determine whether the U.S. corrections system is too large?
3. What might some of those reasons be? Are they more important than money?

Conflict among the branches and levels of government also creates problems for corrections. Local governments are often responsible for correctional programs for people convicted of minor crimes; state governments handle those who will be longer term because of their more-serious crimes. Often the two levels vie for operating funds, and each seeks to avoid responsibility for people supervised by the other. Given this fragmentation, correctional services and programs may overlap.

Officials of the executive branch often complain that legislatures enact correctional codes and prescribe operational responsibilities without providing sufficient funds to carry them out. Both branches complain that court rulings set unfair constraints on their ability to handle assigned caseloads. In developing and implementing policies, correctional agents must consider not only the sociopolitical environment but also the government setting in which corrections functions.

One result of funding squabbles is dispute over organizational “turf.” Most probation offices are attached to the judiciary and funded by county governments. Do they then fall within the domain of corrections, or do they belong to the judiciary? Should the sheriff be in charge of transporting people from jail to prison, or should the prison administrators be responsible? To what extent should social service agencies become involved with the needs of correctional clients in a halfway house? Should parole officers or the police be responsible for tracking people down who have violated the conditions of their release?

Struggles for resources also occur between corrections and related social service agencies. A department of corrections may vie with a department of mental health for funds to set up a drug rehabilitation program; both departments may view the new resources as a way to expand. Often, correctional departments take such empire-building actions to keep themselves strong and viable.

street-level bureaucrats

Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their work, granting access to government programs and providing services within them.

Bureaucracy Michael Lipsky has provided perhaps the most vivid portrait of the problems facing correctional workers. He coined the term **street-level bureaucrats** to refer to the following:

Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, [including] teachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officers, health workers and many other public employees who grant access to government programs and provide services within them.³⁰

Lipsky’s provocative generalizations about street-level bureaucrats apply to virtually all individuals who have face-to-face contact with people under the authority of the corrections system. They work with inadequate resources and face ever-increasing demands. Frequently, they find themselves theoretically obligated to provide higher-quality treatment for their clients than they can afford. Thus, street-level bureaucrats soon learn that “with any single client they probably could interact flexibly and responsibly. But if they did this with too many clients, their capacity to respond flexibly would disappear.”³¹ For example, probation officers may feel obliged to find jobs for their clients. If they took time to do so, however, they could not provide other services. An officer may genuinely desire to work hard for those who show promise, but not for others. Officers facing such conflicts may become alienated from their clients because they cannot satisfy their clients’ needs: Maintaining a working relationship proves too frustrating.

Limited resources force administrators of service bureaucracies to carefully monitor the way workers apply their time and energies. Bureaucracies that process people develop categories for their clients, seeking to use personnel or agency resources in the best way and to succeed with some clients, even though they cannot succeed with all.

Lipsky concludes that delivering street-level policy through bureaucracy presents an inherent contradiction. One person delivering service to another suggests human interaction, caring, and responsibility. But delivering service through a bureaucracy suggests detached, inflexible treatment based on limited resources. Conflicting, ambiguous goals, combined with difficulties in measuring work performance, may reduce effectiveness and commitment to the work. Thus, the bureaucratic model guarantees that services are delivered only up to a point and that goals are never fully achieved.

Is Lipsky’s conclusion too pessimistic, or just realistic? Certainly, correctional workers and their clients face formidable obstacles. Workers must make daily decisions under conditions of technical uncertainty and sporadic negative feedback; clients must comply both with legal

mandates and with less explicit parameters established by the needs of the correctional organization. Yet bureaucratic worker–client relationships offer benefits as well. As their time and tasks grow more structured, workers have less discretion and thus less capacity to abuse their positions. Further, limited organizational resources force agencies to clarify their goals and to direct services toward those people who most need staff time. Given the extensive power of correctional agencies, conditions in bureaucracies may restrain abuse of state power.

Interagency Coordination Managing correctional agencies is further complicated by the fact that most corrections systems comprise several loosely related organizations that are themselves bureaucracies. Thus, decision making is dispersed—no one person can implement the full range of correctional practices. For example, the sheriff who runs the jail and the probation officer who runs the pretrial release program are both affected by jail crowding and delays in sentencing hearings. Even so, they may resist working together because each is busily protecting an area of managerial control. Furthermore, line workers in corrections, those in direct contact with the system’s clients, seldom influence organizational policies, even though they must implement those policies daily. Corrections itself cannot determine the type and number of its clients. Others in the criminal justice system, primarily judges, do that, and correctional officials cannot halt or regulate the flow. Thus, the efforts of correctional workers are sometimes sporadic, uncoordinated, or inconsistent merely because various bureaucracies are loosely interconnected.

Within the corrections system a great deal of policy is formally interconnected. In some states as many as half or more of all people who go to prison do so because they have violated a requirement of probation or parole; in other states these rule violators are less frequently sent to prison. In other words, the enforcement policies of the supervising agencies help determine prison intake. In most systems, however, prison authorities have little control over policies for enforcing probation rules. Similarly, a probation officer’s caseload is determined by the number of people on probation and the length of their probation terms: Even though officers have a finite amount of time for supervision, they generally have little or no control over their caseloads. As people flow through the system after being convicted of a crime—from probation to revocation to prison to work release to parole—one agency determines the workload of the next.

These informal interconnections create an uneasy tension. Agency directors understandably may take steps to protect their piece of the system from encroachment by the rest of it. Each correctional unit commonly insulates itself from the pressures faced by the other units because the others often produce unwanted caseload increases; for example, crowded jail conditions may encourage judges to put more people on probation.

This isolation makes it more likely that the other units will run into problems resulting from a lack of cooperation and that these problems will haunt all the units when the corrections system as a whole is criticized.

“People work” is central to corrections. Staff must work closely with clients, use new technologies, engage in exchange relationships, and follow uncertain strategies. ▼

Working with People

“People work” is central to corrections because the raw material of the system consists of people—those who work in the system and those who are under the system’s authority. In doing their work, correctional staff must deal with uncertain technologies, engage in exchange relationships with their clients, and follow uncertain correctional strategies.

Professional Versus Nonprofessional Staff The term *staff* in the corrections system refers to probation officers, correctional officers, counselors, and others responsible for the daily management and supervision of people under correctional control. Correctional staff includes both professional and nonprofessional employees. For example, psychologists, counselors, and administrators usually hold at least one college degree. They view themselves as members of various professions, with all the rights that adhere to such callings. They



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