

The Correctional Officer

The Correctional Officer

A Practical Guide

Second Edition

Gary F. Cornelius

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Dedication

The corrections field is a demanding one, and sometimes a thankless one. I have been fortunate to pass on my observations and experiences to the current and new generation of correctional officers. I dedicate it to them, as I am going out to pasture and you all are coming in.

I could not have done this without the support and guidance of several people. I dedicate this work to my children Gary Jr., Amber and the loving spirit of their late mother and my wife, Nancy.

I also dedicate it to a loving person, Deborah. Also, my friend and colleague Tim Manley provided support when the going got rough. Finally, little Isaiah and his dad Pernell will hopefully pick this book up in later years and treasure it.

I love you all and thanks.

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About the Author

Lt. Gary F. Cornelius retired in 2005 from the Fairfax County (VA) Office of the Sheriff, after serving over 27 years in the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. His career included assignments in confinement, work release, programs and classification.

He has been an adjunct faculty member of the Administration of Justice Department at George Mason University from 1986–2009, where he taught four corrections courses. He also teaches corrections in service sessions in Virginia, and has performed training and consulting for the American Correctional Association, the American Jail Association, and the National Institute of Justice. *The Correctional Officer: A Practical Guide Second Edition* is Gary's ninth book in corrections. His most recent books are *The American Jail: Cornerstone of Modern Corrections*, 2008, from Pearson and *The Art of the Con: Avoiding Offender Manipulation Second Edition* 2009, both available from the American Correctional Association. In 2008 he co-founded ETC, LLC: Education and Training in Corrections with Timothy P. Manley, MSW, LCSW. Gary resides in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Introduction

Correctional officer... When most people hear the words, they think of a “guard”—a uniformed person patrolling Spartan looking cell blocks, keeping an eye on sinister looking inmates. In reality highly trained, professional and motivated men and women patrol the cellblocks, hallways, recreation yards, towers and walls of our nation’s jails, prisons and lockups.

The job of a correctional officer in the 21st century is a demanding one. The days of a correctional officer being a “watchdog” are long gone. Gone also is the notion that correctional officers are merely “custodians” of wrongdoers. The philosophy of merely warehousing and keeping an eye on inmates has given way to such revolutionary concepts such as direct supervision, improved electronic monitoring, improved medical care, and alternatives to traditional forms of incarceration.

Another demand on the correctional officer of today is the keeping up with information about offenders. More knowledge is available now thanks to the Internet and improved communications about inmates. More information is now known and being updated about offenders’ medical issues, mental health, gang affiliations and civil rights, to name a few. There have been new developments in institutional security and procedures; for example the development of emergency procedures, correctional emergency response teams and new methods of security. Correctional officers face dangers—for some working in correctional facilities and being around offenders have resulted in injuries and death.

Public opinion and criminal justice policies throughout the 1980s and 1990s resulted in mandatory sentencing, “three strikes and you’re out” and the abolition of parole in many states. These changes, combined with more research on inmate violence, security threat groups, recent legislative acts and court decisions all have impacted the job of the correctional officer. Today’s correctional officers need as much knowledge and skills training as possible in order to be the best and safest at their jobs.

This book while concise, is a relevant “hands on” informational tool for correctional officers. Its purpose is to be a training resource for correctional offi-

cers in correctional facilities such as lockups, prisons, jails and community corrections facilities. This book is specifically designed for entry level and in service training with the following goals:

- To serve as a written training guide for corrections agency instructors and field training personnel.
- To provide an understanding into the history, philosophy and evolution of past and present correctional systems.
- To serve as a guide for correctional officer job skills training.
- To provide an understanding of the sociological, educational and behavioral characteristics of inmates.
- To give the correctional officer an understanding of the positive traits and characteristics needed to maintain a successful career in corrections.
- To give understanding as to the future of corrections and the skills needed by the correctional officer to meet future challenges.

This version has been updated and will be hopefully more reader friendly. In the first chapter, the previous edition focused on the three correctional ideologies. In this revised version, there is a discussion of the functions of corrections and how they fit in and overlap into each ideology. The text is updated throughout to reflect current statistics and operational practices, as well as current information on offenders. The final chapter, The Rights of Inmates, has been modified to provide a good, common sense look at liability, the basic civil rights of inmates and has a strong emphasis on how correctional officers can avoid inmate litigation.

This book can be used in an undergraduate class in corrections, especially where the instructor wishes to interject a realistic view of operations and staff in different types of correctional facilities. By doing so, college students considering a career in corrections will be provided a good look at the field. No matter in what way the book is used, it is a valuable resource for the “unsung heroes” of the corrections field—the correctional officers.

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