

## **Correctional Fundamentals**



# Correctional Fundamentals

A Personal Narrative Approach

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## Preface

At one point in time, a discussion of corrections might not have taken too long. Legal codes, if they even existed, were much shorter. The range of punishments was less diverse. Perhaps most importantly, when punishments were imposed, the state generally took no further interest in the offender. As time has gone on, though, corrections have become more complicated. Incarceration, probation, and parole, three of the more modern forms of correctional supervision, are modern inventions. The range of community corrections programs seems to grow by the day. Legal codes are much longer, and the courts have taken a progressively active role in corrections. The growing complexity of corrections is important for two reasons. The first reason is if you want to become knowledgeable about corrections, that takes more time. The second reason is if you want to gain this knowledge, it takes an ever-lengthening textbook to tell this information. Many corrections books approach 20 chapters, and some are even longer. If you want such a textbook, ours is not for you.

When writing this book, we wanted to provide an overview of corrections but a much shorter version. Thus, when we say “correctional fundamentals,” we attempted to provide the most crucial information regarding corrections but not the most complete telling possible. In doing so, we present an overview of corrections in 10 chapters. Within these chapters, we believe we cover the most crucial issues. If you need a more comprehensive reading, perhaps you might look elsewhere, but then again, why not start with us first?

In addition to providing an abridged textbook on corrections, we also wanted to provide something else. Corrections, like a great many other things, is made up by people. If there were no offenders, we would not have to punish people. If we did not punish people, there would no need for correctional workers, or at

least there would be a lot less of them. Essentially, what we are trying to say is that people are an important part of corrections. If we only told you how many people are under correctional control or how many people work as jailors or correctional officers, you might get a small picture of who these people are, but we wanted to go further. Thus, within the book, we include many people's narratives. These people graciously provided us with many aspects of their life stories, but most importantly, what it is like to be a part of the correctional system. While we are providing a textbook that is shorter on details, we hope these narratives will give you a fuller idea of the American correctional experience. Many textbooks are thick in terminology, or bold terms, that your professors ask you to memorize, but they also seem to have moved away from the human part of this field. The criminal justice system is often viewed as the many parts and agencies that comprise it, but we would argue that it should be viewed through the lens of the people who actually live in it. We hope this book will help to restore the human voice that is too often lost in traditional textbooks about corrections. In doing so, we organized our book into 10 chapters.

In Chapter 1, we will provide a brief history of American corrections. This will include a discussion of historical legal codes and what punishment was like in early America. In particular, we want to provide you some sense of how American corrections has evolved over time.

In Chapter 2, we discuss the different philosophies of corrections. Some of these philosophies are specifically relevant to corrections, but many of them you may have studied in general criminological theory.

In Chapter 3, we discuss the various ways in which legal matters govern corrections. Within this section, we discuss the constitutional rights of inmates, legislation, the courts, and other important legal mechanisms that guide corrections.

In Chapter 4, we discuss incarceration in the United States. Incarceration occurs within two different types of facilities: jails and prisons. Some people seem to use these two terms interchangeably, but, as we discuss, they are quite different.

In Chapter 5, we discuss probation and parole. We will provide some history of how both are treated in the modern day.

In Chapter 6, we discuss community corrections. Community corrections have grown considerably in the United States, both in breadth and scope. While we will not give an exhaustive list of these sanctions, an overview of the most common types will be provided.

In Chapter 7, we discuss life in correctional facilities. This will cover what it is like for inmates who are doing time in jails and prisons.

In Chapter 8, we discuss juvenile corrections. Essentially unknown before the 1900s, the juvenile corrections systems is both similar and different from the adult correctional system.

In Chapter 9, we discuss correctional facility workers. Working in these facilities can be both a trying and rewarding experience. If you are at all interested in a career in corrections, this chapter will give you some idea of what to expect.

In Chapter 10, we discuss rehabilitation programs. The first prison reformers believed that the prison process itself was rehabilitative in nature. Yet, this is not a view that many people have in the modern day. We will discuss some of the different types of rehabilitation programs that are implemented in the American correctional system.

