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A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE SELF-EVALUATION PROJECT AT M.C.I., CONCORD

Massachusetts Department of Correction

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INTRODUCTION

During the months of December, 1969, and January, 1970, a self-evaluation research project was carried out at M.C.I., Concord. The goal of this project was to determine the extent to which the institution measured up to the standards of the American Correctional Association in a number of areas. A questionnaire developed by the American Correctional Association, based on its Manual of Correctional Standards, was administered to a large number of institutional personnel. One of the important aspects of this research, therefore, is that the ratings are the product of those directly involved in a particular institutional operation or program.

A major aim of the self-evaluation project was to provide some systematic information on the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the institution. Such information will provide a basis for short and long range planning for improvements in programs, procedures, and physical facilities.

Another important aspect of this research was to encourage the respondents to evaluate the correctional standards themselves. That is, if a respondent felt that a particular standard was inappropriate, invalid, or irrelevant, he could point this out in specific terms in his response. This kind of critical appraisal of the standards will be very useful to the American Correctional Association for their next revision of the Manual. Eventually, the American Correctional Association plans to use the revised correctional standards as part of an accreditation system for correctional institutions and systems, much like the hospital accreditation process of the American Hospital Association.

METHOD

Many of the employees were asked to respond to the questionnaire because of their position or their specialized knowledge - e.g., the hospital officer was selected to fill out the questionnaire on health and medical services. In addition, all correction officers and senior correction officers were given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the study. All who volunteered were given a particular operation or program to evaluate. In all, 185 questionnaires were completed by employees. Several individuals were asked to fill out questionnaires in more than one area.

There were 15 sets of questionnaires corresponding to 15 chapters in the Manual of Correctional Standards. The areas covered included the following:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Title</u>
19	The Administrative Organization of the Institution
20	The Physical Plant of the Institution
21	Classification
22	Custody and Security
23	Employment of Inmates
24	Discipline
25	Counseling, Casework and Clinical Services
26	Health and Medical Services
27	Food Service
28	Inmate Property Control, Issue Items and Services
29	Chaplaincy Services
30	Education
31	Library Services
32	Recreation
33	Inmate Activities and Privileges

The items or questions in each questionnaire were taken directly from the relevant chapter in the Manual. Each respondent received a copy of the appropriate chapter so that he could read it over before filling out the questionnaire. Thus, each item on the questionnaire could be evaluated in its proper context. Every item was scored with one of the following symbols:

- (X) The provisions or conditions are present to the extent that the item may be positively answered without qualification.
- (-) There is some minor variation or omission of the requirements as described in the Manual.
- (0) The essential factors are missing or so limited as to be ineffective.
- (NA) The item cannot be applied to the local situation. Each use of this symbol required an explanation on an attached form.
- (?) The respondent does not know whether or not the institution meets the conditions or provisions of this item.

Each chapter was rated by a number of evaluators and by a final evaluator. The ratings of the evaluations on each item were summarized for the final evaluator before he made his assessment. However, the final evaluator's rating was not necessarily a recording of the consensus on each item. Rather, it was his judgment as shaped by the opinions of the preliminary evaluators. Where there was a discrepancy in the ratings on a particular item, the final evaluator generally consulted with the preliminary evaluators in order to help him make the most informed response.

Most of the data presented in this report will be based on the ratings of the final evaluator. However, the range of the preliminary evaluators ratings on each chapter will be provided, along with the overall ratings of all evaluators on each chapter. For the most part the ratings will be presented in terms of the percentage of "X" responses for each chapter. In determining the percentage of "X" responses, the "NA" responses and the "?" responses were eliminated from the total number of responses. Therefore, this percentage refers to the number of "X" responses out of those that were rated "X", "-", or "0".

The distribution and collection of the questionnaires and the summary of the ratings of the preliminary evaluators was done by the staff of the Officers

Training Academy. The overall coordination of the project was handled by the Training Officer of M.C.I., Concord. Two of the Deputy Commissioners and the Superintendent of M.C.I., Concord also played a crucial role in initiating and developing this self-evaluation project.

RESULTS

Table I presents the proportion of questions on each chapter that were answered affirmatively by the final evaluator without qualification - i.e., the proportion of "X" responses. As this graph indicates, 52.8% of the total number of standards were completely met. The institution was found to be particularly strong in such areas as Classification (88.2% of the standards were completely met), Chaplaincy Services (83.3%), and Discipline (78.1%). On the other hand, Library Services (2.2%) and Education (15.8%) were two areas where relatively few of the standards were met.

In Table II the chapters are ranked according to the proportion of standards which were completely met. The proportion of standards met on each chapter is compared with the total institutional average (52.8%), and the number of percentage points above or below the total institutional average is presented for each chapter and displayed in the bargraph. The difference ranges from 35.4 percentage points above the average for Classification, to 50.6 points below the average for Library Services.

Table III presents the proportion of "X" responses and the proportion of "-" responses, along with the sum of these two proportions for each chapter. (The "-" response refers to those standards which were considered to be essentially met, but with some minor variation or omission of the requirements). In this table the chapters are ranked according to the "Total" column - i.e., the sum of "X" and "-" responses. This table is of interest because it indicates the

proportion of standards which could be met with only minor changes in practice or policy. For example, 100.0% of the standards under Classification could be completely met with minor changes. It is noteworthy that for the first 12 chapters in this table - Classification through Counselling, Casework and Clinical Services - at least 61.6% of the standards could be met without any major changes. In fact, the average combined "X" and "-" rating for these twelve chapters was 83.0%. On the other hand, for the last three chapters in this table - Employment of Inmates, Education, and Library Services - the highest proportion of standards that could be met with minor changes was 36.4%. The average combined "X" and "-" rating for these three chapters was 26.5%. This means that in these three areas the institution did not come close to meeting 73.5% of the American Correctional Association standards. This finding indicates that significant changes in policies, practices, and facilities will be required in order to bring these three areas more in line with the American Correctional Association standards.

The results presented in Tables I, II, and III have been based exclusively on the ratings of the final evaluator. In Table IV the ratings of all evaluators are taken into consideration. In addition to the ratings of the final evaluators, this table includes the number of evaluators for each chapter, the lowest and the highest rating on every chapter, and the average rating of all the evaluators for each chapter. One important finding spotlighted in this table is the general lack of consensus among evaluators in their ratings of individual chapters. An examination of the difference between the low and the high ratings on each chapter clearly brings out this point. For example, in the chapter on Employment (#13), the difference between the lowest rating and the highest rating of the 18 evaluators was 85.7 percentage points. Indeed, the average difference between the high and the low ratings for the 15 chapters was 44.3 percentage points, and

on 12 of the 15 chapters the difference was greater than 34 percentage points.

Although there seems to be a relatively low degree of consensus among evaluators, there is a strong correlation between the ratings of the final evaluators and the average ratings of all evaluators for the 15 chapters. When the 15 chapters are ranked according to the ratings of the final evaluators and then ranked according to the average of all evaluators, the correlation between these two sets of ranks is statistically significant ($\rho=.807$). The probability of such a strong positive correlation occurring by chance is less than one in a hundred - i.e., $p<.01$. Therefore, despite the lack of consensus among evaluators within each chapter, there is close agreement between the ratings of the final evaluators and the average ratings of all evaluators in terms of the rank of each chapter relative to other chapters.

Summary and Conclusions

The goal of this report was to spotlight the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of M.C.I., Concord by examining the extent to which the institution measured up to the standards of the American Correctional Association in fifteen areas. It was found that the institution was strong in such areas as Classification, Chaplaincy Services, and Discipline, but rather weak with respect to Library Services, Education, and Employment of Inmates. It was noted that several areas could be substantially improved with only minor changes in policies or practices. Two outstanding examples of this were Health and Medical Services, which with minor changes could rise from 57.9% to 89.5% of standards completely met, and Administrative Organization, which could rise from 67.7% to 96.7%. It was also discovered that there was a general lack of consensus among evaluators on many chapters, but there was a very strong positive correlation between the ratings of the final evaluators and the average rating of all evaluators in terms of the relative rank of each of the fifteen chapters.

The study brought out a rather paradoxical situation at the institution. The most outstanding area, as measured by American Correctional Association standards was Classification. However, the weakest areas tended to be those institutional programs to which the classification committee would assign inmates. Table II shows that Classification was the highest ranked chapter (35.4 percentage points above the total institutional average). The five chapters which fell below the total institutional average were all programs (or related to a program, in the case of Library Services) to which the classification committee assigns inmates - i.e., Recreation; Counselling, Casework and Clinical Services; Employment of Inmates; Education; and Library Services. This finding suggests that some improvement in these programs is necessary in order for Classification to become a more effective and meaningful process.

One important issue underlying many of the negative ratings ought to be mentioned - i.e., the complete reconstruction of the institution which is currently under way. Several evaluators stated that they anticipated substantial improvement in their particular chapters when the construction is completed. This is particularly true in the five program areas mentioned above with relatively low ratings. It will be interesting to repeat the self-evaluation process when the construction has been finished in order to measure the extent of the improvements in these areas.

Table I

American Correctional Association Project
 Proportion of Correctional Standards Met

No.	Chapter Title	Item Totals	Item %										%
			10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%	
19	Administrative Organization	31											57.7%
20	Physical Plant	27											72.0%
21	Classification	18											88.2%
22	Custody & Security	59											61.0%
23	Employment	11											36.4%
24	Discipline	34											78.1%
25	Counselling, Case Work & Clinical Service	17											38.5%
26	Health & Medical Services	20											57.9%
27	Food Service	25											63.6%
28	Inmate Property Control, Issue Items & Services	32											75.0%
29	Chaplaincy	33											83.3%
30	Education	57											15.8%
31	Library Services	45											2.2%
32	Recreation	45											40.5%
33	Inmate Activities & Privileges	26											72.0%
	TOTAL	480											52.8%

INTERPRETATION: The Bargraph indicates the proportion of questions on each chapter that were answered affirmatively by the Final Evaluator, without qualification.

Table II

A Comparison of the Differences Between Each Chapter's
Rating and the Total Institutional Average

Total Institutional Average = 52.8%

Chapter		Results		Difference in Percentage Points										
No.	Title	Rating	Difference	-50	-40	-30	-20	-10	0	+10	+20	+30	+40	+50
21	Classification	88.2%	+35.4											
29	Chaplaincy	83.3%	+30.5											
24	Discipline	78.1%	+25.3											
28	Inmate Property Control, Issue Items & Services	75.0%	+22.2											
33	Inmate Activities & Privileges	72.0%	+19.2											
20	Physical Plant	72.0%	+19.2											
19	Administrative Org.	67.7%	+14.9											
27	Food Service	63.6%	+10.8											
22	Custody & Security	61.0%	+ 8.2											
26	Health & Medical Services	57.9%	+ 5.1											
32	Recreation	40.5%	-12.3											
25	Counselling, Case Work & Clinical Services	38.5%	-14.3											
23	Employment	36.4%	-16.4											
30	Education	15.8%	-37.0											
31	Library Services	2.2%	-50.6											

INTERPRETATION: This graph represents the number of percentage points above or below the total institutional average for each chapter. It is based on the Final Evaluators' ratings of standards met, without qualifications.

Table III

A Ranking of the Chapters According to the Combined "X" and "-" Responses

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Chapter</u>	<u>("X")</u>	<u>("-")</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.	Classification	88.2%	11.8%	100.0%
2.	Administrative Organization	67.7%	29.0%	96.7%
3.	Chaplaincy	83.3%	6.7%	90.0%
4.	Health & Medical Services	57.9%	31.6%	89.5%
5.	Discipline	78.1%	9.4%	87.5%
6.	Inmate Property Control Issue Items & Services	75.0%	12.5%	87.5%
7.	Custody & Security	61.0%	23.7%	84.7%
8.	Food Service	63.6%	18.2%	81.8%
9.	Physical Plant	72.0%	8.0%	80.0%
10.	Inmate Activities and Privileges	72.0%	4.0%	76.0%
11.	Recreation	40.5%	21.4%	61.9%
12.	Counselling, Case Work and Clinical Services	38.5%	23.1%	61.6%
13.	Employment of Inmates	36.4%	0.0%	36.4%
14.	Education	15.8%	17.5%	33.3%
15.	Library Services	<u>2.2%</u>	<u>13.3%</u>	<u>15.5%</u>
	Total	52.8%	16.3%	69.1%

Table IV

Final Evaluators

Rank	<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Final Evaluator</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>No. of Evaluators</u>	<u>Range</u>		<u>Average Rating All Evaluators</u>
					<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	
1.	Classification	Director of Treatment	88.2%	12	43.8%	94.4%	82.1%
2.	Chaplaincy	Director of Treatment	83.3%	3	79.3%	83.3%	80.9%
3.	Discipline	Deputy Superintendent	78.1%	24	45.5%	94.1%	74.4%
4.	Inmate Property Control Issue Items & Services	Deputy Superintendent	75.0%	13	40.6%	100.0%	65.3%
5.	Inmate Activities and Privileges	Deputy Superintendent	72.0%	17	65.4%	100.0%	85.0%
6.	Physical Plant	Superintendent	72.0%	19	44.0%	87.5%	62.6%
7.	Administrative Organization	Superintendent	67.7%	9	45.2%	80.6%	62.3%
8.	Food Service	Steward	63.6%	7	24.0%	68.0%	50.3%
9.	Custody and Security	Deputy Superintendent	61.0%	17	38.9%	97.6%	65.9%
10.	Health & Medical Services	Physician	57.9%	5	55.6%	100.0%	77.2%
11.	Recreation	Recreation Officer	40.5%	15	15.6%	67.4%	41.0%
12.	Counselling, Case Work & Clinical Services	Director of Treatment	38.5%	15	35.3%	100.0%	49.3%
13.	Employment	Supervisor of Industries	36.4%	18	0.0%	85.7%	46.4%
14.	Education	Head School Teacher	15.8%	6	7.1%	31.5%	18.9%
15.	Library Services	Head School Teacher	2.2%	5	2.2%	17.1%	8.2%