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Correctional Counselors: Roles, Work Environments, Conflicts, and Challenges

■ The Need for Correctional Counseling

This chapter gives an overview of the background information related to correctional counseling. The issues examined include the current need for educated counselors in corrections, a history of correctional counseling, basic characteristics that separate correctional counseling from other counseling practices, correctional counselors' responsibilities, as well as the types of competence and challenges for the counselors. Familiarity with the knowledge prepares readers for contents in subsequent chapters.

The criminal justice system consists of a complex and fragmented mixture of many agencies and programs in federal, state, and local jurisdictions that form three interconnected systems: law enforcement, law adjudication, and corrections. Although jails and prisons are the most visible parts of the correctional system, pretrial and posttrial, community-based correctional programs and work release and halfway release programs are inseparable parts of the structure. The goal of the system is both to punish and to rehabilitate (Muraskin, 2005).

Statistics

The correctional population in the United States reached a new record of over 7 million at the end of 2005 (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2006a, 2006b). With only about 5% of the world's population, the United States incarcerates

more than 2 million people, or a quarter of the world's 8 million prisoners (Mair & Mair, 2003). In addition, over 4.9 million adult men and women were under federal, state, or local probation or parole jurisdiction at year-end 2005 (BJS, 2006a, 2006b).

The increasing offender population in corrections in the United States is directly correlated with the reactions of policymakers, politicians, and legislators. They believe that expediting solutions to the crime problem involves building more prisons and passing “get tough” sentencing laws that increased the frequency and length of prison terms. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, 49 states passed or expanded mandatory minimum sentencing laws covering a variety of drug offenses and violent crimes. Most states enacted “truth-in-sentencing” laws that required violent offenders to serve a fixed portion of their prison terms. Many states passed three-strike laws that mandated long prison terms without parole for habitual offenders. These policy changes increased prison populations sharply (Parent & Barnett, 2004).

The rising correctional population is not only produced by the increase in severe punishments. Crime and criminal behavior result from the interaction of many variables, including sociological, psychological, and legal factors. It is certain, however, that building more prisons has not and will not solve the crime problem.

Demand and Supply

The large correctional population creates the need for educated counselors who have the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to work with correctional clients. Competent counselors should be able to play an effective role in counseling multicultural clients, adhering to social justice, discerning the clients' true problems, selecting and implementing interventions, and reducing recidivism.

There seems to be a mismatch between the demand for correctional counselors and the supply. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006–2007 edition), employment in this field (probation officers and correctional treatment specialists) is projected to grow about 9 to 17% through 2014. In addition to the job openings as a result of growth, many jobs will be created by replacement needs, especially by the expected retirement of large numbers of correctional staff. Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists held about 93,000 jobs in 2004. Most jobs are in state or local government, though some are employed by the U.S. courts and by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons. In general, correctional counselors may work in federal or state prisons, jails, community corrections (e.g., probation and parole), and facilities for juvenile offenders.

Education Qualifications

The education qualifications for probation officers, correctional treatment specialists, and correctional social workers or counselors vary by state, but most employers require a bachelor's degree (and preferably a master's degree) in social work, criminal justice, psychology, or a related field, or a bachelor's degree with extensive coursework in counseling. Additional requirements by most correctional agencies are that all correctional counselors show a demonstrated interest in working in corrections and a belief that helping to rehabilitate or habilitate offenders is a worthy calling.

Opportunities

A career in correctional counseling provides individuals with a great opportunity to use their knowledge, skills, and values to positively affect individuals as well as their communities and society. The following points elaborate on the opportunities:

1. Counselors can help correctional clients to reach their optimal growth, development, and well-being and to live a crime-free life. They work with individuals in need who are themselves the victims of crime, sexual abuse, family violence, discrimination, and other social problems.
2. Counselors are often required to work both in and outside the correctional system, interacting and cooperating with family members, social service agencies, groups, community, victims, and other staff in the justice system to enhance the safety and well-being of the community and general public.
3. Counselors are given many opportunities to develop and apply counseling theories and practice.

Correctional counseling thus influences the functioning of society and the smooth operation of the criminal justice system. Through the process of assessment, guidance, and effective intervention and treatment of offenders, correctional counselors help clients to function well in prison or community settings and to balance their mental state and interpersonal relationships. Any individual improvement in social-cognitive capacity, thinking, motivation, emotions, and behavior, regardless of how insignificant it is, will benefit family, community, and society.

■ A History of Correctional Counseling

According to Schrink and Hamm (1989) and to Gendreau, Goggin, French, and Smith (2006), the history of correctional counseling in the United States may be divided into three stages: (1) from the 1870s to 1945, (2) from 1945 to the mid-1970s, and (3) from the mid-1970s to the present.

Stage 1: 1870s to 1945

Well before the turn of the 20th century, correctional counseling in the United States was initiated and sustained by reform-minded people—from probation and parole officers, clergymen, teachers to a wide variety of other persons working in the corrections system. In addition, advancement in the treatment of offenders had been initiated by concerned citizens from outside the criminal justice system. They had volunteered their time, energy, and personal resources and contributed to this nation's tradition of popular justice. Rather than applying a series of academic research findings or a needs assessment of the criminal justice system, correctional counseling in the early stages was trial and error, struggling to find ways to alleviate the pain of incarcerated individuals rejected by society.

Stage 2: 1945 to the Mid-1970s

After World War II, the rehabilitative ideal had become the preeminent corrections philosophy in North America. In 1954, the American Prison Association was renamed the American Correctional Association, and prisons became known as correctional institutions. Prison treatment programs—for example, individual and group counseling, behavior modification, and vocational and educational programming—were widely implemented. Although systematic research to evaluate counseling programs and services was still lacking, counseling became popular, especially in the 1960s. During this period, correctional counseling programs were boosted by the concept of rehabilitation being the penal ideology. Starting in the mid-1970s, however, the idea that offenders can be rehabilitated was seriously questioned in political and academic circles. Martinson's (1974) claim that “nothing works” represented a noticeable attack on rehabilitation as the goal of corrections. Researchers had identified many weaknesses in Martinson's work, however. For example, about 40 to 60% of the 231 studies he had reviewed, included reports of *positive* effects on at least some types of offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). Martinson's claim did not stop new research on the effect of counseling in reducing recidivism. For example, the report by Kadish, Glaser, Calhoun, and Risler (1999) supported the effectiveness of counseling services. In their study about the effect of Juvenile Counseling and Assessment Program (JCAP) in Georgia, individual and group counseling services were provided for 55 adjudicated delinquent youths (aged 9–17 years) over a 4- to 6-month period. The recidivism rates of the youths who had received counseling services were compared to the recidivism rates of a control group of 55 adjudicated youths who had *not* received counseling. A significant difference in the frequency of reoffending was found between the two groups. Of those juvenile delinquents who received counseling, only 25% reoffended, whereas 64% of the youths in the control sample reoffended. A systematic review of the social problem-solving

approach with cognitive-behavioral methods indicates that this approach reduces the misconduct of offenders with deficient social problem-solving skills, childhood aggression, personality disorders, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide risk, and criminal activities to a varying degree (McGuire & McGuire, 2005). French and Gendreau's (2006) analysis of 68 studies involving 21,467 offenders showed that cognitive-behavioral and other prison programs reduced institutional misconduct and recidivism.

Stage 3: Mid-1970s to the Present

During this period, the political atmosphere has shifted to devaluating correctional treatment. As a result of the political climate, most correctional counselors are assigned responsibilities that are not strictly counseling and treatment activities.

Opponents to correctional treatment emphasize a “just desert” model, or doing the crime and doing the time. The hard-line approach to correctional programs is well supported in spite of the lack of consensus in research studies concerning the effectiveness of retribution or deterrence as a crime-control strategy. Great disagreement occurs between the proponents and opponents of correctional treatment/counseling, much like the case for capital punishment (Schrink & Hamm, 1989).

■ The Meaning of Correctional Counseling

Counseling involves the implementation of practices that help individuals, groups, and organizations function optimally by assessing and changing personal and interpersonal dysfunctions that occur in many areas—emotional adjustments, relationship problems, career planning, vocational and educational issues, health problems). Individuals need counseling to improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, and resolve conflicts (see Counseling Psychology Division 17 of the American Psychological Association, 1999; Todd & Bohart, 2003). The reorientation of individuals is shared by all helping professionals—from counseling psychologists to social workers.

Although correctional counseling has the same mission as other counseling professions, it includes the following unique characteristics: (1) the characteristics of correctional clients; (2) the training of those who perform correctional counseling; (3) the settings for correctional counseling; and (4) the correctional counselor's responsibilities.

The Characteristics of Correctional Clients

The correctional population is different from other clients because most are **involuntary clients**—offenders who are convicted of one or more crimes

(felonies or misdemeanors or both) and are serving mandatory sentences either in incarceration or in the community. Some of them are uncommunicative, hostile, or angry, and they may be physically aggressive. Shearer and Ogan (2002) characterized this type of attitude as clients' "resistance," which includes various beliefs such as the sense of isolation and detachment, counselor distrust, compliance (e.g., offenders do only what they have to do to get through a treatment program), low self-disclosure (e.g., refusing to talk about personal problems to a group), cynicism (e.g., the belief that prison counseling is useless "bull" sessions), denial (e.g., denying the problem). In addition, clients may have dysfunctions in interpersonal relations, substance abuse, employment issues, mental or physical health problems, and other areas of concern.

In a strict sense, offenders in correctional counseling may not be defined as clients, because the term *client* generally refers to recipients of a service or treatment who are willing to mutually identify and work on the identified target issues (Ivanoff, Blythe, & Tripodi, 1994). This book uses the terms *offenders/inmates* and *correctional clients* interchangeably to emphasize that both juvenile and mentally disordered offenders and adult offenders need help and counseling. In addition, it is important to recognize that offenders in corrections are not alike. They are far more diverse than the staff in terms of their ethnic, religious, geographical, and work background (McCullough, 2006). The inmates do not share one voice. People's misconceptions concerning offender motivation for counseling often serve as a psychological obstacle to effective treatment. Although offenders are placed in correctional programs or institutions against their will and they are required to participate in various types of treatment activities, they often have a range of motivations for counseling (Schrink & Hamm, 1989). Offenders are motivated to understand their experiences and frustrations, just like other human beings (Sun, 2002a).

Who Performs Correctional Counseling?

Correctional counseling is not only the responsibility of officially designated correctional counselors. It may also involve formal or informal tasks carried out by other correctional staff, including social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, probation and parole officers, and correctional officers. In addition, prison chaplains play an important role in facilitating inmate adjustment and rehabilitation through counseling. Approximately one in three inmates participate in religious programs (Sundt, Dammer, & Cullen, 2002).

The Settings for Correctional Counseling

Most correctional counselors are employed in state and federal prisons, jails, juvenile residential facilities, and community corrections.

State and Federal Prisons

Prisons are state or federal correctional institutions that typically consist of three types of security level: (1) maximum and close-security prisons for the most serious and violent offenders; (2) medium-security prisons for moderately serious offenders; and (3) minimum-security prisons for inmates who demonstrate good behavior by not committing new infractions or by participating in prison programs such as education, prison labor and industry, religious programs, and drug abuse treatment. These programs are funded by either the state or federal governments. The professionals who work in prison settings include psychiatrists, nurses, dentists, chaplains, psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and correctional counselors (e.g., classification counselors and correctional mental health counselors).

Jails

Another important element in the American correctional system is the **jail**, a detention facility that differs from a prison as follows:

1. Unlike prisons that are run by state and federal governments, a jail is a place of confinement typically administered by the county sheriff's department or city police department.
2. Jails house only individuals who are awaiting trial, who are waiting to be transferred to prison, or who are convicted of relatively minor crimes and receive relatively short sentences.
3. Local jails are funded by local administrators (Inciardi, 1999).

Juvenile Residential Facilities

Juvenile residential facilities involve places of forced confinement of youths who are deemed to pose a danger to themselves and society. When a youth has been judged guilty of an offense, the juvenile court may impose the most severe sanction by restricting the juvenile's freedom through placement in a **juvenile residential facility**. The facilities may be publicly or privately operated, with either a secure, prisonlike environment or a more open setting. In addition, before the disposition, a youth may be held in detention after arrest or during court proceedings (Carlson, Hess, & Orthmann, 1999). In 2003, more than 92,000 juvenile offenders were held in public or private juvenile residential facilities in the United States. The daily number of committed youth held in these facilities increased 28% between 1991 and 2003, with a greater increase in private rather than in public facilities (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2006). Because juveniles placed in residential facilities have many needs, including schooling, maintaining family/social relationships, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment, the juvenile counselors may have more diverse responsibilities than counselors in facilities for adult offenders.

EXHIBIT**1.1****Efforts to Reform Juvenile Confinement
in California***—Jennifer Warren*

The Schwarzenegger administration is poised to profoundly transform how California treats its most troubled young lawbreakers, replacing a prison culture of punishment and control with one anchored in group therapy, self-discipline and preparation for life outside.

Under the new approach, outlined in court documents to be filed today, inmates in the California Youth Authority—now idle or locked down much of the time—would follow an intensive schedule of counseling, education, and vocational training designed to consume nearly every waking hour.

Living units, now marked by violence and crowded with up to 75 youths, would house half that number. Every offender would be teamed with a counselor who would follow the youth's progress—and, when needed, impose sanctions or rewards—throughout the sentence.

Officials could not predict how soon the state would transition to the therapeutic approach, though it will not be this year. A more detailed blueprint from the state is due to be filed in November in Alameda County Superior Court, where it must be approved by Judge Ronald Sabrow before any changes are made. Also unclear was how much the changes would cost.

But Corrections Secretary Roderick Q. Hickman said he hoped that the shift, proposed in response to a lawsuit challenging the CYA's conditions, would make California's juvenile penal system a national model. As it stands, three of four parolees are arrested within three years, and officials acknowledge that many inmates fail to receive the education, psychiatric treatment, or other medical care they need.

"What we are trying to do has never been done before—not here in California, or anywhere else for that matter, not at this scale," Hickman said. He said he envisions "a whole new CYA" that keeps the staff safe while giving young offenders tools to succeed. Some critics applauded the new direction but said the specifics fall well short of their expectations.

"I'd love to be able to say, 'Hurrah, go team!'" said David Steinhart, a consultant who has fought to overhaul the CYA for two decades and who recently served on a committee advising the administration on juvenile justice reform. "But we need an extreme makeover, and this isn't it."

Missing, among other things, is a clear promise to tear down the system's large, prisonlike institutions and replace them with smaller facilities closer to where inmates' families live, Steinhart said.

Also lacking, he added, is any immediate plan to improve the Youth Authority's widely maligned parole system, whose overloaded agents can do little more than track—rather than guide and support—juveniles during their transition back into society. Perhaps the most glaring omission, Steinhart said, is any significant financial commitment from Schwarzenegger. The governor's revised \$115.7-billion budget, released Friday, contains just \$3.1 million for "reinventing California's broken juvenile corrections system," though an additional \$6.8 million is earmarked for specific improvements.

Steinhart called the funding pledge a "positive hint of good things to come, but pretty disappointing." "I think this administration is acting in good faith and trying to get to a good result," he added, "but it's painfully slow."

Hickman acknowledged that new facilities are key to making the rehabilitative model a success. The \$3.1 million, officials said, is a down payment on that vision. "The facilities in the Youth Authority are mostly old, they are not in the best repair, and they were designed for a different kind of population and a different kind of program," said G. Kevin Carruth, undersecretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency. He could not say, however, when new buildings might replace existing ones. Efforts to reform the California Youth Authority have sputtered for years, the victim of political indifference and disagreement over what constitutes a successful formula for managing wayward youths.

With eight prisons and two camps, the CYA was founded in 1941 after activists protested the housing of young troublemakers alongside hardened criminals in the state's adult lockups.

For decades, the agency took a paternalistic approach. Inmates—called wards—took field trips to movies and the beach. They lived in "cottages" and were supervised by counselors in civilian clothes.

But while a number of its 3,300 wards ages 12 to 25 still live in those open dorms, little else about the CYA of 2005 resembles the agency of old. The growth of gangs has added a violent component to life inside, and the Youth Authority now houses the toughest of the state's offenders, spending \$71,000 a year to house each male and \$140,000 on each female.

At the same time, the original focus on rehabilitation has gradually given way to a more punitive—and sometimes brutal—culture, according to state-hired experts who spent weeks inside the CYA as part of the lawsuit. Inmates who misbehave are often segregated in bare cells for weeks, locked down for all but a few hours a day. Until recently, some were confined in large metal cages for certain purposes. That practice was halted after an outcry from lawmakers and activists.

The last few years have been particularly turbulent for the CYA, with independent experts criticizing almost every aspect of its operations, including the

use of force by staff. One high-profile incident in 2004 involved a videotape—broadcast nationwide—that showed two correctional counselors kicking and striking two wards as they lay facedown on the floor. At least one legislator, state Sen. Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles), has proposed closing the CYA.

Aides to the governor said the videotaped beating was among the factors persuading Schwarzenegger to settle the lawsuit challenging conditions in the CYA. The suit, first filed as a class action in 2002, was later refiled as a taxpayer action on behalf of Margaret Farrell of Reseda, whose nephew, inmate Edward Jermaine Brown, allegedly was locked in an isolation cell for seven months and fed “blender meals,” a whipped mix of food, through a straw pushed through his door. (After the suit’s filing, the CYA closed the unit where Brown was housed and stopped dispensing blender meals.) In announcing the settlement at a CYA prison in Stockton last fall, Schwarzenegger said he wanted to “put the focus back on rehabilitation” and give the wards, with an average age of 19, “a better chance to succeed in life.”

Officials said the approach to be disclosed today would do just that. In building their model, California corrections officials spent the last year visiting Missouri, Texas, Washington, Colorado, and Florida—states with juvenile programs that are delivering promising results.

Several features characterize successful programs: smaller living units, a therapeutic peer culture, and a low staff-to-inmate ratio. Each of those would be present in the California version, officials said.

Incoming wards would be screened to determine their educational, emotional, and psychological needs, and then sent to an appropriate facility. There, they would develop a behavioral contract with a case manager, who would set goals, spell out sanctions for misbehavior, and help the ward stay on track.

In the living units, senior wards would act as role models and leaders; misbehavior would immediately give rise to a group meeting or, when necessary to ensure safety, a ward’s temporary removal from the group.

Officials said one significant challenge would be training the staff, especially in ways to manage outbursts and keep hostilities from escalating, and getting inmates used to the new approach. In today’s CYA, violence has been described by one expert as “off the charts,” and officers routinely use Mace to subdue warring youths.

“It’s a big culture shift, and it won’t happen overnight,” said Elizabeth Siggins, California’s assistant secretary for juvenile justice policy.

Source: State to Detail Reform of CYA; Intensive therapy and education would replace a punitive culture in California’s youth penal system under the terms of a lawsuit settlement.

Jenifer Warren. *Los Angeles Times*. May 16, 2005.

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Community Corrections

Many correctional counselors work in **community corrections**—community-based correctional settings. Although their official titles may range from juvenile probation counselors to community correctional officers, and probation and parole officers to correctional social workers, their responsibilities involve supervising, assisting, and counseling offenders serving in the community.

Offenders in community corrections generally come from two sources:

1. *Probationers*, who serve their sentences in the community without being incarcerated in prison or jail.
2. *Ex-prisoners*, who have served their prison terms and reenter the community. Except for those few who die in custody or while serving their life term in prison without the possibility of parole, all prisoners eventually return to society (Travis, 2005). It is called the *iron law of imprisonment*. Over 600,000 individuals were released from state and federal prisons in 2002. According to a national study, within three years, almost seven out of ten of the offenders will have been rearrested and half will be back in prison, either for a new crime or for violating the conditions of their release (Visher & Travis, 2003).

According to Evans (2004), the challenge of supervising these offenders can only be met by an effective approach to community corrections, an effective way to protect the public and reduce reoffending by providing postcustody supervision and support. The goal of community corrections is to assist offenders in breaking the cycle of offending so that they can become productive, contributing members of the community. Community corrections also provide support to victims of crime.

The **setting principle** suggests that services to offenders have been shown to be more effective in a community than in prison (Clear & Dammer, 2003). In addition to being beneficial for the offenders, community corrections have other positive effects, such as helping to reduce institutional crowding, stress, suicides, lawsuits related to crowding, inmate-on-inmate assaults, and inmate-on-staff assaults (Lauren, 1997).

Mental health professionals and correctional counselors generally perform counseling for offenders in three community corrections settings: (1) probation, (2) parole, and (3) intermediate sanctions.

Probation Usually considered the least restrictive of the alternatives to incarceration, **probation** is the most frequently used punishment, a sentence that is served in the community under supervision. Probation is most commonly granted to first-time offenders, drug offenders, property offenders, and low-risk offenders (Clear & Dammer, 2003). About 50% of probationers have been convicted of committing a felony in 2005 (BJS, 2006b).

Although probation is seen as a part of both the federal and state corrections, it is managed by the federal or state courts and is supervised and revoked by the courts (Inciardi, 1999).

In some county court systems, there are divisions of labor for probation officers and probation counselors. The former conduct presentencing investigation and arrest, and they hold a probationer for violations; the latter mainly engage in mental-health counseling and case management.

Parole Parole is a distinct form of community corrections related to probation. Unlike probation (a sentence imposed by the court), **parole** is a common method of reducing a sentence of imprisonment on the basis of federal or state indeterminate sentencing statutes.

Both granting and revoking parole are done by state parole boards, which are separated from the state prison administrations, or by the United States Parole Commission, which is separated from the federal Bureau of Prison. In other words, the state or federal parole authorities determine the actual length of incarceration to be served in the corrections system. Sentencing laws were changed in about half of the states to remove the discretionary release authority of parole boards. By the end of 2000, 16 states had abolished parole-board authority for releasing all offenders, and another four states had put an end to parole-board authority for releasing certain violent offenders (BJS, 2006b). According to the U.S. Parole Commission (2007), although offenders for federal crimes committed on or after November 1, 1987, are no longer eligible for parole consideration, the commission still holds substantial responsibilities for granting or denying parole to federal offenders who committed their offenses before that date, offenders convicted of D.C. Code violations, certain Uniform Code of Military Justice offenders, and state probationers and parolees in Federal Witness Protection Program.

Only a small percentage of prisoners receives parole and goes to community corrections. According to BJS (2006b), state inmates released from prison as a result of a parole-board decision dropped from 50% of all adults entering parole in 1995 to 31% in 2005, while mandatory releases (based on a statutory requirement) increased from 45 to 51%. Mandatory release occurs when the inmate reaches the end of the prison sentence and has to be released to the community by law.

Intermediate Sanctions Correctional counselors may also manage offenders in community corrections who have received some type of intermediate sanction. Such sanctions include community services (e.g., public service for non-profit organizations, cleaning playgrounds, painting houses, or planting gardens), day-reporting centers, paying a fine (to the government), restitution (compensating a victim), residence in a halfway house, and house arrest/electronic monitoring (e.g., random phone calls generated by computers to which

the offender must respond within a certain time). Offenders may also have received mixed sentencing—serving weekends in jail while undergoing supervision during the week (see Clear & Dammer, 2003).

Correctional Counselors' General Responsibilities in a Facility of Confinement

Although the facilities of confinement (e.g., prisons, jails, juvenile residential centers) differ in types of offender, security designations, and the expectations and requirements for counselors, there are some general responsibilities for correctional counselors across agencies:

1. Assessing the offenders' risk and needs in such areas as reoffending, anger management, poor impulse control, interpersonal conflicts, prison adjustments, substance abuse, mental health, education, and employment.
2. Performing counseling services, case management (matching the offender's needs with available services and treatments and coordinating the services) and other interventions to address offenders' criminogenic needs (factors associated with recidivism) and dysfunctions in those areas.
3. Reviewing, preparing, and updating records and reports (either on paper or in a computer file) concerning the clients' issues in crime involvements, institutional infractions, institutional program participation, personal relationships, and other areas.
4. Initiating recommendations dealing with issues such as offender transfers and custody level reduction/increase based on their new custody scores.
5. Serving as a witness at disciplinary hearings for offenders on the counselor's caseload.
6. Participating in staff meetings to discuss, develop, and implement rehabilitation plans for a client, as required by rules, policies, and procedures of the correctional system.
7. Participating in emergency assignments in which counselors must act as security personnel, perhaps assisting security staff in times of inmate disturbance or conducting a search of the offender's person and cell for contraband.

In order to perform counseling tasks, it is important to keep in mind that a facility of confinement does not represent a very salubrious environment. The architectural design of the physical environment (particularly if the prison is fortresslike) is not designed for counseling and treatment. Counselors should thus be aware that the physical and psychological settings influence the effectiveness of interventions and treatment (Schrink & Hamm, 1989).

The General Responsibilities of a Community Correctional Counselor

The general responsibilities of a community correctional counselor may be more diverse and flexible than those of a counselor working with inmate clients.

First, the priority of community supervisions involves making sure offenders follow two types of conditions of supervision: (1) those intended for offender rehabilitation or reform, and (2) those intended for the control of offenders. The rehabilitation-based conditions of community corrections push for offenders to seek a noncriminal way of life by attaining education, employment, substance treatment, and anger management and/or by participating in other programs in the community. The control-based conditions help the correctional agency keep track of those under supervision, including the requirement of reporting to community correctional officers on a regular basis, prohibitions of involvement in certain places (e.g., school), people (e.g., victim, crime partners, potential victims), certain behaviors (drugs, alcohol, illegal activities, and hanging out) (State of Washington, Department of Corrections, 2001).

These two types of condition can be further divided into four categories: (1) *standard conditions*, which may include travel restrictions, no contact with children (for sex offenders), and weekly reports at the local community correctional center; (2) *community placement conditions*, which consist of notice of changing residency and completing treatment and education requirements; (3) *court-ordered conditions*, which specify a particular requirement for the offender on the basis of his or her criminal case, such as no contact with ex-spouse; and (4) *financial conditions*, which are related to offenders' financial responsibility to the government or the victim(s). Probationers and parolees are subject to being returned to jail or prison for violations of the conditions or other offenses.

Second, the counselors' responsibilities include completing intake assessment for offenders initially entering community corrections and performing risk assessments/reassessments, identifying and monitoring the offenders' performance and compliance with the conditions and the prohibitions during the community corrections. The counselor updates supervision plans as needed; conducts presentence investigations (for probation officers) and prepares reports; and investigates and writes reports on alleged correctional violations. A counselor may also conduct searches and arrests, testifying before courts or disciplinary hearings.

Third, counselors have the obligation to meet, observe, and interact with the clients both in the office and in the community (including making home/field visits) and also to maintain contact with a client's family members and employers, other members of the criminal justice system, community agencies, and program-service providers (e.g., providers for mental health, substance abuse treatment, education).

Fourth, community corrections counselors should focus on target interventions, which include not only working with high-risk offenders (e.g., working with gang-involved youths, mentally ill offenders, sex offenders, and high-risk violent offenders in the community), but also concentrating on important offender issues such as anger management, employment, and education services and on applying other practical reintegration strategies (Parent & Barnett, 2004).

According to Visser and Travis (2003), community correctional staff needs to view recidivism as being directly affected by four sets of factors:

1. The offender's preprison conditions (e.g., criminal history, substance abuse involvement, demographic profile, work history, job skills, and family types);
2. The offender's in-prison experiences (e.g., the length of the incarceration; longer prison sentences were associated with higher recidivism for both high- and low-risk offenders), the prisoner's involvement in correctional programs, including those focused on individual improvement in education, job skills, cognitive skills, and substance abuse;
3. The offender's immediate postprison experiences (e.g., meeting the initial housing needs, transition assistance, and family support); and
4. Postrelease integration experiences (e.g., employment experiences, influence of peers, family connections, social service support, criminal justice supervision).

Awareness and Application of Community Resources

Community correctional counselors may be involved in two other tasks:

1. Identifying and applying **community resources** (e.g., education, employment, treatment, and social services); and
2. Helping the clients recognize and use the resources.

Counselors are required to manage offender risk in the community and prevent reoffending through the use of guardians—individuals who have the capacity to influence the behavior of offenders. They include victims, citizens, treatment providers, employers, family members, and law enforcement (State of Washington, Department of Corrections, 2001).

Restorative Justice

In addition to counseling, community correctional counselors or officers may be involved in assisting or facilitating an emerging community program known as **restorative justice**—a process of conflict resolution that brings together all parties affected by harm or wrongdoing (e.g., offenders and their families, victims and their families, other members of the community, and professionals).

Although the practice of restorative justice is focused on serving victims whose needs are often overlooked in this country's retributive criminal justice system, it is also meant to heal the wounds of other parties affected by conflict, including offenders.

Instead of focusing solely on retribution, restorative justice emphasizes accountability and healing for the victim, offender, and community with a focus on service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person and value of human relationships (Fred, 2005). It is usually run by nonprofit groups or criminal justice personnel (Morrison & Ahmed, 2006).

Restorative justice combines strong disapproval of bad conduct with respect for the person who committed those bad acts. The goal for offenders is to encourage feelings of shame regarding bad acts, accepting responsibility, sincerely apologizing, and developing commitment to self-regulatory actions that in turn work against future transgression of the law. Restorative justice thus restores the dignity of offenders. The key to this process involves the social connection with family, friends, and community (Tyler, 2006).

The roots of restorative justice are based in indigenous traditions. For example, the Maori people of New Zealand had an alternate form of sentencing that involves the victim and offender as well as the family and friends of both in resolving a criminal or delinquent incident. The *talking circle* of Native Americans for peacemaking can also be seen as a form of restorative justice (Fred, 2005).

In short, although the prevention of recidivism is often described as the goal of correctional counseling, its responsibilities are wider (see Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). Correctional counseling helps clients to expand their competence and increase their problem-solving and coping abilities by helping them to understand and deal with their existing problems.

■ Five Areas of Competence for Correctional Counselors

Competence in knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes are among the essentials in fulfilling the role of the helping professionals (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). To be effective in performing the professional responsibilities of the correctional counselor, five areas of competence are needed:

1. *Knowledge in counseling, psychology, and related social sciences and the ability to apply the knowledge to corrections.* Counselors need to have training and skill in psychology, social work, or other social sciences, adequate knowledge of human behavior in social environments (i.e., understanding how offenders' dysfunctions are created and maintained by the interaction of many systems and factors). Counselors must also be familiar with the operation and structure of

the criminal justice system and community corrections as well as with relevant laws, rules, policies, standards, and procedures of correctional operations.

An adequate knowledge of theory and research is only part of the competence needed to evaluate, explain, and understand offenders' mental and interpersonal conflicts. Counselors also need to act as researchers who can test and revise their knowledge of social reality concerning the human mind and behavior in the context of correctional environments. Counseling is an ongoing process of discovery because no current research findings represent a complete understanding of human behavior. The process of developing a new scientific concept or model involves comparing (1) the to-be-rejected model and the to-be-accepted model with reality and (2) the two models with each other. Accepting the new model is based on the discovery that what is anomalous under the old model becomes expected under the new one (see Kuhn, 1970).

2. *Skills in written and verbal communications.* Counseling is about communication. Good communication skills include not only writing and speaking correctly, clearly, objectively, and effectively but also having listening skills and the ability to ask thoughtful questions. These skills have at least three components for correctional counselors:

- Helping offenders to evaluate their personal issues and situations accurately and to adopt an appropriate course of action;
- Writing reports, documenting violations and suggesting improvements for clients, and sharing complete and accurate information and professional opinions with other staff members in the justice system, employers, residents, crime victims, and offenders' family members; and
- Handling various stressors created by a large caseload and excessive paperwork in correctional settings.

3. *Developing and maintaining good work relationships with offenders and other correctional personnel.* Correctional counselors must regulate the two types of human relationship:

- Developing and maintaining a good work relationship with correctional clients by gaining their trust and cooperation and withholding judgment of their offenses. Withholding judgment does not mean that counselors condone or approve of illegal, immoral, abusive, exploitative, manipulative, or irresponsible behavior; neither does it imply that counselors should overlook the offenders' crime (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). Counselors must assist clients to take responsibility for the part they play in their difficulties. Maintaining a good work relationship suggests that counselors should have the attitude, warmth, open-mindedness, and values to help offenders improve themselves regardless of their crimes. As suggested by the American Correctional Association (ACA) Code of

Ethics (1994), “members of the ACA shall respect and protect the civil and legal rights of all individuals,” including offenders.

- Developing and maintaining a good work relationship with other correctional personnel, including administrators and supervisory personnel, other treatment personnel (e.g., psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists) and line staff (correctional officers).

According to the ACA Code of Ethics (1994), good work relationships must be maintained with correctional colleagues to “promote mutual respect within the profession and improve the quality of service” and to “contribute to a work place that is safe, healthy, and free of harassment in any form.”

Correctional counselors must understand and deal with ethical and professional conflict. They are required to report to responsible authorities regarding “corrupt or unethical behavior in which there is sufficient evidence to justify a review” (ACA, 1994). The correctional setting is a miniature society that mirrors all the good and bad elements of society. For example, an important source of conflict that occurs in a correctional facility involves coercive power—the situation in which correctional officers may act in unethical ways by abusing power to make life miserable for the inmates they dislike, such as “forgetting” to send an inmate to an appointment, making an inmate stay in lockdown longer than the disciplinary requirement, and writing infractions at their discretion (Pollock, 2004). In addition, correctional officers may cover up for each others’ unethical behavior (Pollock, 2004).

Sometimes the psychological environment leads to a debilitating misunderstanding of correctional counseling, particularly when correctional administrators place more emphasis on security than treatment. As a result, counselors may find their best efforts disrupted or thwarted by correctional officers who misunderstand counseling efforts and intentions for the clients (Schrink & Hamm, 1989).

Even worse, African American correctional officers in some institutions say they are subjected to racial slurs and white-supremacist activity, including Nazi salutes in the facility and the distribution of hate literature. Some correctional officers belong to, or have knowledge about, hate groups among correctional personnel (Vogel, 1999).

Some conflict in corrections may result from the different training and background of the various correctional personnel. For example, one type of conflict involves an interpretation of the disruptive behavior of inmates. While the custody staff tends to ignore, dismiss, misidentify, or punish problematic behavior, the mental health staff tends to see such behavior as the product of mental illness or the reflection of a psychotic episode (Mobley, 2006; Sun, 2005; Weinberger & Sreenivasan, 1994).

Deutsch (1993) suggested that when a conflict persists between two sides, facing the conflict rather than avoiding it seems a better solution. Evading conflict (e.g., denial, inhibition, being overly agreeable, postponement, and premature conflict resolution) often produces negative emotional consequences such as irritability, tension, and continuation of the problem. People can avoid the destructive results of conflict by engaging in constructive cooperation between the conflicting parties and using communications that convey cooperative attitudes, knowledge, and skills contributing to effective fact-finding and problem-solving.

Healthy human relationships are based on understanding human behavior. One of the strategies to deal with staff conflicts involves understanding the **power of situation**—a principle suggesting that situations and contexts, especially psychologically controlling environments like prison, have strong influences on social behavior such as abusive conduct and compliance. This principle argues that social environments shape human social behavior through social interactions in which individuals act and play roles (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998). As shown in the study known as the Stanford Prison Experiment, when a group of psychologically healthy, emotionally stable and normal college students were randomly assigned roles as mock-prisoners and prison guards, they were temporarily but dramatically transformed by six days in a prisonlike environment. Those students who were assigned the role of inmate underwent acute mental strain and breakdowns. Some of them entreated to be released from the intense pain of the simulated confinement within a couple of days, whereas others became blindly obedient to the abuse of the guards by habituating to the setting. The students who played the guards (many of whom were gentle and caring young college students before the experiment) soon began mistreating the “inmates,” sometimes imposing viciously inventive ways to harass and degrade them. The attitudes of many mock-guards toward the obvious suffering of the prisoners involved apathy and the failure to intervene and complain about the abuse they witnessed. Interestingly, the worst prisoner treatment occurred when the guards thought they could avoid surveillance and interference (Haney & Zimbardo, 1998).

4. *Computer literacy, including the ability to learn, master and apply new technologies in correctional settings.* Although many professional counselors and social workers enjoy using computer technology, the complex computer databases related to offender classification, assessments, and data management remain a challenge for some correctional staff, creating an impediment for universal and consistent offender management.

5. *Multicultural competence.* Correctional counselors must have the following skills related to multicultural competence:

- The ability to deal effectively with persons of varying socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds;

- An awareness of the interconnections among all people and their contributions to society and civilization; and
- An understanding of the psychological cause of prejudice and how to overcome it (Sun, 2002b).

According to Sun (2002b), increasing cultural diversity in criminal justice will eliminate the bad aspects (e.g., discrimination, racial profiling) and promote the good ones (appreciating the cultural achievements of all humanity and increasing crosscultural understanding). However, three misconceptions concerning the meaning of multiculturalism or cultural diversity may jeopardize the attempt to reach these goals:

- The tendency to treat the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture as synonymous. In reality, race and ethnicity are two different concepts. Culture, which is associated with ethnicity, is learned (Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). People who are categorized as members of black, white, Hispanic, or Asian racial groups may not know “black,” “white,” “Hispanic” or “Asian” culture, because their learning experiences do not fit the perceived stereotypic categories (Sun, 2002b).
- The view that culture or ethnicity are the sole determinant of identity and behavior. Actually, culture is just one of the factors that shape personality and behavior. People live not only in a physical world but also in a psychological world. They have opportunities to experience and learn other cultures through various contacts. Thinking, feelings, and behavior are thus shaped by interactions among multiple systems—cultural, social, psychological and physical.
- The view that cultures are isolated from one another. In today’s world, all cultures are in fact increasingly interacting, forming a global village.

In short, multiculturalism in the criminal justice system emphasizes that culture is knowledge that is learned, not inherited. Correctional counselors must realize that their clients think, feel, and act in certain ways because they have different degrees of learning experience and understanding about social reality (including cultures). Offenders can change and improve as they change their distorted knowledge of social reality concerning themselves, others, and the environment. (A more detailed examination of multiculturalism and elimination of prejudice is presented in Chapter 11.)

SUMMARY

The recent “get tough” sentencing laws and the new record of the correctional population in the United States have created the need for educated correctional counselors who have the knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to work with correctional clients. Correctional counselors have a great opportunity to use their knowledge, skills, and values to have an impact on individuals as well as the community and society.

Correctional counseling in the United States started during the 1870s and reached its peak in the early 1970s. Although the political atmosphere at present is less favorable to correctional counseling, the progress made in the past has not been entirely abandoned. Four characteristics separate correctional counseling from other counseling practices: (1) the characteristics of correctional clients, (2) the individuals who perform counseling, (3) the counseling settings, and (4) the counselor’s responsibilities. Most correctional counselors are employed in one of the following settings: state or federal prisons, jails, community corrections, and juvenile justice facilities. In addition, correctional counselors may be involved in such community programs as restorative justice.

To be effective in performing their professional responsibilities, correctional counselors need to possess competence in five areas: (1) professional knowledge, (2) written and verbal communication skills, (3) good work relationships with offenders and other correctional personnel, (4) computer literacy, and (5) multicultural competence.

KEY TERMS

Community corrections

Community resources

Involuntary clients

Jail

Juvenile residential facilities

Parole

Prison

Probation

Restorative justice

Power of situation

Setting principle

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the four characteristics of correctional counseling?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities in correctional counseling?
3. How do community correctional counselors working in a community corrections setting and those working in prison or jail differ in their responsibilities?
4. Name the five areas of competence required for correctional counselors.

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