



**Written Testimony Of  
George E. Snyder, Warden  
Rivers Correctional Institution**

**Before**

**The House Committee On Oversight And Government Reform  
Subcommittee On The Federal Workforce, Postal Service, And The  
District of Columbia**

**Regarding**

**Program Offerings At Rivers Correctional Institution**

**Chairman Davis and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:**

My name is George Snyder, Warden of Rivers Correctional Institution, Winton, North Carolina. On behalf of The GEO Group, Inc., I thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the various programs offered to inmates housed in our facility.

Let me first, though, provide you with an overview of our company and the history of how Rivers Correctional Institution came into existence.

The GEO Group, Inc. is a world leader in the delivery of correctional, detention, and residential treatment services to federal, state, and local governmental agencies around the globe. GEO offers a turnkey approach that includes design, construction, financing, and operations. GEO represents government clients in the United States, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom. GEO's worldwide operations include 68 correctional and residential treatment facilities with a total design capacity of approximately 59,000 beds.

The National Capital Revitalization Act of 1997 mandated that the Bureau of Prisons house a portion of District of Columbia, sentenced felons in private contract facilities. The BOP subsequently adopted a course of action that included soliciting bids for contract facilities, closing the existing Lorton, Virginia facility, and transferring inmates to contracted facilities.

On March 7, 2000, the BOP signed a contract with The GEO Group, Inc. to design, build, finance, own, operate and manage a low security, adult male facility in Winton, North Carolina. We received our first DC inmates in March of 2001. Located on a 257-acre tract in rural Hertford County, the facility is a campus design with four housing buildings, indoor and outdoor recreational areas, a central programs building, a prison industries building, and an administrative building. The design enables cost-effective utilization of security staff supplemented by modern electronic surveillance, which in turn allows enhanced programmatic activities without significant budgetary implications. Our average inmate population is 1350, with approximately 54 percent of the inmates coming from the District of Columbia. Rivers Correctional Institution is 226 miles from Washington, D.C.

The facility is accredited by the American Correctional Association and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

**RIVERS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION PROGRAMS**

**Psychology Department:**

All inmates admitted to the institution are provided an initial assessment by psychology staff. During this assessment, it is determined if an inmate is in need of additional psychological services, to include individual counseling, group counseling, substance abuse counseling, and/or psychiatric services. Currently, approximately 55 inmates are prescribed psychotropic

medication for a variety of mental illnesses from depression to schizophrenia.

At any given time, approximately sixty inmates are receiving regular bi-weekly to monthly individual counseling sessions, focusing on topics including problem-solving, conflict resolution, parenting skills, bereavement, victim empathy, relationship difficulties, and sex offender treatment.

A variety of staff and inmate-facilitated groups are offered, including Anger Management, Stress Management, and Doing Time with the Right Mind (DTRM), a Therapeutic Film Group, and a Fathers Support Group. DTRM is a 9-week, inmate-facilitated program that emphasizes improving communication between staff and inmates. It also helps inmates to use their time in prison wisely to better prepare themselves for release. The Therapeutic Film Group uses the themes of contemporary films as a therapeutic tool to illicit emotions and provide a foundation on which to discuss these emotions and other related issues. The Fathers Support Group is an ongoing self-help group that focuses on improving parenting skills.

Over the course of the past six months, 42 inmates have participated in the Anger Management Group, 6 inmates have successfully completed the Stress Management Group, and 32 inmates have participated in the Therapeutic Film Group. In April and August 2007, graduations for the DTRM Program were held with a combined total of 108 inmates graduating and receiving certificates of completion. Currently, 60 inmates are participating in DTRM, and 13 in the Fathers Support Group.

Additional services provided by psychology staff include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention, suicide assessments, psychiatric referrals, ongoing mental status assessments in the Special Housing Unit (SHU), psychological evaluations for US Parole Commission, and marriage evaluations.

### **New Beginning Drug Treatment Program:**

RCI offers a nine-month residential drug treatment program that provides a continuum of treatment services to inmates with a documented history of substance abuse problems. The philosophy of the program holds that both substance abuse and recovery have a cause, a course, and a predictable outcome. This comprehensive program is conducted within a highly structured regimen of a modified therapeutic community composed of inmates with similar problems living and working together, elements critical to building a sense of community and cohesiveness among participants and staff, and promoting conformity and compliance with program rules and philosophy. Drug treatment staff are also based in the inmate housing unit in order to further the sense of community and cohesiveness.

The program has three phases of treatment:

Phase I – Orientation: Designed to acquaint the new inmate with the basic concepts of the therapeutic community and chemical dependency treatment. The inmate begins to participate in the development of an individual treatment plan, setting goals and accepting responsibility for his own behavior.

Phase II – Main Treatment: Focuses on the exploration of chemical dependency and associated recovery issues. The inmate continues the process of self-examination and works toward developing positive attitudes and behaviors.

Phase III – Re-entry: Provides a period for solidifying new behaviors and attitudes into lasting habits, which will support this lifelong process of recovery. The inmate develops relapse prevention and aftercare plans, addressing all areas of his life, i.e., family, employment, housing, individual recovery, and use of community resources.

Throughout participation in the program, inmates are required to participate in weekly NA/AA meetings. These meetings may be facilitated by staff, inmates, or outside volunteers.

After completing the program, inmates are provided with an opportunity to continue their involvement in treatment through the Aftercare Program. Participation in weekly aftercare meetings provides a forum for inmates to practice skills acquired during treatment and prevents inmates from slowly returning back to old behavior patterns.

The program can accommodate 57 inmates in active treatment, with three additional inmates serving in the role as “cadre.” Cadre inmates have completed treatment and are assigned as counselor aides, performing duties such as lectures and group facilitation. Since the program’s inception in 2003, 155 inmates have completed the nine-month program.

Participation in the RCI residential drug treatment program does not preclude transfer of an inmate to a BOP facility for participation in the BOP 500-hour drug treatment program.

**40-Hour Substance Abuse Education:** This program provides inmates with information on alcohol and drugs as well as the physical, social and psychological impact of these substances. The course is considered a prerequisite for the therapeutic drug program.

Participation in the program is mandatory if: there is evidence in the Pre-Sentence Investigation that alcohol or other drug use contributed to the commission of the instance offense; alcohol or other drug use was a reason for violation of supervised release, including parole or Residential Re-entry Center placement for which the inmate is now incarcerated; or the inmate was recommended for drug programming during incarceration by the sentencing judge.

Inmates who are not required to participate in the program may request to participate voluntarily. Unit and psychology staff also recommends participation.

**Community Resource Day:**

Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) is a federal agency providing supervision of adults on probation, parole and supervised release in the District of Columbia. Once a quarter CSOSA joins RCI in presenting a Community Resource Day in an effort to assist inmates with release preparation and transition planning via videoconference or in person.

Groups of over 200 D.C. inmates due to be released within 90 days participate in each resource day.

There are two basic elements of the program: During the morning segment the U.S. Parole Commission staff cover conditions of parole and supervised release; a representative from Hope Village Residential Reentry Center covers rules and responsibilities tied to halfway house residency; CSOSA's Community Supervision Officers explain how they conduct home plan investigations as well as the requirements of community supervision. A representative from Child Support Services Division of the Office of the D.C. Attorney General explains their enforcement policies and the benefits of compliance. The afternoon segment focuses on the critical areas of employment, education, health care and housing.

### **Hope House DC Programs:**

Hope House DC was founded to serve the needs of DC inmates by offering programs to keep inmates and their families connected.

**Father-to-Child Reading Program:** Inmate fathers participating in this program are provided a children's book and audio or videotape; the inmate then records the book for his children. The book and the tape are mailed to the child. Parents and caregivers report that children not only enthusiastically listen to the recording, but do so repeatedly, reliving the experience of their father telling them a story.

**Father-to-Child Teleconference Program:** Children are brought to the D.C. Hope House where they may visit with their fathers face-to-face through a live teleconference hookup.

**Father to Child Summer Camp:** One week each summer, children from the D.C. area attend day camp with their fathers at RCI. Hope House staff and camp counselors guide the campers through crafts, drama, games, creative writing and other activities designed to help parent and child reconnect and strengthen the parent-child relationship. In the evening the children and counselors retreat to a local campground where they participate in crafts and recreation.

### **Video Mentoring Program:**

A 1997 study showed that in the District of Columbia, one in two African American men ages 18 to 35 were under some form of correctional supervision. Given those statistics, and with an estimated 2,500 inmates returning to the District this year alone, law enforcement and church groups have set up a pilot mentoring program that involves church volunteers. The program pairs inmates with personal mentors to help them navigate the first difficult months out of incarceration, where everything from applying for a driver's license to navigating the Metro can be a frustrating challenge.

Run by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), and a faith-based advisory committee chaired by the Rev. Donald Isaac, Associate Pastor of Southeast Tabernacle Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., this year-old program has so far matched about 100 inmates

and mentors. The idea is to focus intense attention on each inmate in the hope that none returns to drug use or other criminal habits once released.

Agency officers screen inmates still in prison who have volunteered for the program. The inmate/mentor pairs then meet and talk, in person or on the phone, developing a relationship that might last into the future.

**Education Programs:** Approximately 32 percent of the inmate population participates in either vocational or academic programs. Average monthly enrollment for academic education is 261, vocational education 101, and Life Skills 85.

Academic Programs include: English as a second language, adult basic education, pre-GED, and GED, and life skills/parenting. In 2007, 49 students received their General Equivalent Diploma and five students graduated from the English as a Second Language program.

**English as a Second Language (ESL):** Instruction is provided to non-English speaking and English speaking persons who are not fluent in the English language. Classes focus on survival language skills. The program is designed to enable inmates to function at the equivalent of an eighth grade level of education.

**Adult Basic Education (ABE):** Designed primarily for adults whose basic skills are below the ninth grade level, ABE classes focus on helping adults function more effectively in today's technological world by improving their reading, writing and math skills. Graduates of this program are encouraged to continue studies in the Pre-General Education Development program.

**Pre-General Equivalent Diploma (GED):** This course is designed for students who comprehend on or at least a fifth grade level. Students are guided through an individualized process by the instructor and given a six-part examination comprised of all core curriculum courses (Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, Literature and Arts, and Writing Skills). Graduates are encouraged to continue studies in the GED program.

**General Equivalent Diploma (GED):** This course is offered as a means for adults with educational skills at the high school level to earn the equivalent of a high school diploma. In preparation for the GED Exam, students are guided through an individualized study process and given GED practice tests. Roanoke Chowan Community College, Ahoskie, North Carolina, administers the official GED examination. If he passes, the graduate receives a High School Diploma Equivalency Certificate from the North Carolina Community College System.

**Life Skills/Parenting:** The Life Skills program focuses on providing students with direction in dealing with many everyday life situations that they may encounter upon release. Students are taught to understand and build their self-esteem while learning to understand other people. They learn procedures for securing a driver's license, how to write checks, financial budgeting, the importance of maintaining a job, how to submit

resumes and apply for jobs. Parenting focuses on providing parent education in the areas of positive relationships, family values, mutual support and nurturing.

Vocational Programs includes computer technology, woodworking, heating and air conditioning, workforce transition, workforce transition, Corrections Learning Network, and Wheels for the World.

**Keyboarding:** This course is designed to teach basic keying skills and procedures. Emphasis is placed on the daily use of a computer system to develop skills with concentrated application of these skills to the production of business correspondence.

**Computer Technology I and II:** These programs are designed to teach students more than just document preparation. Desktop publishing is a component of this course that teaches the students to produce documents that are more creative, fun and effective in communicating messages. The student learns skills necessary for writing newsletters, creating styles, outlines, tables and tables of content. Students learn desktop features and design tips that help them to use art and color and use the drawing toolbar to create original artwork for their documents. Students are taught how to prepare basic worksheets, and to design, create, retrieve and enhance slides.

**Woodworking:** In a woodshop setting, the woodworking program focuses on transferable skills and stresses understanding and demonstration of the following elements of woodworking: planning, technical and product skills, health and safety and environmental issues, concepts of residential framing, residential planning and design and building code requirements. The student has hands-on instruction in the use of hand tools, operating portable power tools and stationary power woodworking machines.

**Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC):** In this course students are introduced to the basic refrigeration process used in mechanical refrigeration and air conditioning systems. It covers the requirements for EPA certification and examinations and introduces common business and customer relation practices that may be encountered in HVAC. Some topics include terminology, safety, identification and function of components, refrigeration cycle, tools, instrumentation used in mechanical refrigeration systems, small appliances, and high and low pressure systems. Upon completion students should be able to identify refrigeration systems and components, explain the refrigeration process, use the tools and instrumentation of the trade, demonstrate knowledge of refrigerants, and be prepared for the EPA certification examination, present themselves to customers in a professional manner, understand how the business operates, complete invoices, and handle complaints.

**Workforce Transition:** A joint program conducted by the University of the District of Columbia, the Court Services and Offenders Agency and Rivers Correctional Institution staff, the program is a work-readiness program that prepares the individual inmates for resources and actions dedicated to addressing workforce needs and marketable skills. The training workshops include resume assistance, certifications, professional development, interview techniques, educational referrals and the basic job-hunting skills.

**Corrections Learning Network (CLN):** The CLN program is a distance learning initiative administered by the Educational Service District 101 and funded through a Star School Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Education Service District provides the RCI Educational Department with DVD's to enhance our Life Skills/Parenting, Release Preparation Program, and our Literacy programs. DVD Resource topics include, but are not limited to:

Work Performance	GED Math
Problem Solving	Science
Workplace Communication	Language Arts, Writing and Reading
Lifestyle & Wellness	

**Wheels for the World:** Wheels for the world Program, founded by Joni and Friends, is a nonprofit organization located in Agoura Hills, California. Wheels for the world collects donated wheelchairs from across the United States through an organization called Chair Corps Organization. Volunteers collect, store and transport wheelchairs to and from various prisons participating in the program.

Rivers Correctional Institution began participating in the Wheels for the World Program in August of 2007. The program assists inmates in developing the necessary skills to master the basic concepts of wheelchair repair, including wheelchair identification, design, purpose and tool identification. 15 inmates are currently assigned to refurbish and repair wheelchairs. A total of 63 chairs have been repaired and ready for distribution.

**Conclusion:** Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by emphasizing that we at Rivers Correctional Institute are committed to providing inmates in our care with treatment and training programs that help them become productive and responsible members of their community upon release. I appreciate the subcommittee's interest in this important issue, and I am happy to answer any questions the subcommittee members may have.