



Alternative Incarceration Programs

“Alternative incarceration” is a phrase that describes intensive prison programs offered by the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) to selected inmates who are at risk of reoffending due to untreated addictions and criminal thinking.

Oregon’s first alternative incarceration program, the Summit Program, began in 1994 and continues today. The 2003 Legislature approved additional alternative incarceration programs: “Turning Point” for women and “New Directions” for men provide cognitive behavioral change programs that focus on alcohol and drug treatment.

Alternative incarceration programs prevent future criminal behavior

Many Oregon prison inmates have severe substance abuse problems — a key risk factor contributing to criminal behavior. To reduce the risk that offenders will commit new crimes, the DOC designed its alternative incarceration programs around treatment and programs that are proven to be effective in treating addictions and changing behavior. The programs are designed to prepare inmates to return successfully to the community after release from prison.

Summit, Turning Point and New Directions all have structured 14-hour days that require treatment, physical work, exercise and service to the community. Participants live in dedicated housing units for about six months and participate in programs that stress personal responsibility and accountability. Inmates accepted into Turning Point and New Directions also must participate in intensive addiction treatment, counseling, and education. The curriculum includes preparing for employment, developing good relationships and family skills, and recognizing and changing criminal-thinking errors. Participants also focus on developing healthy decision-making skills and habits for successful community living, including attending 12-step meetings and other recovery activities.

Alternative incarceration programs have three phases: Inmates who successfully complete the 180-day residential phase move into the community. Still considered inmates, they are tightly supervised for 90 days while practicing the skills and discipline learned in prison. Those who complete this “transitional leave” phase are eligible to have their prison sentences reduced. These time cuts are expected to average about 13 months. After transitional leave, offenders are supervised by parole officers while completing their post-prison supervision sentences.

Many graduates of these types of programs have gone on to be successful contributing members of society. The results of Oregon’s alternative incarceration programs are carefully tracked. Outcomes of each program as well as a control group will be researched, evaluated and compared to each other and to other prison programs to guide future policy decisions.

Oregon's three alternative incarceration programs

Both men and women participate in the **Summit Program** at Shutter Creek Correctional Institution in North Bend. Summit stands for "Success Using Motivation, Morale, Intensity and Treatment. Summit leads inmates to confront criminal thinking. The program encourages and supports new pro-social beliefs and behaviors. It focuses on cognitive skills, alcohol and drug education, work skills and ethics. Summit also teaches inmates how to build and maintain positive relationships. Inmates learn to accept responsibility for their criminal behaviors and the harm they caused others. It includes a personal discipline component that is loosely based on a military training model. Summit graduates about 225 inmates annually.

Turning Point for women is offered at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville. In a learning environment, women work to develop the pro-social skills needed for life outside prison. Inmates in the program participate in intensive addiction treatment and participate in individual and group counseling. Participants learn the skills necessary to change their behavior and increase their personal accountability and responsibility. They are required to develop healthy daily routines that involve physical work and exercise. A strong emphasis is placed on preparing for gainful employment and successful living in the community. Every year, Turning Point will serve about 100 women.

New Directions Addictions Program is an intensive residential treatment program for men at Powder River Correctional Facility in Baker City. It focuses on developing personal accountability and responsibility through a structured daily routine that involves physical work, exercise, and behavioral skill development. Group and individual addiction treatment includes 12-step and other recovery activities where participants learn the skills necessary to change their behavior and increase their personal accountability and responsibility. Additional interventions prepare inmates for gainful employment and teach them how to develop and maintain pro-social relationships and family skills. They also learn to identify and change criminal thinking errors and develop healthy decision-making skills and habits for successful community living. About 350 men will participate in New Directions each year.

Eligibility criteria

Qualified inmates must apply to be accepted into any of the three programs. Summit has specific start dates for each group. The other two programs have rolling admissions, which means that new participants are accepted when there are openings.

Other DOC criteria may apply, but the basic qualifications are:

- A sentencing order that allows alternative incarceration, transitional leave and time cuts (no mandatory minimum sentences or sentencing under another disqualifying laws).
- Minimum-custody classification.
- Enough time remaining in the sentence to complete the 270-day program.
- No immigration or felony detainer that would still be in effect at the time of transitional leave.

The selection process

All inmates are carefully evaluated when they enter the Oregon Department of Corrections. Each inmate receives an individual corrections plan to address seven key criminal risk factors. Among those factors is alcohol and drug abuse. Eligible inmates are prioritized based on these risk factors and admitted into the appropriate programs as space permits.

Active participation required

Inmates may be removed from alternative incarceration programs at any time for rule infractions, lack of effort or motivation, poor program progress, or lack of positive change. Inmates who fail any phase of an alternative incarceration program or who voluntarily request to be removed from the program will return to regular incarceration to serve the balance of their sentences. They are ineligible to participate in alternative incarceration programs in the future.

Statutory authority:

ORS 421.502, 421.508, 421.510, 421.512, Chapter 464 (2003 Laws), effective date: January 1, 2004.

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