

ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS  
Some Forms, Some Issues and Some Suggestions

by

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Prepared for the Division of Community Corrections of the  
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April 1988

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## Why This Paper Was Written

Advisory boards dealing with adult community corrections have now become a fact of life for well over half the states in this country. As a result, private citizens find themselves drawn into correctional policy and programs in significant numbers. The National Institute of Corrections supports this concept of citizen participation, and is determined to help ensure its effectiveness.

This paper is a first step in that direction. Written for both administrators and board members, it reviews the different forms of advisory boards which presently exist, and offers a few suggestions to deal with the more common issues that arise around board activities.

It is neither a comprehensive survey nor a basic how-to manual. Rather, it is designed to begin a closer look at the role of advisory boards within the adult community corrections system, focusing on their actual and potential impact on the system, and on increasing public acceptance of local sanctions as a sentencing option.

Not all forms of advisory boards are included. For instance, boards which are advisory to the entire criminal justice system are not discussed, such as those in Maryland and New Hampshire, important as they are. Nor are boards with policy-making powers, such as Texas' or Arkansas' Adult Probation Commission. Nor are Wyoming's community corrections boards, since they have final approval in certain areas. The

here is strictly on those boards with a private citizen presence who advise public officials on matters involving adult community corrections.

## INTRODUCTION

In Virginia, citizen panels consider whether community sentences are an acceptable alternative to prison for certain offenders from their area.

In Massachusetts, members of the state's Probation Advisory Board provide the Commissioner access to private sector technologies and contacts with the media. District board members help find community service placements and work to improve coordination between the district probation office and area human service agencies.

In Iowa, citizens advisory to individual programs join with district boards of directors to form a supportive network around the whole array of community-based correctional programs.

And in Idaho, advisory board members of community correctional work centers meet monthly to monitor operations and help residents gain access to focal resources.

These are only a few examples of the work being done by members of advisory boards on behalf of adult community corrections. In one form or another, these boards can be found today throughout the United States.

The boards have different compositions. Some have representatives from both the-general public and from the criminal justice system. Other boards have only members from the general public.

They have different mandates. Many have statutory functions built into criminal justice procedures, such as planning local programs or reviewing private provider contracts. Others are used to help improve the system: "To involve the community in the corrections process" or "to explore innovative administrative and programmatic ideas".

But whatever their membership or mandate, all these boards have certain elements in common:

- They build a constituency for community corrections.
- They keep public administrators in touch with political realities.
- They offer the beleaguered - and not so beleaguered - administrator a sounding board and a set of allies.
- They provide a forum in which public officials and private citizens share priorities, concerns and opportunities, and work together on strategies for change.
- They provide a forum in which individual board members with very

different views come to appreciate each other's perspective and reach common ground.

- They provide access to private and other public sector resources.
- They allow public administrators to be accountable to the public.
- They give an agency a credible voice with which to explain programs, services, issues and incidents to those outside the criminal justice system.

And perhaps most important of all,

- They give members of the public a sense of ownership of and commitment to the correctional programs of their area.

They may be advisory, but they can have a significant impact.

#### SOME BACKGROUND)

Advisory boards have had a place in government operations for a long time, but their present form is relatively new. Until recently, advisory boards were considered decorative objects. Little was expected of them and little was wanted from them by those whom they "advised".

But the inactive form of advisory board is no longer the norm. Today these boards are taken seriously because they engage in serious business.

This new structure emerged from the dissatisfactions of the late sixties and early seventies, when those affected by public programs - clients, consumers, taxpayers - demanded a voice in what those programs should be and how they should be delivered. Public officials agreed, and settled on advisory boards as the way to incorporate that voice into public agencies. Boards in this new guise began appearing throughout the executive branch: to test public acceptance of new policies and to refine existing ones; to express an independent view to legislators, to chief executives and to their peers; and to advocate changes in services, in funding, or simply in the way communities viewed some of their clients.

It is important in thinking about these boards to bear two things in mind:

- (1) Advisory boards which operate within government should not be confused with citizen groups that operate outside of government. Citizen organizations such as the Sierra Club, the League of Women Voters or the Coalition for the Homeless, are composed of self-organizing volunteers who share a common view; represent the interests of a particular segment of the public; work for specific reforms; seek publicity to spread their own views; and sometimes deal confrontationally with government. Public advisory boards, on the other hand, are usually embodied in law, with members specified from various segments of the public. Their members work on day-to-day problems of the system as well as on broader reforms; seek publicity in order to hear the views of others as well as to present

their own; and deal with government in a collaborative rather than a confrontational manner.

- (2) They are advisory. They are not designed to take away or even to share the authority nor the accountability of public officials, but rather to bring the public's interests, political realities, and area resources into the formulation of an agency's policies and programs.

With few exceptions, this new form of citizen participation first appeared in public agencies other than those dealing with adult corrections. And the boards have made a difference. In mental health and mental retardation, for instance, boards are responsible for improvements in hospitals and for increased funding of community residences. In transportation they have kept neighborhoods from being overrun by highways, and have raised the need for mass transit. In the environmental field they have developed consensus among developers and advocates of restricted growth, and in the welfare arena, bank presidents and welfare recipients have worked together to reach agreement on policy changes.

A handful of states, such as Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and New Jersey, have long recognized the benefits of public involvement, and have pioneered the use of citizens in correctional policy and programs. But for most states, advisory boards in adult community corrections began to appear well after those in other agencies, and motivated by different forces. While a few were formed to gain the benefits of public participation, it seems fair to say that most boards were created to help solve the crisis of overcrowded prisons.

To ease the overcrowding, corrections officials required the cooperation of all parts of the criminal justice system, and political and public support for new strategies. Advisory boards were seen as a good means to achieve these two goals. In some states the functions were separated. Citizen boards were formed to develop the political and public support, and planning took place elsewhere among the criminal justice practitioners. In other states the functions were combined into one board composed of both citizens and criminal justice practitioners.

Thus boards sprang up composed of county commissioners, legislators, businessmen, focal officials, clergy, doctors, educators, housewives, and others to advise administrators and reflect the views of a particular geographic area. And other boards appeared, often to advise elected officials as well as administrators, composed primarily of representatives of the criminal justice system, - judges, sheriffs, district attorneys, correctional officials, attorneys for the defense, police - to which were added a few of the area's private citizens.

It takes time for advisory boards to become effective and integral part of agency operations, and so inevitably they have yet to reach their full potential. Nevertheless, the boards have already shown value and promise. Screening panels have diverted significant numbers of offenders from prison to community alternatives, thereby saving states thousands of dollars. Boards have planned and put in place expanded local programs and created new ones to increase sentencing options. Other boards have gained neighborhood support for residential programs. Still others have lobbied

legislators for more funds and new programs. New training programs have been developed through boards, as well as speakers' bureaus and public education programs. Even just holding meetings has helped to educate the board members themselves, no small benefit when heretofore various parts of the criminal justice system have been strikingly unaware of each other's operations and concerns, let alone been aware of the public's views.

## **SOME FORMS OF ADVISORY BOARDS**

Adult community corrections boards can be divided roughly into four different types. With apologies to those who may feel their particular board has been wrongly classified - in this kind of overview subtleties and differences get blurred and inadvertently distorted - here-with a brief description of the four models:

### 1. Boards Focused on community Corrections Planning

- States which have either state level or county level versions include:

Georgia	Indiana	Iowa
Kansas	Michigan	Minnesota
New York	Ohio	Oregon
Tennessee	Virginia	

- The boards are intrinsic to the operation of community corrections in areas opting to receive state funds for an approved annual plan to create and maintain local alternatives to state prison.
- They are usually advisory to the local unit of government, generally the county.
- Their members represent the criminal justice system and the general community. Their numbers vary.
- Their main purpose is to increase the ability of local government to handle misdemeanants and selected offenders outside of state prison by developing a broad range of local sanctions.
- The American Correctional Associations technical assistance manual on Community Corrections defines board responsibility in this way:

"This board has the flexibility to decide which services or sanctions are most suited to community needs...The... board is required to prepare a local comprehensive plan detailing local correctional needs, proposed community corrections programs, and projected reduction of state commitments. The plan must first be approved by the local unit of government and then by the state commissioner of correc-

tions before the state subsidy can be released.”

- Some states include other responsibilities. For example:

“Participate in the establishment of local eligibility standards for local community corrections programs which meet the local needs of the community;

“Monitor the effectiveness of local community correctional services and advise the county legislative body regarding needed modifications;

“Inform and educate the general public regarding the need for diversion of selected non-violent offenders...in order to gain greater public support for corrections. (Tennessee Laws, Ch. 36)

“Establish a project advisory committee to act in an advisory capacity on matters pertaining to the planning, operation and other pertinent functions of each project in the judicial district.” (Iowa Laws. Ch. 905)

“Coordinate service delivery. Disseminate information to public. Seek alternative funding sources, review and monitor all expenditures, evaluate correctional programs.” (From Citizen Advisory Board Survey, Minnesota 1986)

These boards are powerful tools to integrated, systemwide planning. Until their arrival, those working within individual parts of the justice system were often unaware of the needs and circumstances of one another, and of the possibilities of cooperative strategies. Board meetings “were especially revealing”, says the 1986 annual report of New York States Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, “for they demonstrated the potential impact that the advisory boards could have within the local criminal justice system, regardless of the actual service plan. Different criminal justice officials became familiar with decision making by their colleagues, and data were reviewed, often for the first time, in a group context...These experiences, especially when they led to collaborative approaches to problem solving, were the most meaningful parts of the entire planning process.”

Administrators also speak of the benefits of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials being directly involved with planning alternatives, so that they can tell their colleagues and legislators about the use of these sanctions.



These boards are not as useful for hearing the public's concerns nor for building public constituencies. The citizen voice tends to get lost amid the professionals' discussions, and citizen and professional alike can forget the importance of the political dimension the citizen presence brings.

## 2. Boards That Serve a General Advisory Purpose

- States which have either a state level or county level version include:

California  
Iowa  
New Jersey  
Texas

Florida  
Massachusetts  
Oklahoma

Illinois  
Missouri  
South Carolina

- Although they may be statutory, these boards serve essentially an enhancing rather than the intrinsic purpose of the previous boards.
- They are advisory to various parts of the system: to a Commissioner, to a Chief Probation Officer at the county or district level, to an individual restitution program.
- Most boards have members only from the general public, although a few like New Jersey have the criminal justice/public mix. At the state level, the members tend to be academics, lawyers, doctors, representatives of citizen groups such as the League of Women Voters, labor leaders, influential businessmen. At the local level, members come from a spectrum more representative of the community at large. Numbers vary.
- Their purposes are generally couched in terms of advising on ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the system or program to which they are advisory:

To increase the public's understanding of probation and how the local probation office functions. (District Office advisory board, Massachusetts)

[To] create a statewide program of support for probation in New Jersey by enlisting business, educational, social, religious and community organizations to help improve the effectiveness of probation as well as the chances of individual probationers succeeding. (Statewide board, New Jersey)

[To] communicate the ideas of the community and the local criminal justice system to the regional administration of the Department of Corrections...[To] provide a forum for receiving citizen complaints and holding hearings on general problems relating to the Department. (Regional Advisory Councils, Florida)

To involve the community in the corrections process; to increase services to clients on probation and parole; to

provide for satisfying and dignified interpersonal relationships between clients and the rest of the St. Louis community. (Local citizen advisory board, Missouri)

These boards have a great deal of latitude, and can focus on particular needs of the agency or the interests of board members at a given moment. They are strong tools for developing public constituencies; for forging links to local resources; for advocating for funds, for better interagency cooperation, for access to services, for volunteers; and for providing a credible voice to speak to issues and needs of an agency or program. And perhaps most important, in the words of one official: "They make a difference on the small things on a daily basis. They change the climate."

### **3. Boards Advisory to Residential Programs.**

- States in which there are programs with such boards include:

Florida	Idaho	Illinois
Massachusetts	Michigan	Montana
Ohio	Pennsylvania	Texas
Utah		

- Some are required by statute, others are created at the initiative of individual correctional administrators or program directors.
- They are advisory to the director of the program, and in some cases have ties to regional-or state administrators or boards. These boards are also found around private non-profit organizations and can then have ties to a board of directors or to a correctional board or administrator.
- Members come from the program's host community and can include neighbors, police, social service workers, local businessmen, clergy, and elected officials - legislators or municipal leaders. No set number but usually a general requirement that there be certain categories represented.
- Their main purpose is to form a partnership between community and facility and to integrate the program into the surrounding area.
- Here are some sample responsibilities:

Pursue ways and means of communicating the Community Services Division's mission to the public;  
Assist in the identification of public service projects;

Develop resources which will benefit inmates/releasees;

Assist in the development of private business enterprises to provide employment to the inmates/releasees;

Advise the Chief Administrative Officer on policies

which impact the community; and

Provide other advice and input which will enhance the Community Services Division's position in the community. (Illinois Department of Corrections)

"The most outstanding example of citizen volunteers in the community center program is the Citizens Advisory Committee, a group of local people who...have agreed to serve as liaisons between the center and the local community. The members meet regularly to coordinate programs for the inmates and projects the inmates can undertake for the community...They also facilitate inmates' participation in community groups which provide helpful services." (Pamphlet on Florida's Community Correctional Centers)

These boards give the community a sense of ownership and a role in monitoring a program, particularly those areas which are of most concern to neighbors: (1) the impact of the program on the neighborhood and on the community at large; and (2) the categories of offenders placed in the program. These boards also allow a public agency to demonstrate its sensitivity to the feelings of the host community.

#### **4. Boards Directly Involved In Individual Cases**

- States with some form of these boards include the following:

Colorado	New Mexico	New Jersey
North Carolina	Virginia	

- They are advisory to the judiciary or to correctional officials.
- Membership is generally drawn from the criminal justice system and the general public. Some boards are required to have a preponderance of community members. Boards tend to be small, five to seven people.
- Purpose can be one or a combination of three functions: (1) to screen offenders for placement in residential community programs; (2) to consider the suitability of individual offenders for community sanctions instead of imprisonment; (3) to develop individualized supervision plans for selected offenders which can then be sent as a recommended sentence to the referring judge.
- In North Carolina, for instance, under a "Community Penalties Program", General Statute sets forth the offenders who are eligible (by crime or prison-risk), and boards can further exclude certain offenses (sex offenders, drug charges).

The purpose is to reduce prison overcrowding by providing the judicial system with community sentences to be used in lieu of and at less cost than imprisonment. In furtherance of

this purpose, this Part provides for the following:

(1) Establishment of local sentencing alternatives for felons who require less than institutional custody but more than regular probation supervision.

(2) Increased opportunities for nonviolent felons to make restitution to victims of crime through financial reimbursement or community service.

(3) Local involvement in the development of community penalties to assure that they are specifically designed to meet local needs.

(4) Reduced expenditures of State funds through an emphasis on alternative penalties for offenders so that new prisons need not be built or new space added. (North Carolina)

- Sample responsibilities from other states include these:

Screen and Identify criminal offenders sentenced to imprisonment in a correction facility suitable for placement in a program, and send a recommendation to that effect and for modification of sentence to the sentencing judge. (New Mexico)

Provide for the purchase or development of community services and programs for use by the courts in diverting offenders from state and local correctional facility placements;

Assist community agencies and organizations in establishing and modifying programs and services for offenders on the basis of an objective assessment of the community's needs and resources;

Evaluate and monitor community programs and services to determine their impact on offenders;

Provide a mechanism whereby all offenders with needs for services will be linked to appropriate services;

Attempt to resolve agency policies and procedures that make it difficult for offenders to receive services;

Upon referral to the board of individual offenders by any court, determine whether an appropriate, rational behavioral contract can be developed with the offenders for participation in a community diversion program; and

Provide the judge of the referring court with the findings and recommendations of the board made on individual offenders. (Virginia)

These boards bring the community squarely into deciding whom it will tolerate on its streets. "Citizen involvement is key,"

says one official, "because it brings in the community's mores. A good reflective group can set the terms of what kind of person is acceptable, and that varies from county to county. They also intercede with the legislature and that makes the money flow more easily."

The boards operate within guidelines established by statute and/or by the Department of Corrections. The final sentencing rests with the judge, but the final decision on placement in a particular community program can rest with a board..

## **SOME DIFFICULTIES AND SOME SUGGESTIONS**

Despite their value, advisory boards are not without difficulties. For one thing, nothing prepares an administrator or a board member for this particular kind of work, and little help is offered in how to deal with the process. For another, boards promote the effectiveness, not necessarily the efficiency of policies and programs. Boards take a lot of time and effort, and on occasion they can be rogue elephants. To officials not persuaded of their value, they can seem a real headache, especially if there is no commitment to their importance from the top, and no time and support provided to make them work.

There are certain difficulties that simply come with the territory, that are an inevitable part of the advisory board process. Among the more frustrating and common are the following:

### **Middle-Aged Slump**

It is fairly easy to start an advisory board, particularly if the reason for its creation is clear and compelling. It is not so easy to keep it going. Minnesota recognized this problem early, and holds retreats for administrators alone, and then for administrators and board members together to consider how to reenergize the process.

All boards have ebbs and flows, so that what may appear to be a slump may simply be part of a natural rhythm. It is useful to probe a bit and find out how both members and staff are feeling. If it is a slump, herewith a few suggestions that may bring some fresh energy:

- Share the issue. In the words of one board member in Minnesota: "Board members should have more say in keeping boards alive."
- In addition to the required activities, select one issue a year for all similar boards in a state to work on, with members helping to choose the issue.
- Appoint one or two new citizen members each year so that the unexpected and basic questions are always being asked.
- Prepare easy-to-follow instructions on how individual members can become involved in the planning process, in monitoring or in advocacy, so that there can be comfortable and effective action when interest is high.

- Have speakers at meetings, including members of other boards.
- Hold periodic meetings across regional lines, where board members and staff can share experiences and help each other.
- Allow time at one meeting a year to assess the board's effectiveness.

But projects are not alone the measure of a board's effectiveness. The mere fact of meeting to listen to each other's views, to hold administrators accountable through questions and answers, and to keep current on programs and issues is an important activity in and of itself, and should not be undervalued.

### **Tensions**

Inevitable. They come between individual board members with different backgrounds and views, between board and staff, between a local administrator and those further up the line, between board members and those they advise. One administrator cited a board wanting funds to go to one program while department heads wanted them to go elsewhere, - and also reported feeling caught in the middle. Another spoke of tensions caused by differences in salary between county and state staff.

Tensions need to be aired openly and frankly, difficult though that might be. They need to be recognized as an inevitable part of the process, and treated as constructive differences, not as hostile confrontations. The four steps in negotiation outlined in Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury offer a useful guide for dealing with differences:

- (1) separate the people from the problem;
- (2) clarify Interests;
- (3) generate options for mutual gain; and
- (4) use objective criteria.

### **Lack of understanding of one's role**

Everyone at one time or another feels uncertain about his or her role. Administrators wonder how much to lead, how much to set the agenda. Board members also wonder about the administrator's role, and wonder how much power "advisory" really has. And everyone involved, with very few exceptions, has periods of uncertainty regarding the whole board concept.

Most advisory boards were created with mandates worded in very general terms, with little said about how they were to work, leaving individual agencies and directors to develop their own interpretations. These issues will be discussed further under the section titled "Training". The main thing, as in all other issues, is to recognize openly how universal is the feeling of uncertainty, and to help create a climate in which administrators and board members alike feel comfortable speaking their minds and trying to reach a common understanding of purpose and strategies.

## **Demands of Time and Energy**

Many administrators who work with advisory boards speak of their surprise - even shock - at exactly how much time it takes to focus and support a board. Yet that fact is seldom reflected in job descriptions or in agency procedures.

For a board to succeed, the demand it makes on the administrator's time and energy needs to be recognized. It is important that job descriptions reflect it, that higher-ups encourage it, that training supports it, and that board members understand it.

While an advisory board's effectiveness is primarily the responsibility of the administrator, board members can certainly help share the load. While they should probably not be asked to help with minutes or logistics, they can help plan meetings, articulate needs, and see that their fellow members work candidly and comfortably with one another.

Administrators will find they can also cut down their time by having a mission statement and orientation materials that can be used by all similar boards. Common procedures for board member activities will also help. So will sharing experiences with other administrators, as will time spent in careful planning of the board's work. But if there is real commitment to the value of a board, the time it takes to make it work effectively must be recognized and built into the job.

### THREE FINAL SUGGESTIONS

#### **1. Training and orientation**

**Administrators who work directly with boards** are key to the boards' success, and should receive the most help. They need to understand their board's role and their own role in relation to their board. They also need ongoing support from other colleagues more experienced with boards and periodic meetings among themselves to discuss issues and share solutions. As a New Jersey official put it: "Volunteer (board member) involvement is only as good as the staff, and the staff is only as good as the support it receives."

Training for administrators should include:

- the purposes the advisory board serves for the agency and for themselves as individual managers;
- the contribution expected of citizen members (always difficult for private citizen and professional alike to grasp);
- the leadership role an administrator must play when a board is advisory;
- specific ways to carry out the board's mandate;
- group dynamics to make the administrator comfortable with the board.

(New Jersey is one of the few states to include this in its training.)

Officials and administrators who are directly affected by the work of a board need orientation too: to the purposes of the board, what they can expect of it, the kind of information and responses board members need from them to do their work and to feel effective, and most importantly, the potential contribution of members of the public and why that is essential to a public agency.

Board members need to know

- the purpose of the board with regard to the criminal justice system in general and to the program or government unit they are advising in particular;
- the activities through which that purpose is carried out;
- what the private citizen brings to the board and why that is important;
- the parameters of authority of a board which is "advisory", and its sources of power;
- issues of importance, such as conflicts of interest and liability concerns, and resources to address them.

North Carolina's Community Penalties Program boards decided to add training in group process, with obvious and long lasting benefits.

A glossary of terms also helps. Members of Massachusetts' probation advisory boards, for instance, are given the Commonwealth's Criminal Law Reference Handbook.

Orientation can be offered for all new members of similar boards at periodic intervals. This has two benefits: it saves individual administrators from having to do it themselves; and board members will see they are part of a broad network of individuals engaged in similar pursuits. A "buddy system" for new members can be used to carry them until the next scheduled statewide orientation.

As program administrators profit from periodic meetings among themselves to share experiences and activities, so too do board members. Occasional meetings of administrators and board chairs to discuss organizational leaderships are also helpful.

## 2. Visibility

No matter the type of board, in order for its members to carry out their full purpose the public must be aware of the board's existence and purpose. One of a board's main functions is to be a communication channel between an agency and the public. Through its members, the board offers the public a chance to ask questions and voice concerns. If the public does not know a board exists, that exchange cannot take place.



Visibility is also important for recruitment, for an agency's public image, and for the effectiveness of a board's advocacy. Local media is always interested in local activities, and should be willing partners in increasing visibility. Board member names on the backs of pamphlets describing programs will help. Talks about the boards to fraternal organizations and professional groups will also spread the word. But whatever techniques are used, the word does need to spread. The best public education flows from public involvement, but that involvement in turn needs to be transmitted to the broader public.

### **3. A Strong Citizen Presence**

The stronger the private citizen element on a board, the stronger will be the board in carrying out its objectives. It may make the board more difficult for criminal justice professionals at first, but in the long run it will be worth the effort.

Obviously if the boards are to be the communication channel for the public, the public must be strongly represented. But the public presence is equally important for the other obvious reasons. Citizen board members bring a fresh eye, and ask the basic questions of why some things are done and why other things are not. They can gauge public reaction to proposed initiatives. They have voices credible to their peers, and create ties to state and local power centers and resources. They are also invaluable vehicles for public education and constituency building. In short, they make the community a partner in community corrections.

The tendency is to recruit members who already know something about corrections. But it is not the purpose of the private citizen to second-guess administrators. It is much more important that members be people in touch with and able to speak to the political climate, the public mood, the resources of the area, and be able to ask the questions of criminal justice officials that the public wants answered. They will learn the criminal justice system soon enough, and justice professionals will be *more* effective for watching that learning process.

In those boards which have a majority of criminal justice professionals, it can be hard to listen to private citizens. "Their voice gets swamped", says one administrator, reflecting the views of many. Training helps underscore the importance of the non-criminal justice view, but a conscious effort must be made on mixed boards to make sure the citizen voice is heard.

#### RESOURCES - FREE AND AVAILABLE

There are a number of helpful resources which can be found or could be created in every state with relatively little effort.

- Colleagues. Administrators and board members, through periodic meetings by region, state or groups of states, can help each other with activities, problems, training and psychological support..
- A central board office. A central office available to all advisory boards can help with technical assistance, training, projects, and

information on issues such as liability, conflict of interest and other pertinent laws. Since so many issues are common to all advisory boards in all public agencies, one central office could serve as a resource to all boards throughout state government, with individual agencies providing orientation to their own policies and programs.

- ~~Citizen organizations that offer workshops in government and group process.~~ In most states, the League of Women Voters and/or Common Cause give workshops when asked, about how state government functions and how to develop effective advocacy. It is not necessary to agree with the political views of these organizations to profit from their technical know-how. In many states the Junior League and/or the United Way offer training in group process to public boards.
- **NIC's Information Center in Boulder, Colorado.** The Center is developing a library of materials that can help orient board members and correctional officials. Background papers on probation and community sanctions can give board members a broader sense of overall mission. Background papers on advisory boards can help clarify the citizen involvement concept to board member and administrator alike.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Forming an advisory board is the smartest thing I've done as Commissioner", says one supporter of the process.

Community corrections needs to work closely with the community to succeed, even as communities need a sense of ownership in the programs which can so strongly affect their residents. Advisory boards offer the means to that collaboration. While they may have been formed originally to deal with prison overcrowding, it is important for the future of community corrections that the boards continue even if the overcrowding subsides.

In many states, that future is already embodied in law.

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