



A Communications Audit: Promoting Public Understanding of Corrections

National Institute of Corrections

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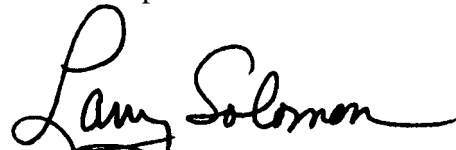
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FOREWORD

In recent years, the National Institute of Corrections has received numerous requests for information and assistance in dealing with the communications challenges facing corrections professionals. Much of this interest centers around the problems of dealing with multiple constituencies with differing perspectives regarding corrections' mission and role in the states and localities. In addition, many corrections officials and staff have been concerned about their ability to articulate their initiatives and proposals to the legislature, governor, media, and general public.

In response to these concerns, NIC funded a multiyear effort to examine the issues surrounding the corrections community's communications needs and to develop strategies and methodologies to improve the quality and impact of communications activities. This monograph describes the communications audit process undertaken in three state departments of corrections as part of the project. It is hoped that documentation of experiences in those three states will assist others in auditing their processes and developing strategic communications plans.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Solomon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Larry Solomon
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three departments selected by NIC for participation in the Communications Audit were the Alabama Department of Corrections, the California Department of Corrections, and the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. The project team for the Communications Audit was led by CGA Consulting Services, Inc., in association with the Criminal Justice Institute and Chernoff Silver Associates.

Dan Russell served as the project manager on behalf of the NIC Prisons Division. His assistance was invaluable in developing the project objectives and refining the project work plan so as to meet the needs of each individual department.

The authors wish to acknowledge the encouragement and support offered by the department heads in the three participating states: former Commissioner Morris L. Thigpen of Alabama; Director James H. Gomez of California; and Director George A. Vose, Jr., of Rhode Island. A special word of thanks goes to the primary staff contacts in each department who helped arrange interviews, secure documentary materials, and coordinate activities with their respective departmental steering committees: John Hale of the Alabama Department of Corrections, Tipton C. Kindel of the California Department of Corrections, and A.T. Wall II of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

I. INTRODUCTION

Correctional administrators increasingly recognize that dissemination of factual information concerning the work of corrections is essential to public understanding and support. Legislators need to be accurately informed about correctional issues if they are to make sound judgments about legislation and appropriations.

Public information about the work of corrections significantly influences the image of corrections as a career and the ability to successfully recruit, employ, and retain a balanced workforce. Employee morale and performance, community support, citizen participation, involvement of advocacy groups, and many other critical factors in corrections work depend heavily on the message conveyed to the public.

These conditions make it mandatory that departments of corrections become more proactive in their relationships with the media, their governing authorities, and the public in an effort to promote better understanding of corrections' role, its purpose, and the issues it must address. To respond to this need, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Prisons Division established a project entitled "A Communications Audit: Promoting Public Understanding of Corrections" as part of its fiscal year 1992 program.

This project had two objectives. The first was to assist three state departments of corrections in developing more effective strategic communications plans. The second was to produce a monograph to document and describe the audit process in a manner that would enable other departments of corrections to similarly evaluate their communications effectiveness and prepare their own communications strategy. This report is that project monograph.

To initiate the state selection process, the NIC Director wrote to the director, secretary, or commissioner of corrections in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia announcing the project and inviting them to send a written response if they would like to participate in the project. Positive responses were received from over half the states.

Information was collected from the responding states regarding the size of their system (i.e., number of inmates and number of institutions), rates of incarceration and overcrowding, current communications practices, and departmental organization. In order to ensure diversity among the participating departments, NIC emphasized system size and region of the country as the primary screening criteria in selecting the three departments.

State corrections systems range in size from over 100,000 inmates to slightly over 500. To reflect system size, the states were classified into three categories:

- **Small Systems:** This category consists of systems with less than 7,500 inmates. There are a total of 22 states in this category.
- **Medium Systems:** This category consists of systems with 7,500 to 20,000 inmates. Altogether, there are 18 states and the District of Columbia in this category.
- **Large Systems:** This category consists of systems with over 20,000 inmates. There are a total of 10 states in this category.

In order to reflect region, the states were divided into four groupings: the Northeast, the Midwest, the South/Southwest, and the West.

Each of the three system size categories was well represented in the screening process, since approximately half of the departments in each category indicated an interest in participating in the audit. Furthermore, positive responses were received from all four regions and were well distributed within each region across the three categories of system size.

Based on the information gathered during the screening process, NIC selected the Alabama Department of Corrections, the California Department of Corrections, and the Rhode Island Department of Corrections to participate in the Communications Audit.

The audit process was a collaborative effort between the project team members and staff from each department, who were selected by that department's director or commissioner. In gathering information on issues and concerns, interviews were held with a wide range of individuals both within and outside of each department. In addition, documentary materials were collected and reviewed.

Interim project reports were prepared and reviewed with the project steering committees in each of the participating departments. The comments and guidance of the committees were used in refining a mutual understanding of issues and concerns, defining a goal and the objectives for each department's communications strategy, and defining the elements of a plan to implement that strategy.

The purpose of this monograph is to review the issues relating to communications and corrections, summarize the audit process and the results achieved in each of the three participating states, and set forth guidelines and procedures that other state departments of corrections can use to conduct a review of their own communication needs and formulate their own strategic communications plan.

- **Chapter II** describes the audit process, which consisted of four tasks conducted simultaneously in each of the three departments.
- **Chapter III** summarizes the results and key findings for each department. These case studies give a brief background of the characteristics of each department and then summarize the issues and communications objectives that were identified for their strategic communications plans.
- **Chapter IV** reviews the basic principles for conducting a communications audit in a department of corrections. These guidelines identify the key issues that should be addressed and the components of the communications process that should be evaluated.
- **Chapter V** summarizes the four basic steps to improving internal and external communications practices.

The appendices of the monograph contain supporting material developed as a part of the Communications Audit. These sections include copies of the final strategic communications plans developed for the Alabama Department of Corrections (Appendix A), the California Department of Corrections (Appendix B), and the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (Appendix C). Appendix D is the questionnaire form used to conduct interviews in the three departments of corrections, and Appendix E is a sample action plan form that departments of corrections might use.

II. THE COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT PROCESS

The communications audit process was divided into four tasks. Each task had several subtasks that described the objectives of that task, the methodologies to be employed, and the outcomes to be achieved. The following narrative describes how the audit process was carried out in each of the three departments participating in the study.

Task 1: Assess the Department's Internal and External Communications

Identification of Key Issues

The communications needs assessment began with the identification of key issues facing the department of corrections, both internal and external.

Internal Issues: Within each department, the project team gathered information on issues from the perspective of those who do the work of corrections, including representatives from all levels of the department. Also taken into consideration was the role of the inmate population, since inmates can have a major impact on both the internal operation of a facility and the external image of the department of corrections throughout the state.

External Issues: The project team's initial step in identifying external issues was to study the mission and role of the department of corrections. Recent departmental history was reviewed to identify any changes within the agency's structure or operations that were mandated by external sources and to identify the major policy issues that have dominated the public debate on corrections in that state during the past decade.

The department's relationships with other elements of the state governmental structure, such as the governor and the legislature, were examined, as were the department's linkages to service provider networks. Information was gathered on private sector constituencies and on the department's relationships with the media.

Data Collection

The information gathering consisted of individual interviews with appropriate persons and documentary research, including content analysis of clipping files. The project team worked with the leadership of the department to identify a list of persons to interview, both within and outside the department.

A standardized questionnaire was used to guide the interview process (see Appendix D for a copy of the interview form). The primary objective of Task 1 was to develop a database of information about the issues and concerns affecting the department's mission and its operations.

Task 2: Review Formal and Informal Communications Processes

Documentation and Assessment of Current Communications

The focus of this task was to document and assess the current communications activities of the department, including both formal and informal channels. Formal channels included annual reports, press releases, legislative testimony, newsletters, reports from the director, and staff meetings. Informal channels included interactions with legislators and the media, ad hoc staff meetings, and even the “rumor mill.”

Data Collection

The primary methods of data collection for this task were interviews and documentary research of materials like press releases, budget proposals, and newsletters. Interviews were used to review the informal modes of communication.

Analysis

Analysis was done to determine the content of communications and to assess message consistency across the various channels. The purpose of this analysis was to identify those methods of communication considered to be the most reliable and beneficial to the department and its intended audiences.

Task 3: Assist the Department in Clarifying its Communications Goal and Strategies

Identification of a Goal and Objectives

The project team built upon the work done during the previous tasks to lay the foundation for the development of a more effective communications strategy. The main purpose of this task was to establish a communications goal and objectives that were consistent with the issues and concerns identified earlier.

Some of the issues and concerns identified in the earlier tasks did not relate directly to the development of a communications strategy. Therefore, the first step in this task was to select those issues that were appropriate for inclusion. The primary criteria for inclusion were either: (1) that the issue was something about which the department wanted or needed to communicate, or (2) that the issue had an impact upon the department’s ability to communicate. The issues selected ranged from the fact that the department was operating under a court order to the impact of continuing budget constraints on departmental operations and staff morale.

Development of Strategic Messages

Once the list of issues was identified, the project team formulated a “strategic message” or “positioning statement” for the department that was responsive to the issues and concerns. In other words, given the stated concerns about existing conditions, this is what the department wants to communicate about itself to its various publics.

Defining a Goal and Objectives

Based on these strategic messages, a communications goal and objectives were developed, taking steps to ensure that the set of objectives took into account all of the department's relevant issues and concerns. This phase of the project involved a great deal of interaction between the project team and the department's project steering committee. Through an interactive process, the team and departmental staff prioritized the objectives in order of importance and feasibility.

Task 4: Assist the Department in Developing a Strategic Communications Plan

In this final task, the project team worked with the department steering committee to draft a strategic communications plan. This process addressed four areas: mission and goals, content of the plan, staff responsibilities, and evaluation.

Mission and Goals

The first step was to define the mission and goals of the department and to articulate how these elements are manifested in the role the department plays. This step is to ensure that the communications plan will reflect these fundamentals and that the leadership of the department has a consistent view of its mission and goals.

Content of Communications Plans

The next step involved translating the strategic messages, identified in Task 3, into a set of communications tasks or objectives. What the department says must be directly tied to the issues of concern and what it wants to say about those issues. It was also important during this step to verify that the department's issues and concerns related to communications in some way. In other words, the issue was something about which communication was wanted or needed or the issue had some impact on the department's ability to communicate.

Responsibility for Communications and Methods

Once the content was defined, the project team worked with the steering committee to determine who would be responsible for each of the communications objectives incorporated into the strategic plan. In addition, the strategic plan suggested the methods that should be employed to achieve a particular communications objective.

Evaluation Methods

Determination of evaluation methods is a critical step in the process. While the assessment process is often the most difficult task, it is a critical one and must be addressed. More discussion of evaluation techniques is presented in Chapter IV of this monograph.

Copies of the strategic communications plans for each of the three participating departments of corrections are contained in Appendices A, B, and C. The following chapter summarizes the results of the three departmental communications audits.

III. RESULTS OF THE AUDIT PROCESS

During review of the strategic communications plans developed for the Alabama, California, and Rhode Island Departments of Corrections, two things become clear. First, unique factors exist in each state that affect the ability of the department of corrections to communicate effectively. Second, most of the issues and concerns that emerged during the audit process are common to all three state departments and, therefore, can be translated into broad “truths” or principles regarding the role of communications in corrections.

This section summarizes the findings and recommendations for each of the three states in order to identify those common truths or principles that can be applied to other departments of corrections throughout the country. The three states are discussed in order of their size, beginning with the smallest.

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Background

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RI-DOC) is responsible for all incarceration and field service functions for both pretrial detainees and convicted offenders within the state. Thus, the Department operates both prison and detention facilities as well as probation and parole services. The Department carries out these functions with a total staff of approximately 1,535 employees.

The inmate population in Rhode Island grew from 990 inmates in 1982 to 2,862 in 1992, an increase of 189%. During this same 10-year period, the Department’s budget increased by over 400%) from \$21.3 million in fiscal year 1982 to over \$92 million in fiscal year 1992. The Department operates nine institutions, including eight prisons and one work release center.

The RI-DOC recognizes that it paid insufficient attention in the past to communicating its messages. This fact is of significance in that it created an environment in which there is considerable skepticism and doubt among the staff, the media, and the public regarding the Department’s mission and purpose. Under the leadership of its new Director, the Department has made considerable strides toward refocusing its efforts to communicate.

As the basis for its communications strategy, the Department and its steering committee formulated the following:

The communication goal of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections is to promote the Department's mission and gain confidence in and support for the mission from staff, client population, and the public at large.

In order to achieve this goal, RI-DOC identified the following issues and objectives for its strategic communications plan. A complete copy of the Rhode Island strategic communications plan is contained in Appendix C.

Issues and Objectives

1. **The Effects of Operating Under Court Oversight:** Many issues and concerns affect RI-DOC's ability to achieve its communications goal. One of them is the fact that the Department has been operating under the court's oversight since the 1970's and has been directed to limit the size of the inmate population.

In addition, the Department has found itself in the position of having to respond to allegations about staff conduct. This situation has impaired the Department's ability to develop proactive communications with the various publics.

The Department, therefore, wants to develop greater public understanding about its mission and its actual operations. An additional need is to educate the public on the cost benefits of community-based programs so that more inmates can be placed in the community when appropriate, thereby ameliorating the overcrowded conditions.

Two communications objectives were identified to address these concerns:

- The first is to educate the public that rehabilitative programming is in the interest of public safety.
- The second is to build public awareness of, support for, and participation in a program of intermediate sanctions.

Some of the methods the Department is considering to meet these objectives are the expansion of open house programs, the creation of an advisory board representing other criminal justice agencies, a statewide corrections conference, a media campaign designed to inform the public about rehabilitative programming, and the establishment of a speakers' bureau on the topic of corrections.

2. **Budget Constraints:** As is the case with most departments of corrections in the 1990's, budget constraints are a major problem for the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. The nearly complete elimination of the use of overtime for correctional officers led to a dramatic reduction in income, thereby removing a major source of job satisfaction. This greatly affected the substance of internal communications, especially for staff members who feel they are suffering financial hardships.

The Department's challenge is to create other sources of job satisfaction to compensate for the loss of income. Communicating to all staff that their work contributes to achieving the Department's goals and objectives is one way to meet that challenge. Staff must be consulted and involved in the development of Departmental policies, plans, and objectives. Encouraging staff to participate in the process will help ensure that the philosophy and goals contained in the Department's mission statement will be reflected in the conduct of the staff.

3. **Changes Under the New Director:** The current Department Director's tenure began in January 1991. One of the new Director's first initiatives was the development of a Departmental mission statement, reflecting his awareness of the importance of good communications. Concurrent with adoption of the new mission statement, the Director instituted changes in the Department's organizational structure and brought in some new staff.

Some policy shifts also occurred under the new Director's leadership. These shifts in management philosophy and operating practices were aimed at increasing the staff's accountability and control over the operation of the institutions. Adjustments were required by both staff and inmates.

One of the Department's most immediate objectives is to help staff develop an understanding and acceptance of the changes initiated by the new Director. This can be done by building staff awareness of these initiatives and the Department's mission through repeated communication directly from the administration, using a variety of communications vehicles on a regular basis.

Steps that will enable the Department to reach its objectives are conducting regular and frequent staff meetings, creating forums in which staff can express their opinions and concerns, and incorporating communications objectives into staff training programs.

- 4. The Mission Statement:** One area of concern frequently voiced among staff is the perceived gap between their day-to-day activities and the direction for the Department set forth in the mission statement. It appears that not all members of the staff have accepted the Department's new mission statement.

Demonstrating the results of achieving specific mission-related objectives is required to gain broad acceptance of the value of embracing the mission itself. It requires communicating with staff and the public about the worthwhile results of achieving these objectives. To do so, the mission statement can be used to evaluate staff performance and communications objectives can be incorporated into staff training programs.

- 5. The Department's Physical Layout:** Rhode Island's correctional facilities are all within close proximity to each other, clustered together in a single complex 6 miles south of Providence. Accordingly, they are under the close watch of the media, the public, and the central office staff. In contrast, many other state departments of corrections, frustrated by the geographic distance separating their facilities, feel that close proximity would enhance internal communications.

This has clearly not been the case in Rhode Island. It is felt that staff working in the separate facilities have very little contact with each other. In fact, most communications among staff seem to occur within the shift to which they are assigned, and there is a perception that each facility is run differently. Most staff believe that Departmental rules, particularly those involving discipline, are not applied uniformly. As a result, a level of distrust has developed between line staff and administrators.

Communicating to all employees that they are part of one organization with a specific and inclusive mission whose success depends upon the individual efforts and accomplishments of all staff is a critical communication need for the Department. The Department plans to consult and involve staff in the development of policies, plans, and objectives while demonstrating management's commitment to implementation of the mission. Ideas and suggestions of staff will be solicited through formal and informal methods. Management must also demonstrate its commitment to implementation of the Department's mission by creating a system to ensure regular communications with staff about its actions.

- 6. Lack of In-Service Training:** Another major concern of the Department is the historical lack of in-service training programs, particularly for staff who are promoted to supervisory roles. These training programs provide a valuable opportunity to communicate with staff members in a systematic

manner and to receive input from staff. They should be reinstated to the greatest **extent possible** within the budget constraints. In lieu of training programs as a method of face-to-face, two-way communication, staff meetings could provide another valuable, less costly channel.

7. **Media Relations:** Staff of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections feel that the media portray them in a negative sense and that this negative perception derives in large part from two recent incidents. During the past year, two major disturbances within the institutions led to considerable media attention. In addition, inmate allegations of abuse by staff resulted in attention from the media and pressure from community-based organizations pushing for prison reform.

To an extent, the problems in media relations have been exacerbated by a perception that some of those commenting for the Department are not as well informed as they should be and, therefore, are unable to project a positive image of the Department. Staff feel that their jobs are misunderstood by the public and that they have no control over how they are portrayed in the media. This situation is not surprising for an agency that lacks a public information office.

As a consequence, the Department is usually in a reactive rather than proactive mode, and its image has suffered. The Department plans to present a more complete, accurate picture of corrections in Rhode Island. It will work toward building and maintaining positive relationships with the public and the media. Accurate and timely information will be provided to the media. A public information officer will be hired who will operate according to written guidelines and initiate contacts with the media in a proactive manner.

8. **Public Image:** A vital part of this new proactive stance will be to improve the public's understanding of the Department's roles and activities. The public's current view is based on coverage of the isolated, negative events, and they have little understanding of what correctional officers and other staff members do on a day-to-day basis. The Department will attempt to build more positive relationships with the public to instill in them a more realistic, complete picture **of corrections.**

Summary

During the course of the Communications Audit, the PI-DOC steering **committee took steps to go beyond** the development of a strategic plan. The committee began work on drafting specific action plans to implement the communications objectives identified in the Department's strategic communications plan. Appendix E contains a sample of the action plan form that Department staff are using.

These initial implementation efforts have been directed toward laying down some of the fundamental building blocks for effective communications that, for too long, have been missing in the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. In keeping with the priorities established in the PI-DOC mission statement, the initiative to move forward has received strong support from the Director of the Department.

The Alabama Department of Corrections

Background

Alabama's Department of Corrections (AL-DOC) has responsibility for the management and operation of state institutions for convicted offenders. The parole function is under a separate agency, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. With a workforce of 3,224 employees, the Department operates 18 prisons and 12 community-based facilities throughout the state.

The inmate population more than doubled since 1982, from 8,415 to 17,819 in 1993. During this same period, the Department's budget increased from \$51.3 million to \$170.6 million. The Commissioner of Corrections is a cabinet appointee of the Governor. The Commissioner of the Department during the period of the Communications Audit was appointed in 1987.

Two major factors affect the Department's ability to carry out its operations: the continuing budget constraints and the public's attitude toward corrections. Alabama has a "tough-on-crime" attitude, as exhibited by the adoption of the habitual offender laws in the mid-1980's and the tightening of parole practices in the late 1980's. There is a public perception that the State has always handled and can continue to handle all criminals. There appears to be little public understanding of the role local communities should play in dealing with less serious offenders.

This public misconception is further exacerbated by budget constraints. Like most states, Alabama has not operated a "pay-as-you-go" corrections system. The imposition of harsher prison penalties and the resulting growth of the inmate population have not been matched by appropriations of funds to build and operate the required prison capacity.

As the State's overall fiscal situation worsened, the impact on the Department's budget became even more severe. The most significant fact of life for the AL-DOC staff during the past year has been "proration," the process by which the state makes across-the-board cuts in agency budgets after the fiscal year has begun. Proration led to widespread layoffs and reassignments, and additional layoffs appear likely. The entire situation has seriously affected the morale of the men and women who work for the AL-DOC.

These same budget constraints led to chronic overcrowding in the Alabama corrections system, as is the case in many other states. As a result of the recent budget reductions, the Department was forced to close one institution temporarily. Although that institution is being reopened, there is the prospect of more closings in the future. Budget constraints also forced a reduction in internal communications channels. The regular newsletter is no longer published, wardens/directors meetings have been curtailed, and the training programs have been drastically reduced.

In order to address these issues and their impact on communications, the AL-DOC project steering committee formulated the following:

The goal of the Alabama Department of Corrections' communications strategy is to promote effective, two-way communications both internally within the Department and externally with its various constituency groups.

The strategic communications plan developed for the AL-DOC is contained in Appendix A. The following section summarizes the issues and communications objectives identified in this strategy for the Department.

Issues and Objectives

1. **A Mission Statement:** The AL-DOC situation differs from the departments in Rhode Island and California since there was no written mission statement for the Department. Lack of a statement represented a priority concern for the Alabama Department, because a mission statement defines a vision for an organization that must be reflected in all of its communications and activities. Accordingly, developing a written mission statement that reflects the Department's philosophy and vision is the initial objective of the communications plan.

It is important to understand that developing a mission statement has an intrinsic value regardless of how the Department uses it in the future. The very process of developing this statement entails a spirit of cooperation and inclusion that fosters better communications. It lays the foundation for all that is to follow. The remaining objectives set forth in the plan address the methods by which improved communications can help achieve the vision described in a mission statement.

- 2. The Role of Staff:** Concern was expressed about the public perception of corrections employees and about how those perceptions are addressed within the Department. The public seems to think that state government workers, including those in corrections, are overpaid and underworked. As one military retiree put it, his fellow retirees think he made a dead-end career choice by going into corrections.

The reality is that, to be effective, a corrections officer must be skilled in constitutional law, interpersonal communications, the proper use of force, cultural awareness, first aid, and CPR; further, the officer must be knowledgeable about communicable diseases, minimum standards for inmates, and due process rights. Other corrections employees must provide financial management, substance abuse treatment and counseling, facilities planning, job training and placement, and legal advice.

By promoting professionalism within the Department, the AL-DOC can lay the groundwork for educating the public about the roles played by Department employees. This will also enable the staff to serve as effective partners in improving external communications. The Department must set standards that reflect the highest levels of professionalism for all categories of staff.

The Alabama strategic communications plan recommends the development of a new employee orientation package that deals with corrections, not just employee benefits, to dispel the notion that the staff of the Alabama Department of Corrections are interested only in salary and benefits. In-service training needs to be reinstated as a means of maintaining active dialogue between the administration and staff.

- 3. Internal Communications:** In dealing with the budget constraints mentioned earlier, internal communications have been reactive and irregular. A more consistent long-range, strategic planning process is needed to enable the Department to anticipate and plan for future events and to improve internal communications.

The Commissioner, with the involvement of his senior management team, can build on the process used to develop the mission statement and establish a process to secure input from throughout the organization. Intradivisional and interdivisional communications should be strengthened by emphasizing options analysis and impact assessment before adopting changes in organizational policies and procedures.

It is unlikely that the State's fiscal situation will improve significantly in the near future; therefore, the Department needs to be prepared for a continuation of "proration." The AL-DOC should keep abreast of externally imposed regulations and familiarize staff with their potential impact on the Department's budget. These steps would enable the Department to maintain a more orderly, less disruptive process for absorbing future budget adjustments.

The Department must strive to rebuild some of the channels of internal communications that were adversely affected by budget cuts. However, given budget conditions, it should use informal or less

costly channels whenever appropriate. More two-way communications should be a goal for the Department as well. Increasing the number of staff meetings is an inexpensive channel for two-way communications. Bulletin boards and paycheck stuffers are two inexpensive ways to facilitate top-down communications.

- 4. Legislative Relations:** The resources needed to fund the work of corrections will continue to be weighed against other public needs across the state. Legislators who make these critical funding decisions are influenced by public opinion, and the Department must assure them that they are effective stewards of their resources. The Department, therefore, needs to continue to be proactive in communicating with the public and government officials about the role of corrections.

Department officials will need to continue to be actively involved in the ongoing legislative and policy debate concerning the role of corrections. Information should be provided in a timely and accurate fashion, and the Department's legislative policy agenda should be articulated internally and externally.

- 5. Media/Public Relations:** The Department's relationship with the media is generally good; however, there is little in-depth coverage of corrections issues and corrections' role in the broader context of the criminal justice process. There is a distinct need to continue the Department's public education efforts on sentencing and sanctions in Alabama. The public needs to understand that the State should be responsible for serious, hard-core offenders, while local communities must be responsible for less serious offenders.

Some AL-DOC administrators who should be responsible for media communications are uncomfortable with that role. They are uncertain as to how, when, and whether they should interact with the media. Given the fact that the most direct and efficient method of communicating with the public is through the media, the Department must involve more of its senior staff in media relations.

The Department should continue to provide the media with as much information as possible about corrections and its mission. The senior staff should not simply wait for the media to come to them with questions but contact the media regularly and frequently. The Alabama communications strategy calls for training and technical assistance in communications skills to be provided to the Department's designated spokespersons.

There are, of course, other methods of communicating with the public, and the Department should not simply rely on the media. Visits by constituencies and legislators should be encouraged to convey a sense of openness. Outreach teams can be established to develop and maintain local community networks to encourage dialogue with local community leaders and legislative delegations.

The Department should also encourage volunteerism as a method for developing contacts in the community. Such a program could include using volunteers to help ex-offenders make a successful return to the community as well as encouraging corrections employees to become involved in community affairs. Special attention should be paid to preventive or aftercare programs, such as MENTOR, literacy training, and Big Brother/Big Sister.

Summary

The philosophy of the communications strategy for the Alabama Department of Corrections is reflected in its title, "The Commissioner's Strategic Communications Plan." The AL-DOC project steering committee strongly believes that improvements in communications must reflect the Commissioner's priorities

and commitment to action. They feel that the most important communications role for the Commissioner and his senior administrative team is to give leadership and direction to the entire Department.

The issues and concerns listed above represent a compendium of the perspectives and opinions of a wide variety of individuals associated with corrections in Alabama. Implementation of action plans for each communications objective will enable the Alabama Department of Corrections to address those major issues that affect the Department and its ability to effectively carry out its responsibilities.

The California Department of Corrections

Background

The California Department of Corrections (CDC) is responsible for inmates in the state institutions as well as offenders on parole. Within its institutional division, the Department operates 24 prisons and 38 minimum-security facilities. CDC carries out these responsibilities with a staff of over 30,000 employees. The Director of Corrections is appointed by the Governor.

Like the other states, the California corrections system has experienced enormous growth during the past decade. The inmate population increased from 32,127 in 1982 to 109,140 in 1992, while the parolee population grew more than fivefold, from 14,469 in 1982 to 83,761 in 1992. The Department's budget increased by 433%, from \$469 million to \$2.5 billion.

At first glance, the sheer size of California's corrections system -- by far the largest in the nation -- could lead other corrections officials to think that they have nothing in common with California's experience. However, size is only one descriptor of a corrections system, and many factors affect CDC that are not unique to California.

As in Alabama, there is a strong law-and-order sentiment, captured in the expression, "Do the crime; do the time." This public attitude has dominated much of the political rhetoric during the past decade and a half and has been reflected in changes in state law adopted during this period. Now, however, there are indications that public attitudes toward corrections are in a state of transition, presenting both challenges and opportunities for CDC.

Another dimension of change affects CDC. During the past decade, the California Department of Corrections has enjoyed strong support from the Governor and legislative leaders -- support that was translated into substantial funding for new facilities and system expansion. In 1991, however, the voters rejected a referendum to fund new prison construction.

At the same time, statewide general appropriations have been cut or severely restrained to meet revenue shortfalls. In light of these circumstances, it is unlikely that corrections will be given the kind of preferential treatment it previously enjoyed. In the years to come, CDC must be prepared for more scrutiny by the legislature, the media, and other constituencies who have competing claims on the State's resources.

In developing a strategy to address these challenges and make them opportunities, the CDC communications plan sets forth the following statement:

The goal of the California Department of Corrections' communications strategy is to ensure that the Department's mission and operations

reflect the corrections realities in the State of California while promoting the understanding of that mission to the Department's internal and external constituencies.

In pursuit of this goal, the CDC project steering committee identified the following issues and objectives for its strategic communications plan. A complete copy of that plan is contained in Appendix B.

Issues and Objectives

1. **A Decade of Growth:** The California Department of Corrections has experienced a decade of phenomenal growth, represented by the increases in inmates and parolees cited above. Even more important, this growth is manifested in the size and diversity of the CDC staff. Over 30,000 men and women are responsible for medical services, security operations, facility management, mental health and substance abuse treatment, financial management, job training and placement, strategic planning, and life skill counseling, among other duties.

The Department needs the commitment and involvement of all its employees to achieve its communications goal. This requires an organizational climate of trust and openness that engenders a desire to participate in Departmental affairs. It also requires an administrative perspective that will value the diversity in the background, talents, and roles of individual CDC staff members.

CDC must take advantage of its diversity to build strength out of what would otherwise be fragmentation. This calls for patterns of communication appropriate to all employees and an organizational structure that does not isolate groups of employees from each other and the larger mission of the Department.

California's strategic plan recommends changes in policies and procedures manuals and job descriptions that recognize the diversity of roles within the Department. By placing more emphasis on performance objectives, wardens and other administrators can be given appropriate discretion and responsibility for implementing Departmental policy. In addition, periodic day-transfers between institutions and parole offices could be encouraged to provide staff with direct exposure to alternative work experiences.

2. **Internal Communications:** Directly related to the consequences of CDC's growth is the issue of internal communications within the Department. It is important for any organization to communicate effectively with its employees, but this is especially true of the CDC because of its sheer size. Five years ago, an internal review established 15 Departmental priorities, the first one being the need to improve internal communications.

Progress has been made, but this issue must remain a focus for the Department. The Department should review the specific initiatives recommended in the 1988 report for improving internal communications practices (e.g., walk-and-talk management style, problem-solving meetings, newsletters, mentor program, reader files, and communications questionnaires).

More emphasis should be placed on communications skills in job descriptions and performance requirements for managers and supervisors, and training programs should place more emphasis on mission and agency performance. The Department needs to maximize the use of existing and emerging information-sharing technologies, including the development of automated databases and reporting systems.

One channel of information that is often overlooked or denigrated is the “grapevine,” which, if viewed properly, can serve as a useful communications tool. Senior managers and unit directors should learn how to access this channel as a means of identifying underlying problems so that they can be addressed proactively.

Another objective set forth in CDC’s strategic communications plan calls for an intra-agency review of the Department’s mission statement. The purpose of this review is to reaffirm the vision and direction for the Department as the basis for improving both its internal and external communications practices.

3. External Communications: A third area of concern involves the Department’s relationship with external constituencies. Any communicator must deal with a variety of publics, taking into account their differing perceptions. This concern is a particular challenge for CDC, given the size and diversity of the State and the Department. Whenever it is communicating, CDC must assess which audience it is addressing to position its message properly.

The Department has developed a good working relationship with the media, but there is still room for improvement. Because of its size and the number of issues the Department must address daily, central office administrators, wardens, regional administrators, and unit supervisors must participate proactively in the communications process. To this end, the Department’s plan calls for enhancing communications training for senior staff and other designated spokespersons, and making proactive communications skills a job performance standard for the appropriate officials.

California is also concerned about the public’s awareness of the role corrections plays in the community. There is a feeling that the State’s tradition of “lock them up and throw away the key” has fostered a sense of detachment from the community that needs to be addressed.

The Department can expand upon several types of community involvement and publicize its efforts in these areas. CDC employee involvement in volunteer activities in the community will be encouraged, as well as continuing public service activities by inmates and parolees. Community volunteers can be used as two-way communications channels to ensure not only that the public develops a better understanding of corrections, but that the Department gets input from the public as well.

4. Setting Public Priorities: CDC must continue to participate in the policy debate on the role of corrections in the State. Several developments make this arena even more crucial for the Department.

The adoption of term limits for the California State Legislature means a higher turnover in both chambers, with more new members requiring orientation to the Department’s mission. The elimination of staffing for joint committees, including the Joint Committee on Prison Construction, will alter the process of legislative oversight. It is anticipated that the standing committees will have more influence in the future on crafting legislation and appropriations for the Department.

Budget constraints will be a continuing challenge for the Department as other constituencies compete for scarce state resources, and more careful scrutiny will be paid to how well the Department manages its funds. Therefore, as often as possible the Department must demonstrate to the public that it is an effective steward of its resources.

Information should be provided to the Governor's office and the legislative leadership in a timely fashion, with a particular focus on those facts that demonstrate the Department is fiscally responsible. While making every effort to provide other state officials with a consistent statement of Departmental priorities and initiatives, CDC will also have to show how its diversity is an essential attribute for meeting the many challenges of the contemporary corrections enterprise.

Summary

Notwithstanding its size and diversity, the California Department of Corrections has achieved some success in building the framework required for strong internal and external communications. The Department must, however, continue to explore ways of improving its skills by making proficiency in communications an integral part of management and day-to-day operations.

As long as corrections remains the focus of attention for so many different constituencies, CDC will need to project a vision of its role and responsibilities within the State of California. This will require not only commitment from the top leadership of the Department, but also active participation by the tens of thousands of men and women who make up the CDC team.

IV. DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR A STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

The preceding chapters provide a basic understanding of the process required to perform a communications audit for a department of corrections. This chapter summarizes the guidelines to be followed in developing a strategic communications plan.

Existing Communications Practices

The first step in developing a strategic communications plan for a department of corrections is to perform an audit of the existing communications practices. All organizations, whether departments of corrections or corporations, have a communications plan. It could be formal or informal, written or unwritten. But methods of communicating exist, and they must be assessed to determine what, if any, changes need to be implemented.

The communications audit is a complete analysis of the department's communications -- both internal and external -- designed to give a complete picture of communications needs, policies, practices, and capabilities and to consider suitable alternatives. It is impossible to make decisions about how to improve a department's communications without having an accurate assessment of current practices. Once initiated, the strategic communications plan should be viewed as a process or continuum rather than a finished product; constant evaluation and updating of "current practices" are critical **parts** of that process.

The audit must examine not only the types of channels, but also how frequently they are being used. It should look not only at current practices, but also at what should be done. This requires **giving careful** consideration to various publics and their needs. Increased understanding **of each** constituency helps determine not only their information needs and uses, but also the most effective means of getting messages to them.

Identifying "Publics"

Some of the questions that must be answered are not only what types of information each public needs, but how much and how often. It is important to determine the issues that need to be addressed and then define objectives for each issue. The information disseminated should always be put **in the terms of its** intended audience and positioned to serve their interests, not the department's.

Analysis of various publics will also help determine an order of priority. Rarely will a department of corrections -- or any other organization for that matter -- have the staff or resources **necessary to** communicate effectively with all of its publics all of the time. Priorities must be assigned **and** routinely assessed to ensure appropriateness under changing situations.

For either a private organization or a public agency, it is a cardinal principle that two groups **of** people should always be at the top of the priority list for communications: the organization's employees and the media. Careful and constant attention must be paid to these two publics, whose opinions are **crucial to** the success of any organization.

Target Audience #1: The Employees

The day-to-day functioning of an organization depends on satisfactory employee relations, which are usually built on a foundation of mutual trust. To succeed, top management must view communications as a key resource for leadership. To instill confidence and trust between management and staff, candid information must flow freely in all directions -- up, down, and sideways. Too often, top-down messages dominate the channels of communications.

The goal of employee communications should be to create an understanding of the department's mission, operations, and problems. Staff should be informed in a timely fashion of significant developments that affect them and the department. Employee input should be encouraged. Fulfilling these goals demands a planned system of internal communications that includes the following steps:

- Establish a formal, organized program of frequent communication with all employees to provide key information of interest to them.
- To the extent that the budget will allow, use regular, printed communications for staff, such as a newsletter, but do not overlook other methods of communicating with staff.
- Develop orientation manuals that set the appropriate tone for new employees.
- Send personalized letters to employees whenever appropriate.
- Use payroll stuffers and bulletin boards as economical methods of communicating.
- Since verbal communications are just as important as written communications, schedule regular meetings between the administration and staff members at various levels of the organization. This approach is especially useful for encouraging two-way communications, which is crucial to a healthy department of corrections. The most effective and successful meetings have a set agenda with specific objectives.
- Pay attention to the "grapevine," though it is neither formal nor controlled, since it is one of the most frequently used methods of communicating. The grapevine will fill in information gaps created by an inadequate communications system. It takes over where the more formal channels stop. Distorted information on the grapevine normally reflects confusion over mission, poor coordination among departmental units, and/or low morale. In other words, a negative rumor often indicates more about the organization than it does about the person transmitting it. Administrators should look at the grapevine as a vital source of "upward" communications about potential problems within the department.
- Conduct periodic audits or surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of communications with the staff. Most important, look at the communications plan as a constantly evolving program. Situations change, and methods of responding to them must change as well.

Target Audience #2: The Media

Because the most effective and direct way to reach the general public is through the media, special attention must be paid to media relations. Due to the public nature of what departments of corrections

are all about, the media are paying increasing attention to departmental activities. It is the media's job to keep the public informed about how well the department does its job.

Any organization naturally wants news reported in a favorable manner that will help promote its objectives and/or will not cause it problems. The news media want stories that will interest readers and viewers. Because these two different perspectives often conflict, the relationship between public agencies and the media can sometimes be seen as adversarial. It is not, however, in anyone's interest -- neither the department's nor the public's -- to accept this situation as a given and do nothing to address it.

Some behavior serves only to exacerbate an already negative situation, and it is all too often adopted by organizations, ranging from large corporations to universities to grocery store chains. It is never in an organization's self-interest simply to accept a negative relationship with the media without trying to improve it.

Media relations can be improved by following several basic rules.

- Follow the first and most important principle: honesty is the best policy when dealing with the press. The truth will eventually come out and, even if it is negative, it looks much better coming from you than from another source.
- Provide information in a timely manner. Be proactive with the media. Do not wait for them to come to the department. The surest way to gain the cooperation of the media is to provide them with timely stories and photos that they want when they want them. Because news happens around the clock, someone from the public information office or from among the department's senior administrators must be available at all hours.
- Provide the media with a list of departmental spokespersons and their phone numbers -- including home phone numbers. Just as important, the department should have an updated list of names and phone numbers of key media personnel. Given the available information technology, there is no excuse for having an incorrect or outdated media list.

Beyond these general rules for dealing with the media are some specific guidelines that should be employed in news conferences or interviews with a reporter.

- First, the news should be positioned in the public's interest, not the department's. This is true for corrections departments just as it is for other organizations, such as banks, hospitals, or department stores.
- If a reporter asks a direct question, he or she should be given a direct answer. If the spokesperson does not know the answer, he or she should say so and then offer to get that information. Avoid using the phrase, "No comment."
- If a question cannot be answered, there is usually a good reason for it. If so, explain the reason to the reporter. For example, something is under litigation or it involves confidential personnel information. With few exceptions, reporters are reasonable and fair people, and an explanation sounds far better than a simple refusal to answer.

- Spokespersons should avoid talking “off the record,” because these conversations usually wind up being published without quoting the source. If one does not want a statement quoted, the statement should not be made. Above all, do not argue with a reporter, and always tell the truth.

The public’s perception of corrections is based in large part on what they read in the newspaper or see on television news. While a department should not attempt to manipulate the news to create favorable public opinion, a communications plan should be designed to be “user-friendly.” It is important to have designated spokespersons for the department who are trained to deal with the media and the public. Anyone who represents the department in a public setting, not just the public information officer, should be similarly trained.

Other Audiences

Although a department’s staff and the media are two of the most important audiences for communications, they are by no means the only two. It is important that the rest of the public not be seen as one large group to be communicated with in the same manner and with the same message. The “general public” is an aggregate of people made up of smaller publics, each of which can and should be defined before communicating with them.

Some of these subsets are the governor, legislators, and other government officials; “activists,” members of the local community, and business leaders; and employees of other criminal justice departments. Keep a list of the department’s audiences and determine which channels to use. A grid format, as illustrated below, can be used to keep track of how audiences and channels match up.

Strategic Messages	Target Audiences				
	Audience #1	Audience #2	Audience #3	Audience #4	Audience #5
Message #1	X	X	X		
Message #2	X			X	X
Message #3			X		
Message #4					X
Message #5	X		X	X	

It is critical that messages reach the appropriate audiences, which can happen only if particular channels of communication are selected for specific audiences. Messages to be communicated to each group should be stated in terms of the interests of that group, not the interests of the department of corrections. Each message should be regularly and consistently examined with that principle in mind.

Crisis Communications Plan

No matter how successful a department’s communications strategy, events and crises will occur. It is only a matter of time, especially in organizations like departments of corrections that engage in inherently risky business. All organizations -- especially those whose activities involve an element of danger or risk -- should have a written crisis communications plan.

An electric utility with a nuclear power plant, a commercial airline company, or a department of corrections could be described as being derelict in its duty if it did not have a written plan that could go into effect immediately when a crisis occurs. But time and time again, such organizations find themselves in the unenviable position of having to “think on their feet” and react, rather than follow carefully thought-out procedures.

An example is the accident that occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1979. This incident provides an excellent analogy for departments of corrections in several ways. Prisons, like nuclear power plants, are under strict scrutiny from the media and the public. When the virtually inevitable accident or incident does occur, it is perceived as having the potential of putting the public at risk.

At Three Mile Island, despite the high level of risk involved, there was no disaster plan, resulting in lasting damage to the entire nuclear power industry. Neither the utility company (Met Ed) nor the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC) anticipated this crisis or planned for it. In reviewing the conditions surrounding communications following the accident, a task force of the President’s Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island reported the following conclusions:

1. The quality of information available to the public in a potentially life-threatening situation is of critical importance.
2. During the accident, neither public information officials nor journalists served the public’s right to know.
3. The utility’s many shortcomings in public information were attributable to self-deception, as well as to a lack of candor.
4. The public information problems of the utility company and the USNRC were rooted in a lack of planning. Neither expected that an accident of this magnitude would ever happen. As a result, neither had a “disaster” plan. Neither had personnel trained in disaster public relations.

Even though a department of corrections does not put the public at as great a risk as a potential nuclear disaster, lessons can be learned from this event. Although specific plans and procedures for handling public information at the time of an emergency will vary, certain factors apply to all situations:

- Staff members should be familiar with the written plan and with their emergency duties before an emergency occurs.
- Training sessions should be held regularly for those responsible for carrying out the plan.
- The procedures for activating a department’s emergency communications plan should be easily understood by everyone involved.
- Lines of responsibility should be clearly defined, keeping in mind that disasters rarely occur at a convenient time when all staff are at work.
- Key players should keep a copy of the plan at home, since there is a good chance they will not be at work when the crisis occurs.

- If the incident lasts for more than one day, regular briefing sessions should be held for employees from each shift.
- There should be a clearly defined list of spokespersons, and they should not have other administrative duties to perform during the crisis. These designated spokespersons should be trained to deal with the media during an emergency.
- Someone should constantly monitor news broadcasts to control and correct rumors.
- Depending on the seriousness and the longevity of the incident, the facility could be inundated with reporters. Plans should be made to address the logistical needs of the media, including fax machines, telephones, copiers, etc.

Nothing will make the bad news go away, but a well-trained staff that functions properly can enhance the public's understanding of an incident. Planning, timeliness, accuracy, and openness are the hallmarks of a good crisis communications plan.

V. SUMMARY

This monograph, describing the NIC Communications Audit, was written to assist a state department of corrections in conducting its own communications audit and preparing a strategic communications plan. The key word in the phrase “strategic communications plan” is **strategic**. The definition of strategy is “a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result.” It is a system of problem solving based on four steps.

Step One

The first step is to define the problem, which requires gathering information to identify the issues. This information includes facts, opinions, and perceptions that define the concerns of the department of corrections. What is the source of the concern? Who is involved or affected? How are they affected? Why does this issue or concern matter to the department and its publics?

A list of concerns and issues can be developed based on the answers to these questions. Effective communications begin with listening, and feedback is a powerful tool. Failure to listen often leads to communications on issues of little or no concern to the intended audience or messages that miss the mark.

Step Two

The next step is to develop channels for feedback. It is critical that these channels be kept open, even after the plan has been developed. This is an ongoing process and must be looked at in that manner. Develop and administer surveys of personnel. Talk to members of key publics -- internal and external. Read newspaper articles about the department. In other words, **stay in touch with the publics**.

The department should continually use this ongoing information gathering to update the list of issues and concerns that need to be addressed. Then goals and objectives can be woven together into a strategy for improved communications to address the issues and concerns. This is the heart of the planning process, and it is the essential element in an effective strategic communications plan.

These first two steps describe the development stage for a Communications Audit. The link between the first two steps and the last two steps is **adoption** of the communications strategy by the agency head. The most important communications role for the department head is to give leadership and direction to the entire departmental team. An effective communications strategy must reflect the agency head’s priorities and commitment to action.

Step Three

With the support of the department head, the third step can be initiated. It involves developing specific action plans to implement the communications objectives defined in the strategic plan. As noted earlier, the Rhode Island Department of Corrections initiated some of the activities in step three as part of the audit.

These action plans should be clear, detailed, and specific. Determine who the audience is and frame the message in terms that are relevant and meaningful to the intended audience. Specific duties should be assigned with timetables where appropriate. The success of the action plans depends upon clear lines of accountability and responsibility. In other words, whose job is it? When should it be done? What channels of communication will be used and how often? Taken as a whole, these action plans represent the department's day-to-day calendar of communications activities.

Step Four

The last step, and the one most often overlooked or ignored, is the evaluation phase. There is danger inherent in using the terms "last step" and "evaluation phase," which imply that this activity takes place in a designated, finite period of time and in some manner closes out the communications planning process. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The department needs to look at its communications program on a regular, ongoing basis to determine not only whether it is being carried out as planned, but also whether the stated objectives are still appropriate to the department's current conditions. As noted earlier, developing a strategic communications plan is a process, not an end result. Situations change, and to be effective, a communications strategy must evolve with changing circumstances.

Assess whether any critical publics are being overlooked. Have incorrect assumptions been made about any publics? Is more information required by the media or are they being given what they need? Does the department communicate in a timely and accurate fashion? What are the reactions to the department's messages? Do the staff perform their functions appropriately?

The answers to these questions should be used to make any adaptations necessary to the communications strategy. These assessments must be seen as opportunities for growth and improvement. It is possible to learn from successes as well as from mistakes.

If communications planning is approached as an ongoing process, involving validation and refinement of objectives, the resulting strategy will remain timely and relevant to real-world concerns. A department will be better able to keep problems from becoming crises, and efforts can be directed toward preventing fires rather than putting them out. By seeking continuous feedback, many problems can be detected in their early stages, permitting corrective actions and responses. Soon the communications strategy will become an integral part of day-to-day management and operations within the department. In other words, effective communications will become central to the way administrators and staff do business.

Appendix A

Alabama Department of Corrections

Strategic Communications Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic communications plan for the Alabama Department of Corrections must reflect the Commissioner's priorities and commitment to action. The goal and objectives defined in this plan are designed to assist the Commissioner in implementing the improvements in communications both within the Department and between the Department and its external constituencies.

The goal of the Alabama Department of Corrections' communications strategy is to promote effective, two-way communications both internally within the Department and externally with its various constituency groups.

In order to achieve this goal, the Department's strategic communications plan establishes seven communications objectives:

- To develop a mission statement for the AL-DOC that defines a shared vision of the Department's future and to articulate that vision to various constituencies across the State of Alabama.
- To demonstrate that AL-DOC employees are the most important asset which the Department has to achieve its communications goal.
- To establish a framework that involves employees and senior managers with the Commissioner in developing the Department's responses to changing needs and changing circumstances.
- To improve internal communications.
- To develop a more visible presence for corrections in local communities all across the State.
- To have a positive impact on the policies and priorities established for corrections in the State of Alabama.
- To maintain effective communications with the media and utilize other channels of public information dissemination.

Implementing the actions proposed for each objective will enable the Department to address the major issues and concerns that affect the Department and the performance of its mission. These include: the need to deal with multiple publics, the anticipated impact of budget constraints, the consequences of growth in the corrections system, and the quality of internal communications.

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this report to the Commissioner, the project consultant worked with a Project Steering Committee, consisting of Alabama Department of Corrections (AL-DOC) staff appointed by the Commissioner. The membership of this Project Steering Committee is shown in the Appendix to this report. In gathering information on issues and concerns, interviews were held with a wide range of individuals both within as well as outside the Department. A listing of persons interviewed is shown in the Appendix. In addition, a variety of documentary resources were gathered and reviewed.

Based on this fact-finding, interim project reports were prepared and reviewed with the Project Steering Committee. The comments and guidance of the Steering Committee were used in refining a mutual understanding of issues and concerns, defining a goal and objectives for the Department's communications strategy, and defining the elements of a plan to implement that strategy. A draft of this report was reviewed with the Steering Committee, and a final strategic communications plan was prepared for submission to the Commissioner.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The Alabama Department of Corrections must address several major issues and concerns in improving the effectiveness of its communications.

- **AL-DOC Team:** Understanding and meeting the challenges of contemporary corrections require an increasingly diverse workforce with professional skills that go far beyond the public image of "prison guards." As one military retiree noted, his fellow retirees think he made a dead-end career choice by going into corrections.

The Department needs to reaffirm its expectations for professionalism of AL-DOC staff, at all levels, by providing the environment and the resources so that each member of the AL-DOC team can reach his or her fullest potential. At the same time, the Department should tell the same story to external audiences so that they too understand the roles and the importance of the state's corrections team.

- **Internal Communications:** Many of the formal channels of internal communications (e.g., the newsletter, warden/directors meetings, etc.) have been eliminated or severely curtailed due to budget cuts. Furthermore, the impact that proration has had on the staff shows how fragile the informal channels of communications are within the Department.

The Department should take steps to improve the quality of its internal communications to match the successes it has achieved in recent years with some of its external constituencies. These efforts will become the foundation of the strategy required to achieve its communications goal and objectives.

- **Budgetary Limitations:** Like most states, Alabama has not operated a "pay-as-you-go" corrections system. Year after year, the political imperative to "get tough on crime" has led to tougher incarceration penalties and growth in the State's prison population without the corresponding appropriations of funds to build and operate the required prison capacity. As fiscal constraints tightened, so too did the pressure on the AL-DOC, culminating in a double dose of proration in 1991.

AL-DOC must improve its ability to anticipate future conditions and to develop strategic responses that maximize its mission objectives in the most cost effective manner. The Department should promote more internal coordination and communications in developing these strategic plans, and it should articulate these initiatives to its external constituencies.

- “Corrections Issues”: The challenges that face AL-DOC cannot be solved solely within the framework of the corrections system. They must be addressed within the larger environments of the criminal justice system, of which corrections is but one component, and the human service delivery system, which increasingly shares client responsibilities with corrections.

The Department must establish a vision that defines its role and responsibilities. It must then share that vision with various external constituencies to build mutual understanding and effective coordination of efforts to serve the citizens of Alabama.

In seeking to build from an understanding of issues and concerns to a strategy for improved communications, it must be remembered that issues normally consist far more of perspective and opinion than they do of “real facts.” Indeed, in his dictionary, Noah Webster defines issues as matters in dispute, in other words, that which requires decision or action to resolve the “issue condition.”

The issues and concerns listed above represent a compendium of the perspectives and opinions expressed in the various interviews and documentary sources, as compiled by the project consultant in consultation with the Project Steering Committee. The Department’s strategy for improved communications must address these matters in order to define the decisions and the actions that can enhance AL-DOC’s performance of its mission.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Alabama Department of Corrections’ communications strategy is to promote effective, two-way communications both internally within the Department and externally with its various constituency groups.

In this goal statement, the adjective “two-way” is used for emphasis since, by definition, good communications & a two-way process. A good communicator listens as well as he or she speaks. As such, good communications is a process of dialogue designed to build mutual understanding and support between the Department and a given constituency.

“Promote effective.. .communications” means the Department will be proactive in its communications. A proactive communications strategy defines the department’s priorities and concerns. It focuses on the significance of events, rather than their mere occurrence. By anticipating changes, a proactive strategy promotes understanding and the opportunity for involvement in Departmental affairs. Finally, it pressures leadership to match their words with concrete actions and, thereby, can inspire hope and optimism that the department can achieve its mission.

While the goal statement calls for action to address both the internal and the external dimensions of communications, priority should be given to improving communications with the Department’s internal constituency -- the men and women of the AL-DOC team. In order to meet the challenges brought about by external forces and to prevail in the coming years, AL-DOC must have a strong, secure fabric of internal communications.

This emphasis on internal communications is underscored by the ordering of communications objectives identified for the Department:

- Internal Communications
 - (1) Developing a Mission Statement
 - (2) Emphasizing the Importance of Staff
 - (3) Anticipating Future Needs
 - (4) Improving Internal Communications

- External Communications
 - (5) Defining Corrections Presence in the Community
 - (6) Impacting on Policies and Priorities for Corrections in Alabama
 - (7) Maintaining Effective Communications with Media and Utilizing Other External Channels

The next section of this report outlines the elements of the strategic communications plan for the Alabama Department of Corrections. The plan is organized around the seven objectives listed above. For each objective, the issues and concerns are described and a set of strategic action items is identified.

COMMISSIONER'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The communications plan for the Alabama Department of Corrections is characterized by the phrase, "Commissioner's Strategic Communications Plan," to underscore the Steering Committee's belief that improvements in communications must reflect the Commissioner's priorities and commitment to action. It is understood that the most important communications role for the Commissioner and his senior administrative team is to give leadership and direction to the entire departmental team.

Indeed, to be truly effective, communications must be an integral part of the leadership, administration, and day-to-day operation of the Department. The strategic communications plan addresses the various ways in which the Commissioner's leadership objectives can be defined, articulated, and implemented, both within the Department and between the Department and its external constituencies.

Objective #1: To develop a mission statement for the AL-DOC that defines a shared vision of the Department's future and to articulate that vision to various constituencies across the State of Alabama.

A well crafted mission statement & a statement of leadership objectives. It defines a vision and direction for an organization, one that can be understood by both internal and external constituencies. By inviting broad participation in the development of a mission statement, a leader can both educate others as to his/her priorities and also refine those priorities and make them more durable.

In many respects, developing and maintaining a vibrant mission statement is the first, most basic step in developing effective, two-way organizational communication.

Recommendation: The Commissioner, with the support of an intradepartmental work group, should develop and adopt a mission statement for the AL-DOC that defines the vision and direction for the Department.

Developing a mission statement will not only refocus internal energies; it will also lay the groundwork for external dialogue and public education regarding the Department's role within the criminal justice system and the broader society.

This mission statement should articulate the Department's values with respect to sentencing and sanctions and the role of alternatives to incarceration within the criminal justice system. An example of such a mission statement is the following:

To prepare offenders for a safe and productive return to society, while using the least restrictive method to manage offender behavior, consistent with public safety; and to reduce the risk of criminal conduct by working cooperatively with communities and other criminal justice agencies, to provide a continuum of community supervision, incarceration, sanctions and services to manage offender behavior.

As noted above, a mission statement defines a vision for an organization rather than describes specific functions. The remaining objectives set forth in this strategic plan address the methods by which improved communications can contribute toward achieving the vision described in the Department's mission statement.

Objective #2: To demonstrate that AL-DOC employees are the most important asset that the Department has to achieve its communications goal.

To achieve its communications goal, the Department needs the commitment and involvement of all its employees, not just the senior staff. This will require continued efforts to address the professional development needs of the Department's staff. By promoting professionalism within the Department, AL-DOC can lay the groundwork for overturning the traditional view that DOC employees are nothing more than prison guards.

To be both an effective employee and an effective communicator, a correctional officer must be skilled in constitutional law, interpersonal communications, the proper use of force, cultural awareness, first aid and CPR, communicable diseases, minimum standards for inmates, and due process rights. Other corrections employees must provide financial management, substance abuse treatment and counseling, facilities planning, job training and job placement, and legal advice.

Recommendation: To ensure that AL-DOC staff can be effective partners in improving communications, the Department must address the infrastructure that promotes professional development. This includes some elements (e.g., the training regime) that have been impacted by past budget cuts.

- Set Departmental standards that reflect the highest levels of professionalism for all categories of AL-DOC staff.
- Emphasize performance objectives and give wardens and directors local discretion to carry out Department-wide policies.
- Develop a "new employee" orientation package that deals with corrections, not just employee benefits. Such a package would embrace the Department's mission statement and the Department's professional standards for job performance.

- Rebuild the regime for both entry level and in-service training as a means of maintaining an active dialogue between the Department's leadership and its employee team on professional development and job performance in corrections.
- Establish employee incentive and award programs at all levels of the Department, (e.g., a preferential parking slot for the employee of the month, recognition citations, etc.) which reflect the vision of the Department's mission statement and its professional standards for job performance.

Objective #3: To establish a framework that involves employees and senior managers with the Commissioner in developing the Department's responses to changing needs and changing circumstances.

There is a need for long-range, strategic planning to enable the Department to anticipate future developments rather than react to them after they have occurred. There is a gap in communications between the central office and the balance of the Department that is perceived both at headquarters and in the field. There needs to be more intradepartmental dialogue before decisions on policy and basic procedures are made.

Between divisions, there is both too much and not enough communication. There is too much direct, top-down communication across divisional lines without adequate, or sometimes any, coordination between Associates. This results in confusing and contradictory signals being sent to middle managers and operating staff. Likewise, there are too many instances in which coordination is lacking between divisions and units. For example, there was no fact sheet or briefing sheet outlining the Department's Fall 1992 Special Session agenda for distribution throughout the Department.

Recommendation: The Commissioner, with the involvement of his senior management team, should strengthen the Department's strategic planning capabilities through the following actions:

- Building on the process used to develop the mission statement, establish mechanisms (e.g., quality teams comprised of managers and staff) to secure input from throughout the organization in developing Departmental policy and standards.
- Using similar mechanisms, strengthen intradivisional and interdivisional communications by emphasizing options analysis and impact assessment prior to adopting changes in procedures within the organization.
- Ensure that the Department's top communicator participates at the highest level of the strategic planning process.
- Translate the strategic planning results into budget proposals that demonstrate AL-DOC's effective stewardship of public tax dollars.

One of the primary concerns identified for AL-DOC is the expectation of continued fiscal constraints in the coming years. The very nature of the governmental budget process in the 1990's virtually guarantees that state agencies will continue to experience within-year budget reviews and budget cutbacks. Thus, while improving its strategic planning capabilities, the Department must have in place the equivalent of a crisis communications plan so that it can respond to these fiscal events.

Recommendation: The Commissioner should establish a mechanism to respond effectively to these within-budget-year events, including the following elements:

- Learn about externally imposed regulations and procedures for proration implementation, and familiarize Departmental staff with their potential impact on AL-DOC budget adjustment actions.
- Develop and articulate a decision-making process for internal budget adjustment actions.
- Provide an explanation of the impact of “proration” decisions on AL-DOC, showing how it compares, both favorably and unfavorably, with other State agencies.

Objective #4: To improve internal communications.

The previous Objectives have addressed various aspects of the framework of internal communications. This Objective addresses the specific channels of internal communications that have been adversely impacted by past budget constraints. The newsletter is no longer published. The wardens/directors meeting is held less frequently, and guard-mounts have been suspended at most institutions. The training regime has been severely cut, and even before these cutbacks, there were never enough management training sessions for senior staff.

Recommendation: The Department should rebuild communications channels suspended or curtailed by budget cutbacks. In doing so, the Commissioner and his senior management team must replace the old channels with new, more effective two-way channels, such as:

- Top-down communications (i.e., from the senior management team) should emphasize mission objectives and agency performance, rather than task directives and detailed review of routine requests and decisions by wardens, directors, and other middle-level managers.
- Emphasize the communication of basic facts, as illustrated in the new publication, Straight-Talk, which is short and to the point.
- Hold staff meetings (e.g., warden/directors meetings, within-institution staff meetings, etc.) with agendas that encourage two-way communications.
- Redefine the in-service training regime to place more emphasis on mission and agency performance topics.
- Establish an “annual motto” program that provides an annual restatement of the Department’s mission with the focus on a priority objective for that year.

In addition to these formal channels, the Department can improve its internal communications by making more effective use of informal channels, colloquially referred to as “the grapevine.” The grapevine is indigenous to any organization because people have a natural tendency to want to talk about their work and the issues that affect it.

The grapevine is used most heavily when information is scarce and there is a strong demand for it (e.g., the Department's recent experience with proration). The distortion of information on the grapevine occurs most frequently when there is confusion over mission, poor coordination among Departmental units, and/or low morale. In other words, a negative rumor usually indicates more about the organization than it does about the person transmitting it.

Recommendation: Senior managers and unit directors should learn how to assess informal communications as a means of identifying underlying problems, so that these problems can be addressed proactively. In addition, all levels of management within AL-DOC should expand their use of informal communications (e.g., "walk-and-talk" management, multiple channels, etc.) to promote dialogue with their staffs.

Objective #5: To develop a more visible presence for corrections in local communities all across the State.

Corrections has numerous connections to the communities throughout the State of Alabama. Virtually all of the inmates in Alabama prisons come from somewhere in the state and will return there when their sentences are completed. The criminal justice system, of which corrections is one component, functions for the most part at the local community level.

The resources needed to fund the work of corrections must be weighed against other public needs across the State, and the legislators who make those final resource allocation decisions come from communities across the State. Thus, building public understanding, legislative support, and more effective working relationships with other components of the criminal justice system are inseparable objectives since they all involve grass-roots efforts at the community level.

Recommendation: The Department should establish "outreach" teams (drawing on staff from all levels of the Department) to develop and maintain local community networks based on the following elements:

- Engage in a dialogue with local community leaders and legislative delegations regarding state and local responsibilities for criminal offenders.
- Provide information to local media whenever possible, particularly in communities where the Department has developed an ongoing network of relationships.
- Continue to examine the role of sentencing and sanctions with judges and prosecutors.
- Maintain a dialogue with law enforcement on areas of mutual concern.
- Encourage each of these constituencies to visit Departmental facilities and programs and to interact with staff and inmates during these site visits.

The profile of convicted offenders in the 1990's indicates a pattern of needs that goes beyond custodial control in the prison setting. Most persons who end up in prison today bring with them a broad array of medical, mental health, psychosocial, substance abuse, and educational and job-skill training needs. Addressing these needs has become a crucial element in preparing offenders for successful (i.e., crime- and drug-free) re-entry into the community.

Recommendation: To supplement its own programming efforts, the Department should strengthen its coordination with the human service delivery system throughout the State. This would include the following elements:

- Building on the local community networking initiatives described above.
- Linking AL-DOC substance abuse programs to treatment capabilities in the local community and helping to build these capabilities where they do not exist.
- Improving coordination with mental health providers.
- Helping to develop a continuing-care network from institutions, through parole, into the community.

There is relatively little involvement by volunteers in AL-DOC. Volunteers could serve as a powerful channel for two-way communications between the Department and the community. In order to recruit volunteers successfully, the Department must be able to articulate its image of corrections and the role the Department plays in the State of Alabama. Once recruited, volunteers will want to explain their involvement to others.

Reverse volunteerism can also be an effective communications channel. The Department should build on the example of public utility companies by encouraging employee involvement in community affairs.

Recommendation: The Department should promote volunteerism through the following measures:

- Establish a volunteer coordination office to promote volunteerism with an emphasis on helping inmates to reintegrate into the community after they leave the institutions.
- Establish appropriate screening mechanisms and training procedures so that volunteers can provide their services in a manner consistent with the inmate management requirements of the institutions.
- Build on the successful examples of volunteerism already in place within the Department and communicate these examples to the public.
- Develop reverse volunteerism by encouraging employee involvement in community affairs with a special emphasis on preventive programs (e.g., MENTOR, Big Brother/Big Sister, literacy training, etc.).

Objective #6: To have a positive impact on the policies and priorities established for corrections in the State of Alabama.

While building more effective communications with legislative delegations at the local level, the Department must continue to participate in the legislative process at the State level. The sentencing reform legislation passed in the 1992 Special Session suggests long-term success with educating the public and their representatives about sentencing options and the role of corrections in the criminal justice system.

The fact that not all the enacted bills were signed into law indicates that this policy debate will continue in the legislature. On the fiscal side, the decisions in the Special Session regarding the Department's budget helped to forestall most of the threatened Fall 1992 proration actions, but they did not alleviate the long-term conditions of budget constraints.

Recommendation: The Department should maintain active involvement in the legislative policy debate regarding the role of corrections in the State of Alabama. This can be done through the following channels:

- Provide information on the role of sentencing and sanctions.
- Emphasize cost-effective approaches for dealing with offenders.
- Articulate the Department's legislative policy agenda internally within the Department.
- Provide written position papers and briefing documents on key initiatives both before and during the legislative sessions.
- Communicate the Department's legislative agenda on a regular basis to the media.

Objective #7: To maintain effective communications with the media and utilize other channels of public information dissemination.

AL-DOC has a positive relationship with the major media channels in the state, largely due to the efforts of the Commissioner and the Department's Public Information Office. Other senior administrators, the wardens, and the institutional press officers (IPO's) must become more actively involved in these external communications. There is a need for training and awareness building to enable these officials to fulfill their communications role and responsibility.

Maintaining regular contact with the media makes it easier to tell your story when problems arise. In addition, the Department needs to develop more channels of external communication: e.g., appear on radio talk shows; promote programs like "Free by Choice," which puts corrections staff in community settings; and encourage staff to talk to their social organizations, churches, and the like.

Recommendation: The Department should institute the following measures to maintain effective communications with the media and to expand its utilization of nontraditional channels:

- Continue to provide information on the role of sentencing and sanctions, emphasizing cost-effective approaches to dealing with convicted offenders.
- Make proactive communications with the media a job performance standard for top-level (i.e., central office) and middle-level (i.e., wardens and directors) administrators.
- Provide training and technical assistance in communications skills to top- and middle-level administrators.
- Use multiple channels of communication and supplement regular contact with the working press by use of nontraditional channels.

APPENDIX to ALABAMA PLAN

The following persons served as members of the Project Steering Committee for the AL-DOC Communications Audit:

- Bill Cobb, Personnel Office
- Tom Gilkeson, Legislative Liaison/Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation
- John Hale, Public Information Office
- Lynn Harrelson, Warden, Kilby Correctional Institution
- Betty Teague, Central Records

The following individuals were interviewed for the Communications Audit:

- Morris Thigpen, Commissioner
- Tommy Herring, Associate Commissioner/Agriculture and Industries
- Ron Sutton, Associate Commissioner/Institutions
- Tom Allen, Associate Commissioner/Program Services
- Paul Herring, Associate Commissioner/Administration
- Marian Shinbaum, Director/Classification
- Betty Teague, Director/Central Records
- Tom Gilkeson, Director/Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation
- Merle Friesen, Director/Treatment
- Harry Lyles, Legal Services
- Charles Wood, Director/Training Services
- Jim Cooke, Warden/Red Eagle Honor Camp
- Senator Larry Dixon
- Representative Mike Box
- Representative Alvin Holms
- Dan Morse, Montgomery Advertiser
- Stan Bailey, The Birmingham News
- Bill Puvey, Associated Press
- Allen Tapley, the Sentencing Institute
- Warren Gaston, volunteer

Group sessions were held with:

- Board of Pardons and Paroles
 - Bill Young, Executive Director
 - Bill Sigret (Field Services)
 - Don Parker (Interstate Compact)
 - H.D. Walton (Special Projects)
- Six staff from Kilby Correctional Institution; including administrative and program staff and correctional officers

Appendix B

California Department of Corrections

Strategic Communications Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic communications plan for the California Department of Corrections must reflect the Director's priorities and commitment to action. The goal and objectives defined in this plan are designed to assist the Director in implementing the improvements in communications both within the Department and between the Department and its external constituencies.

The goal of the California Department of Corrections' communications strategy is to ensure that the Department's mission and operations reflect the corrections realities in the State of California while promoting the understanding of that mission to the Department's internal and external constituencies.

In order to achieve this goal, the Department's strategic communications plan establishes six communications objectives:

- To improve our internal channels of communication.
- To demonstrate that CDC values the diverse roles and professional skills of our employees.
- To review and revise the CDC mission statement to ensure that it reflects a shared vision, and to instill in our various publics an understanding of the Department's mission.
- To maintain an open and accessible relationship with our external constituencies.
- To increase public awareness of the role corrections plays in the community.
- To have a positive impact on the policies and priorities established for corrections in the State of California.

Implementing the actions proposed for each objective will enable the Department to address the major issues and concerns that affect the Department and the performance of its mission. These include: the need to deal with multiple publics, the anticipated impact of budget constraints, the consequences of growth in the corrections system, and the quality of internal communications.

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this report to the Director, the project consultant worked with a Project Steering Committee, consisting of California Department of Corrections (CDC) staff appointed by the Director. The membership of this Project Steering Committee is shown in the Appendix to this report. In gathering information on issues and concerns, interviews were held with a wide range of individuals both within as well as outside the Department. A listing of persons interviewed is shown in the Appendix. In addition, a variety of documentary resources were gathered and reviewed.

Interim project reports were prepared and reviewed with the Project Steering Committee. The comments and guidance of the Steering Committee were used in refining a mutual understanding of issues and concerns, defining a goal and objectives for the Department's communications strategy, and defining the elements of a plan to implement that strategy. A draft of this report was reviewed with the Steering Committee, and a final strategic communications plan was prepared for submission to the Director.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The issues and concerns that affect the CDC's mission and operations begin with external factors, and then reach back inside the Department.

- **Multiple Publics:** Any communicator must deal with a variety of publics and their differing perceptions. This challenge is seen as a particular concern for CDC due, in great measure, to the size of both the State and its Department of Corrections. Each audience has its own set of perceptions regarding the role of corrections in the State and how well the Department is performing its mission. Additionally, these perceptions are not static, and they must be assessed on a continuing basis.

When communicating, CDC needs to determine which audience it is addressing and what perception of corrections that audience holds in order to position its messages in the most appropriate manner.

- **Budget Constraints:** The defeat of the 1991 prison bond bill indicates that CDC is no longer a sacred cow and that corrections will not be given the kind of preferential treatment it previously enjoyed. CDC must be prepared for more scrutiny from the legislature, the media, and other constituencies who have competing claims on the State's resources.

As frequently as possible, CDC must communicate to its publics, especially the external ones, that it is an effective steward of its funds and that it operates in the most cost effective manner. The Department must also articulate that the various elements of its mission have been assessed and prioritized according to budget realities.

- **Impact of Growth:** CDC has experienced a decade of phenomenal growth. This growth is represented by increases in the numbers of inmates and institutions and, even more importantly, by the size and diversity of the current CDC staff. The concept of "multiple publics" is not restricted to the external constituencies. Over 30,000 men and women are responsible for performing medical services, security operations, facility management, mental health and substance abuse treatment, financial management, job training and job placement, strategic planning, and life skill counseling, among other duties.

CDC must build and maintain patterns of communication that span and link together these various disciplines and occupational categories. At the same time, the Department must not let the structure of the organization isolate groups of employees from each other and from the larger mission of CDC.

- **Quality of Internal Communications:** Five years ago, CDC established 15 Departmental Priorities. The first priority was the need to improve internal communications within CDC. There is evidence of the progress that has been made; however, internal communications must remain a priority concern for CDC.

The Department must continue to strengthen its internal communications channels in order to build a better understanding of its mission on the part of all its various constituencies, both internal and external.

In seeking to build from an understanding of issues and concerns to a strategy for improved communications, it must be remembered that issues normally consist far more of perspective and opinion than they do of “real facts.”

These issues and concerns represent a compendium of the perspectives and opinions expressed in the various interviews and documentary sources, as compiled by the project consultant in consultation with the Project Steering Committee. The Department’s strategy for improved communications must address these matters in order to determine which decisions and actions will enhance CDC’s ability to accomplish its mission.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the California Department of Corrections’ communications strategy is to ensure that the Department’s mission and operations reflect the corrections realities in the State of California while promoting the understanding of that mission to the Department’s internal and external constituencies.

This goal statement reflects the need to address the concerns of CDC’s multiple constituencies. It also points to a strategy designed to foster two-way communications between the Department and these constituencies. In this way, communications is seen as a process of dialogue designed to build mutual understanding and support between the Department and a given constituency for the decisions and/or actions required to address a given issue.

While the goal statement calls for action to address both the internal and the external dimensions of communications, the Project Steering Committee emphasized that priority should be given to improving internal communications. This was a priority concern in 1987-88; it remains a priority concern today. By building a strong fabric of internal communications, the Department is investing in its most important asset for overall communications quality -- its staff, who represent over 30,000 channels of direct communication to their fellow Californians.

The Steering Committee also called for a communications strategy based on a realistic set of objectives. The Committee’s purpose was to focus attention on the key communications priorities. It was felt that setting a broad agenda for action would spread resources too widely and reduce the prospects of achieving any of the objectives.

Six objectives were identified. They are shown below reflecting the emphasis on internal communications needs:

- Internal Communications
 - (1) Improving Internal Communications
 - (2) Valuing the Diverse Roles of Employees
 - (3) Revising the Mission Statement

- External Communications
 - (4) Maintaining Openness and Accountability
 - (5) Increasing Public Awareness of Corrections in the Community
 - (6) Impacting on Policies and Priorities for Corrections in California.

The next section defines the elements of the CDC strategic communications plan based on these six objectives.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This strategic communications plan for the California Department of Corrections is prepared as a “Report to the Director” to underscore the belief that an effective communications strategy must reflect the Director’s priorities and commitment to action. It is understood that the most important communications role for the Director and his senior administrative team is to give leadership and direction to the entire departmental team.

Indeed, to be truly effective, communications must be an integral part of the leadership, administration, and, ultimately, the day-to-day operation of the Department. The strategic communications plan addresses the various ways in which the Director’s leadership objectives can be defined, articulated, and implemented, both within the Department and between the Department and its external constituencies.

Objective #1: To improve our internal channels of communication.

The November 1988 report of the CDC Communications Work Group identified a number of specific initiatives to improve internal communications channels, including a walk-and-talk management style, methods to address geographical dispersion, problem solving meetings, newsletters, mentor program, re-establishing the pre-watch meetings, reader files, communications questionnaire and the like.

Recommendation: The Director should assign an intradepartmental work group to revisit these options to determine which can most appropriately be adapted to current Departmental needs, with particular attention to the following areas:

- Place greater emphasis on mission and agency performance (rather than task or job directives) in future top-down communications.

- Improve communications to line staff and section leaders with regular briefing sessions.

- Maximize use of existing and emerging information sharing technologies, including development of automated databases and reporting systems.

- Place more emphasis on communications skills in the job descriptions and performance requirements for managers and supervisors.
- Redefine the in-service training regime to place more emphasis on mission and agency performance topics.

In addition to these formal channels, the Department can improve its internal communications by making more effective use of informal channels, colloquially referred to as “the grapevine.” There is a perception within CDC that participating in the grapevine is unprofessional; that it is nothing more than rumor-mongering.

The fact is that the grapevine is indigenous to any organization because people have a natural tendency to want to talk about their work and the issues that affect it. When information on the grapevine is distorted, it normally results from confusion over mission, poor coordination among departmental units, and/or low morale. In other words, a negative rumor usually indicates more about the organization than it does about the person transmitting it.

Recommendation: Administrators, directors, wardens, and other supervisory persons should learn how to assess informal communications as a means of identifying underlying problems, so that these problems can be addressed proactively. In addition, all levels of management within CDC should expand their use of informal communications (e.g., “walk-and-talk” management, multiple channels, etc.) to promote dialogue with their staff.

Objective #2: To demonstrate that CDC values the diverse roles and professional skills of our employees.

Objective #1 focuses on the mechanics of communications within the Department. It is unlikely that the recommended improvements will be made unless steps are taken to enhance the climate of internal communications.

The Department needs the commitment and involvement of all its employees in order to achieve its communications goal. This requires an organizational climate of trust and openness that engenders a desire to participate in departmental affairs. It also requires a climate that values the diversity in the background, talents, and roles of CDC staff. The ongoing rift between institutions and parole services illustrates the importance of strengthening this type of organizational climate.

In order to fulfill its mission, CDC employees must be skilled in a variety of disciplines, including constitutional law, interpersonal communications, facility maintenance, the proper use of force, job training and job placement, financial management, cultural awareness, first aid and CPR, religious orientation, communicable diseases, inmates/parolee rights, and due process requirements.

CDC must take advantage of its diversity to build strength out of what would otherwise be fragmentation.

Recommendation: The Director and his senior management team should maintain an organizational climate that values professionalism and diversity within CDC:

- Revise policies and procedures manuals and job descriptions to incorporate performance standards that recognize the diverse roles required within the Department.

- Emphasize innovation and excellence in programs and services equivalent to what CDC has achieved in the “California Building System.”
- Building on the process used to develop the mission statement, establish employee advisory groups to secure input from throughout the organization in developing Departmental policy and standards.
- Emphasize performance objectives that provide wardens and directors with local discretion in implementing Department-wide policies.
- Strengthen interdivisional communications by assessing impacts prior to adopting changes in procedures within the organization.
- Encourage periodic day-transfers between institutions and parole offices to provide direct exposure to alternative work experiences.
- Update the “new employee” orientation package to reflect the revised mission statement.

Objective #3: To review and revise the CDC mission statement to ensure that its reflects a shared vision, and to instill in our various publics an understanding of the Department’s mission.

Efforts to improve internal communications will also depend on a statement of leadership objectives that defines a vision and direction for an organization. By inviting broad participation in the development of a Departmental mission statement, a leader can educate others as to his/her priorities while ensuring that the mission reflects a shared vision. This is critical if the mission is to be effectively implemented.

Recommendation: The Director, through intradepartmental work groups and cabinet off-site meetings, should review and revise the Department’s mission statement to reaffirm the vision and direction for the Department. The Department should then use every opportunity to communicate its mission statement to its internal and external constituencies.

Objective #4: To maintain an open and accessible relationship with our external constituencies.

CDC has developed a good working relationship with the media by being proactive with them. The Director and the current Communications Office have played an important role in this process. Now it is time for others in the Department to do their fair share.

The responsibility of executive administrativestaff, wardens, regional administrators, unit supervisors and PIO’s to communicate openly and regularly with the media must be underscored. The Department should assist those who have been reluctant to adopt a proactive role in communications. The Department must also examine and strengthen the public information capabilities in the parole and community services division.

Recommendation: The Department should institute the following measures to maintain effective communications with the media:

- Make proactive communications with the media a job performance standard for top-level administrators, including those in the central office, wardens, regional administrators, and unit supervisors.
- Provide adequate communications staff to the Parole and Community Services Division.
- Provide training (40-hour module) and technical assistance in communications skills to top-level and middle-level administrators. (The training modules should cover not only media relations but also communications skills for dealing with a variety of “publics,” including staff, legislators, the general public, hostile groups, and the like.)
- Provide a 4-hour module as part of in-service training for line staff.
- Facilitate access by major news organizations to remote-site institutions, particularly when events are being reported.
- Develop and maintain a written plan for crisis communications in response to incidents.

While the media are an important channel of communications to a number of external constituencies, including the general public, CDC should utilize other channels to address the concerns of specific constituencies. Particular attention should be given to other components of the criminal justice system, local public officials and other local community opinion leaders.

Recommendation: The Department should institute the following measures to maintain effective communications with other external constituencies:

- Establish external advisory groups to communicate with affected constituencies throughout the State prior to implementation of new policies and operating procedures.
- Maintain effective working relationships between parole services and local and State law enforcement agencies.
- Mutually examine the role of sentencing and sanctions with the courts and prosecutorial officials throughout the State.
- Maintain involvement with crime victim groups to provide information about inmates and the corrections system to victims of crime and to show offenders the consequences of their actions (i.e., the impact of crime on victims and the community).
- Plan monthly on-site visits and/or briefings on CDC facilities and programs for the media, the legislature, and other interested constituencies.

Objective #5: To increase public awareness of the role corrections plays in the community.

The CDC mission calls for the Department to be a part of a cycle of criminal justice that directs offenders toward a successful (i.e., crime- and drug-free) return to the community. Fulfilling this role requires regular interaction with local community organizations and human service provider agencies throughout the State.

CDC must overcome the sense of “separateness” from the community that is implied in the “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” characterization of corrections. While remaining attentive to the concerns of the host communities in which the CDC institutions are located, the Department must articulate a broader definition of “corrections in the community,” one that reaches throughout the State.

Recommendation: The Department should expand upon or establish the following types of community involvement and actively publicize its efforts in these areas:

- Encourage CDC employee involvement in volunteer activities, community service, and elected office.
- Continue public service activities by inmates and parolees and pursue new opportunities for public/private partnerships in providing inmate jobs.
- Encourage wardens and institutions to utilize community volunteers as two-way communications channels.
- Encourage institutions and field services to work together in establishing links to local service provider networks.

Objective #6: To have a positive impact on the policies and priorities established for corrections in the State of California.

CDC must continue to participate in the policy debate on the role of corrections in the State. Several developments make this arena even more crucial for the Department. Term limits will result in more new members who will require orientation to the Department’s mission. Standing committees are likely to have more influence than the Joint Committee in crafting legislation and appropriations for the Department. The ongoing budget crunch will mean a constant struggle for resources.

Both CDC and legislative personnel believe there is a good working relationship at the staff level. There are, however, areas of concern. The Legislature perceives that there are multiple factions within CDC that result in mixed signals and that it is difficult to get information out of CDC. There is a sense that everything, including basic facts and data, must be cleared politically.

Recommendation: The Department should maintain active involvement in the policy debate regarding the role of corrections in the State through the following methods:

- Provide information in a timely manner to the Governor’s Office and the Secretary.
- Facilitate access to information by the legislative leadership and the standing committees.

- Emphasize providing information regarding CDC stewardship of public tax dollars.
- Establish procedures to provide timely briefing and orientation to new members regarding the Department's mission and operations.
- Communicate to the Legislature that the image of "factions" within CDC is a measure of both the strength and diversity of the contemporary corrections enterprise.

APPENDIX to CALIFORNIA PLAN

The following persons served as members of the Project Steering Committee for the CDC Communications Audit:

- G. Kevin Carruth, Deputy Director (Acting), Planning and Construction Division (Alternate: Conrad Holmes)
- Gregg Harding, Deputy Director, Evaluation and Compliance Division (Alternate: Sterling O’Ran)
- Marilyn Kalvelage, Special Assistant to the Chief Deputy Director
- Tipton C. Kindel, Assistant Director, Communications
- Marisela Montes, Assistant Deputy Director, Parole and Community Services Division (Alternate: Ed Elmer)
- Teresa Rocha, Warden (Acting), California State Prison - Sacramento

The following individuals were interviewed for the Communications Audit:

- Joe Sandavol, Secretary, Youth & Adult Correctional Agency
- James H. Gomez, Director, CDC
- Robert H. Denninger, Chief Deputy, CDC
- Gregg Harding, Deputy Director, Evaluation and Compliance Division, CDC
- Kyle McKinsey, Deputy Director (Acting), Health Care Services, CDC
- Eddie Ylst, Deputy Director, Parole and Community Services Division, CDC
- G. Kevin Carruth, Deputy Director (Acting), Planning and Construction Division, CDC
- Michael B. Neal, Assistant Director (Acting), Legislative Liaison, CDC
- Wilbur Beckwith, Assistant Director, Law Enforcement Liaison, CDC
- Helen McCollough, Assistant Director, Community Resource Development, CDC
- Noreen Blonien, Assistant Director, Joint Venture Program, CDC
- Sterling O’Ran, Chief, Special Projects Branch, Evaluation and Compliance Division, CDC
- Greg Schmidt, Majority Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee
- Geoffrey Long, Principal Consultant, Assembly Ways and Means Committee
- Ned Cohen, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
- Susan Wallace, Joint Legislative Committee on Prison Construction and Operations
- Jim Provenza, Chief Counsel, Assembly Committee on Public Safety
- Don Novey, President, California Correctional Peace Officers Association
- Norma Lammers, California State Association of Counties
- Susan Cohen, Executive Director, California Probation, Parole, and Correctional Association
- Dan Morain, Los Angeles Times
- Doug Willis, Capital Bureau Chief, Associated Press
- William Endicott, Capital Bureau Chief, Sacramento Bee

Group sessions were held with:

- Parole Administrators:
 - Hank Peralta, Regional Administrator, Region I (Sacramento)
 - Deborah Star, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region II (San Francisco)
 - R.L. (Ron) Candelaria, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region III (Los Angeles)
 - Jean Anderson, Regional Administrator, Region IV (Diamond Bar)
 - Fran Berkowitz, Parole Administrator, Parole and Community Services Division

- Wardens:
 - Theo White, Chuckawala Valley State Prison (Blythe)
 - Peggy Kernan, California State Prison - Solano (Vacaville)
 - Michael Pickett, California Institution for Men (Chino)
 - Michael Carrillo, Wasco State Prison - Reception Center (Wasco)

- Volunteers:
 - Gretchen Newby, Friends Outside - National
 - Jerry Hill, Chairman, California Medical Facility/California State Prison - Solano Citizens Advisory Committee
 - Ed Faulkner, Chairman, Chaplains Coordinating Committee
 - Peter Breen, Executive Director, Centerforce

- 12 staff from the California Institution for Women (Frontera) and the California Institution for Men (Chino)

- 5 staff from Region IV Parole and Community Services (Diamond Bar)

Appendix C

Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Strategic Communications Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like many corrections departments throughout the country, the Rhode Island Department of Corrections has had to respond to forces and factors that it cannot always control. The cumulative impact of Federal Court intervention, budgetary shortfalls, and other factors has led to a measure of collective frustration expressed in the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the staff of the Department.

The Department understands that this frustration is shared not only by its clients, the inmate and parolee populations within the state, but also by many of the external publics with which the Department interacts.

The Department recognizes that improving its ability to communicate, both internally and externally, is an essential step in addressing these collective concerns. The importance of the Department's commitment to improved communications is underscored by the emphasis placed on communications in its mission statement.

In order to guide its efforts, the Department has formulated the following communications goal:

The Communication Goal of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections is to promote the Department's mission and gain confidence in and support for the mission from staff, client population, and the public at large.

Based on this goal, the Department established two sets of communications objectives:

One set of objectives focuses within the Department:

To build staff awareness of the Department's mission so that the staffs expressed attitudes and conduct reflect the philosophy and the core values contained in that mission.

To demonstrate management's commitment to implementing the mission by creating a climate that encourages staff to express their views and by involving staff in the development of policies, plans, and objectives.

To ensure openness in communications between Department administrators and the client population.

The other set of objectives focuses outside the Department:

To build and maintain positive relations with external publics by providing timely access to accurate information, by educating the public on the department's mission, and by communicating regularly with the media.

To persuade the public that rehabilitative programming is in the interest of public safety.

To build public awareness of, support for, and participation in a program of intermediate sanctions.

OVERVIEW

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections recognizes the **need** to address several issues that are critical to its success. These issues, which are identified and discussed here, form the major building blocks upon which the Department's entire communications plan will be built and implemented. These issues and the Department's response to them contain the strategic messages that it believes necessary to communicate within and outside the Department. The issues themselves are not easily resolved, but their resolution is dependent in large part on the Department's ability to communicate its resolve, reasons, and results.

The Department recognizes that it will take considerable time and resources to successfully communicate its messages. In the past, little attention has been paid to communicating its messages. That history is not insignificant and has created an environment in which considerable skepticism and doubt among staff, the media, and the public remain. Nevertheless, the Department is strongly committed to a new direction. Under the leadership of its Director, it has already made considerable strides in refocusing its efforts and staff. A new mission statement for the Department has been developed that specifically addresses the Department's goals, objectives, and values (see Appendix A). That mission statement was developed by senior staff and has been widely disseminated within the Department.

Recognizing that much more needs to be done, the Department has initiated steps to develop a reasoned plan for improving communications within and outside the Department. This document represents the framework of that communications plan. It presents the strategic messages that must be part of the individual components of the plan itself. Those messages are derived from the issues that the Department must address because it is the successful resolution of those issues that will determine its ability to reach its goals and objectives.

The issues include some that are generated from outside the Department. Others originate from within the Department, while still others find their roots both within and outside the Department. Whatever their origin, they have a profound effect on the Department and its ability to perform. Whatever the source of the issue, staff have expressed concern about them and recognize the need to formulate a strategic communications plan upon which to base more specific action plans. As the Department proceeds with the development of specific action plans, it will bear in mind and be guided by the underlying issues and the key messages it wishes to communicate within the Department to its staff and clients, as well as to the general public and specific audiences within the public at large.

The Department of Corrections' Major Strategic Message

The message that the Department will communicate to its audiences is that the Department of Corrections is a part of the State of Rhode Island and not an isolated entity. As part of a larger "community," the Department will be a responsible participant. Those responsibilities and obligations include being open, honest, direct, and timely in its communications to staff, clients, the public, and representatives of the public. It also will be listening to the concerns and issues of its multiple audiences as it prepares its communications.

The strategic message is well grounded in the mission statement of the Department of Corrections in which the Department recognizes that it is "an integral component of the criminal justice system" and that "the provision of relevant, accurate and timely information is important in order for the Department to demonstrate its accountability." More specifically, the mission statement notes that "the role of the media in a democratic society is recognized and the Department will work actively and constructively with news outlets in order to demonstrate that it is open and accountable." Further, "the appropriate segments of

the public must be consulted in the development of the Department's key policies." With regard to its internal communications, "staff must be consulted and involved in the development of Department policies, plans and objectives, and must be free to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns." The complete mission statement is appended to this plan.

The Department of Corrections' Communications Goal and Objectives

Based on its mission statement, the Department has formulated a communications goal and two sets of objectives.

The Communication Goal of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections is to promote the Department's mission and gain confidence in and support for the mission from staff, client population, and the public at large.

One set of objectives targets issues within the Department of Corrections, while the second set addresses issues outside the Department. They are presented in that order.

Within the Department

Objective 1.1: To build staff awareness of the mission through regular communication directly from the administration.

Objective 1.2: To consult and involve staff in the development of Departmental policies, plans, and objectives, and to ensure staff are free to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns.

Objective 1.3: To demonstrate management's commitment to implementation of the Department's mission.

Objective 1.4: To ensure that the philosophy and goals contained in the Department's mission statement are reflected in the conduct of staff.

Objective 1.5: To develop staff whose attitudes reflect belief in the core values contained in the Department's mission statement.

Objective 1.6: To ensure that channels of communication between the client population and the administration remain open.

Outside the Department

Objective 2.1: To educate the public about the Department's mission.

Objective 2.2: To build and maintain positive relationships with the public at large, including representatives of the media, through a full-scale public relations effort.

Objective 2.3: To provide relevant, accurate, and timely information in order for the Department to demonstrate it is open and accountable.

Objective 2.4: To persuade the public that rehabilitative programming is in the interest of public safety.

Objective 2.5: To build public awareness of, support for, and participation in a program of intermediate sanctions.

What follows is a discussion of those issues and the strategic messages that in large measure cut across all the major issues. Some issues represent the consequences of forces and factors not easily controlled by the Department. They are Prison Crowding and the Longstanding Impact of the Federal Court and the Impact of Revenue Shortfalls. Others involve perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that are based on longstanding relations and experiences. They include: the Change in Direction of the Department's New Administration; the Gap Between the Mission Statement and the Reality of Day-to-Day Work; the Physical Proximity yet Limited Contact Among Staff, Staffs Opinions and Ideas Are Not Sought or Heard, a Lack of Trust Among Staff, and a Lack of In-service Training Programs.

Other issues seem a product of collective frustration from the lack of full and complete information sharing. They include the Department's Image That Is Shaped by "Negative Stories" and the perception that the Public Really Does Not Know What Happens in Prisons. Still another acknowledges that the Department speaks to many audiences, not the least of which are the clients under its care and control. This issue addresses Relationships Between Staff and Inmates.

Obviously, issues in one category spill over into the three other categories. In many respects this self-imposed categorization is artificial and serves only to organize the issues for presentation purposes. Each issue lends itself to one or more strategic messages that the Department is committed to communicating.

CONSEQUENCES OF FORCES AND FACTORS NOT EASILY CONTROLLED

Prison Crowding and the Longstanding Impact of the Federal Court

Since the 1970's, the Department has been operating under the court's oversight and has been directed by the court's orders to limit the size of the inmate population. The public does not understand that there already are a very large number of clients in the community under supervision by the Rehabilitative Services Division of the Department. If the public were aware of how many individuals were under supervision in the community, they would realize how large and significant this component of corrections is within the Department.

This longstanding role of the court has tended to place the Department in a position of having to respond to allegations about the conditions of confinement that are attributed to the confinement of prisoners in excess of the court-ordered capacity of the prison system. This responsive posture has inhibited the development of a proactive stance with regard to communicating to the public the Department's positive accomplishments and its need for understanding and support of its mission.

Strategic Message: The Department plans to articulate to the stakeholders the cost/benefits of community-based correctional programs so that inmates who could be maintained in the community are placed in the community and beds that are needed for confinement are available for those inmates.

The Department has also recognized this deficiency and intends to address it in part by taking a more active role in opening up its facilities and programs to those groups that have a vital interest in the Department's success and/or that are in a position to further communicate with the public at large about the Department, its activities and objectives.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 2.4: To persuade the public that rehabilitative programming is in the interest of public safety, and

Objective 2.5: To build public awareness of, support for, and participation in a program of intermediate sanctions.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Establishing Open House Programs,
- Creating an Advisory Board of persons representing other criminal justice agencies,
- Conducting a statewide Corrections Conference,
- Instituting a media campaign to persuade the public that rehabilitative programming is in their interest, and
- Establishing a Speakers Bureau to provide the public with the facts about corrections.

Impact of Revenue Shortfalls

Simultaneously, the Department has been forced to operate with fewer fiscal resources than its increasing population might otherwise dictate. One consequence of the revenue shortfalls within the State has been the near total elimination of the use of overtime to cover posts. The reduction in overtime has caused a dramatic reduction in income for many correctional officers. As a consequence, many officers who had been earning wages substantially greater than their base salaries have seen their take-home wages reduced dramatically.

While line officers perceive that their supervisors have not had to tighten their belts as much as they have had to, and they are very concerned about the reductions in the level of staffing that have been effected, they do appear to be supportive of management's philosophy and practices as they relate to the running of the facilities. As a consequence, relationships between management and the Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, which represents the line officers, appear to be more positive than they have been in the past.

On the other hand, the loss of income for a great many staff has caused not only financial hardship at home, but also removed a major source of job satisfaction. Wages earned do not represent the sole source of job satisfaction. However, when the rewards that might be derived from other sources are problematic, then the loss of income creates an even larger vacuum to be filled by the Department's leaders.

Strategic Message: Meeting that challenge will involve creating other sources of job satisfaction. The success of those sources is dependent upon the Department's ability to convince staff of their value. Communicating to all staff that their work contributes to achieving goals and objectives in which they are stakeholders is one way to meet that end. Ownership and togetherness are two key elements in any plan to communicate this message.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 1.2: To consult and involve staff in the development of Departmental policies, plans and objectives and to ensure staff are free to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns, and

Objective 1.4: To ensure that the philosophy and goals contained in the Department's mission statement are reflected in the conduct of staff.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Conducting regular and frequent meetings with staff,
- Creating forums for staff to express their concerns, ideas, and opinions, and
- Incorporating the mission statement throughout staff training programs.

PERCEPTIONS, BELIEFS, AND ATTITUDES

The Change in Direction of the Department's New Administration

Of more recent impact have been the changes generated by the appointment of a new Director in January of 1991. Since that time, the Department's organizational structure has been changed, new staff hired, existing staff roles shifted, and others reassigned, retired, or resigned. More on-site managers have been deployed to the facilities. The Department has also launched new initiatives in the area of intermediate sanctions and has sought to expand the use of home confinement for pretrial prisoners. This shift in practice and philosophy is aimed at holding staff responsible and accountable and increasing staffs control over the operation of the institutions. As a result, both staff and inmates have had to adjust.

These new initiatives have received considerable attention among the managers and administrators of the Department. To a lesser degree, middle-level managers and line staff are aware of these new efforts. Still more attention is required to gain understanding and acceptance of these initiatives on the part of all staff in the Department.

Strategic Message: To ensure that the Department's new mission receives broad-based support within all ranks and areas of the Department, a major effort will be made to communicate the goals, objectives, and values the Department embraces.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: One of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan is related to this issue. It is:

Objective 1.1: To build staff awareness of the mission through regular communication directly from the administration.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from this objective include:

- Hiring a Public Information Officer,
- Developing a Public Information Plan, and
- Creating a variety of communications vehicles to keep staff informed, including:
 - the incorporation of the mission statement principles and values into training programs;
 - the regular convening of staff focus groups to discuss special issues;
 - the frequent use of large informational staff forums conducted by the Director; and
 - the continuation of the Director's personal involvement in presenting his views during staff training programs.

Gap Between the Mission Statement and the Reality of Day-to-Day Work

The Department's mission statement is perceived by some to be light years away from the reality of one's day-to-day work. Staff perceive that there is little relationship between what they do and the direction in which the mission is pointing them. Just keeping pace with the demands of maintaining the system and ensuring that essential tasks are accomplished leave little time to pursue the mission. In addition, not all staff have adopted it, although it appears that those who have been exposed to it and understand it do in fact accept it. Embracing the Department's mission seems appropriate to most staff but not critical to their work.

Strategic Message: Linking the results that can be derived by achieving specific mission-related objectives is required in order to gain broad acceptance of the value of embracing the mission itself. Communicating to staff and the public the practical and worthwhile results of achieving these objectives could serve to give greater purpose to the everyday tasks that most employees undertake.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 1.4: To ensure that the philosophy and goals contained in the Department's mission statement are reflected in the conduct of staff.

Objective 1.5: To develop staff whose attitudes reflect belief in the core values contained in the Department's mission statement.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Using the mission statement to evaluate staff performance,
- Incorporating communications objectives into staff training programs, and
- Developing and monitoring job performance standards for Department managers that address communications objectives.

Physical Proximity yet Limited Contact Among Staff

All of the correctional facilities are clustered together on a campus 6 miles south of Providence. This concentration of facilities focuses media attention on corrections, and the closeness of the media in Providence to the prison sites provides easy access to those facilities and the central office.

While the close proximity of the prison facilities to each other has served to make information about the Department easily accessible to the public, it has not enhanced communication within the Department. In spite of the very close proximity of facilities, the staff that work within them appear to have very little contact with each other. For the most part, staff gather most of their information about what is occurring in the Department from the "rumor mill" rather than from Departmental communications.

Most communication occurs within each facility and, more particularly, on each shift within each facility. Staff tend to work in the same facility and on the same shift for a considerable length of time. While the Wardens and Deputy Wardens meet regularly, the middle-level managers and line staff have little contact with their counterparts in other facilities.

This distance between the employees is reflected also by the perception that each facility is run differently from the others. This conclusion is based on the perception that there is little consistency in the application of Departmental policy between the facilities. A lack of consistent application of policies and rules within the same facility is also perceived by staff. Rules and policies are applied differently by “relief” officers and supervisors, as opposed to the practices of the “regular” officers and supervisors.

Strategic Message: Communicating to all employees that they are part of one organization with a specific mission whose success is dependent upon the individual efforts and accomplishments of all staff is a message that must be sent and reinforced in as many ways as possible. Finding ways to take advantage of the close working proximity of the institutional and central office employees represents a unique opportunity for the Department in its efforts to establish closer ties with all staff.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department’s communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 1.2: To consult and involve staff in the development of Departmental policies, plans, and objectives, and to ensure staff are free to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns.

Objective 1.3: To demonstrate management’s commitment to implementation of the Department’s mission.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Using the values and objectives contained in the mission statement to evaluate staff performance, and
- Incorporating communications objectives into staff training programs.

Staff’s Opinions and Ideas Are Not Sought or Heard

In a variety of ways, Department staff feel more often “told” than “asked.” Middle-level managers and line staff feel that senior-level managers tend not to seek out their ideas. They feel they are not listened to, although they believe they have gained valuable experience that could be applied in resolving problems.

Correctional officers feel that other staff do not view their role as important. They believe they are asked for too little input, too late. For example, they believe that they have gained valuable insights into the behavior of prisoners in their care, but they are rarely asked for an assessment of the behavior they have observed or for recommendations and advice on program decisions.

Strategic Message: Involving Department staff as valuable resources in achieving Departmental goals and objectives is becoming a major focus for the Department. Ensuring that all staff are participants in reaching those goals can be realized by actively soliciting their assistance and involvement. One approach to this task is to ensure that communications between supervisors and nonsupervisors moves freely and regularly in both directions. Too often communicators tend to view the process as one involving only giving direction rather than also listening to those around them. To the extent possible, every effort is required to balance both communications directions.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: One of the objectives contained in the Department’s communications plan is related to this issue. It is:

Objective 1.2: To consult and involve staff in the development of Departmental policies, plans, and objectives, and to ensure staff are free to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from this objective include:

- Soliciting the ideas and suggestions of staff through formal and informal methods, and
- Creating an environment in which expression of ideas and concerns is encouraged and fairly received.

Lack of Trust Among Employees

A consequence of the protracted breakdown in communications between staff has been a growing lack of trust between line staff and the administrators. Line staff believe that the administration, at least prior administrations, have not kept their promises. They are skeptical about “believing” and investing in the “word” of the current administration. They see a need for concrete evidence that the administration’s word is “good.” Line officers believe that the administration should be more willing to take the officer’s “word” and not be so quick to blame the officers when mistakes occur.

Most staff believe that Departmental rules, particularly as they relate to the disciplining of staff, are applied differently based on bias and not on an objective analysis. The “fair haired” can do no wrong, while others will have the “book thrown at them” for a first mistake,

Strategic Message: Developing a greater degree of trust between Departmental leaders and other staff is critical to the success of the administration’s programs and objectives. Trust is built through interactions in which expectations are fulfilled. Treating staff equally and fairly supports that principle. Following through on promises made and acting in a manner consistent with written and verbal communications are important to building that trust. Trust can be gained by verbal communication, but it is sustained by actions consistent with those statements. Staff are more likely to believe in what one does than in what one says. As a result, the Department’s communications plan will be based on both forms of communication.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: One of the objectives contained in the Department’s communications plan is related to this issue. It is:

Objective 1.3: To demonstrate management’s commitment to implementation of the Department’s mission.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from this objective include:

- Creating a system to monitor the implementation of the intentions the Department communicates to staff, and
- Providing systematic means of communicating to staff that the Department is doing and has done what it said it would.

Lack of In-Service Training Programs

A major concern of the Department and its staff is the historical lack of in-service training programs, particularly for staff who are promoted to supervisory roles. Not only are opportunities **missed to prepare**

these individuals for their new roles and responsibilities, but on a broader level the opportunity is missed to convey to staff the priorities and values of their leaders.

Strategic Message: Training programs present a valuable opportunity to communicate messages to a large number of staff in a systematic and coherent manner. Further, the format of these programs can provide staff with the opportunity to ask questions and for administrators to listen to their staffs' concerns. Developing training programs consistent with the Department's mission and allocating time for the training to be given are essential and key to the Department's efforts to communicate with its staff.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 1.4: To ensure that the philosophy and goals contained in the Department's mission statement are reflected in the conduct of staff.

Objective 1.5: To develop staff whose attitudes reflect belief in the core values contained in the Department's mission statement.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Ensuring that all staff participate in an annual in-service training program,
- Relating staff training programs directly to the mission statement of the Department, and
- Incorporating Departmental values and objectives into employee work performance standards.

LACK OF FULL AND COMPLETE INFORMATION SHARING

The Department's Image Is Shaped by "Negative Stories"

Two types of "negative stories" frequently are communicated to the public. They involve prison disturbances and riots as well as allegations of abuse of inmates by staff. Within the last year the Department has had to quell two major disturbances within its institutions. Those disruptions, while not resulting in major harm to staff or inmates, have been the center of considerable attention by the media and by community-based organizations that are pressing for "reform" within the system.

Linked somewhat to these disturbances have been a series of allegations that have appeared in the press and in the electronic media that portray staff as having used unnecessary and excessive force with inmates. In some cases, staff have been convicted of such charges or disciplined by the Department. In other instances the charges have been found to be unwarranted. This issue has affected correctional officers more so than other employee groups, but inasmuch as correctional officers are the largest employee group, its effects are widespread.

These issues are troubling both because of their nature and because they serve to mold almost exclusively public opinion about the Department and its staff. Additionally, these allegations are brought to the media's attention by advocacy groups in the community or by inmates and their families and friends. The inmates appear to have more and better communications with the press than the staff. Staff perceive that these groups have an "ax to grind" and that the media are all too ready to believe the charges because the claims and the incidents themselves "sell newspapers." Further, staff feel that the reporting of these events serves to reinforce the public's natural inclination to distrust government and in particular those who work in prisons.

When the Department is contacted to respond to charges or allegations, there is the perception that those who comment on behalf of the Department are not well informed and therefore do not present the Department in as forceful and positive a manner as it could be presented. This situation is partially explained by the Department's policy prohibiting staff from communicating with the media. That policy provides for strict sanctions, including the possibility of dismissal. As a result, accusations are frequently given more credence by the media and the public than the Department's explanations.

Staff believe they have no control over what the media say or report. They perceive the media to be the archenemy of the Department. The press consistently sees the employees as the "bad guys." The Department has become a product of the media, a way of using allegations of violence and abuse to promote the media. Consequently, the Department never gets "positive" press. What is needed is to get the media in contact with those staff who can give good, solid information.

The charges that are brought against staff have a demoralizing effect. Staff do not feel that their efforts are properly recognized and rewarded. They believe that most officers work hard at a very thankless job. As a result, the Department is always in a reactive mode, defending itself against numerous allegations of mistreatment of inmates and staff favoritism in the application of disciplinary measures against staff, as well as in promotion of staff.

Strategic Message: To counterbalance the occurrence of such incidents, the Department will have to present a fuller and more accurate picture of what corrections in Rhode Island stands for and involves. When disturbances occur, the Department will be better served by presenting a full account and responding directly to the media's questions with answers from informed and authoritative staff. Exercising initiative and being more aggressive in getting out the Department's message are viewed as key components of this strategy.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Two of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 2.2: To build and maintain positive relationships with the public at large, including representatives of the media, through a full-scale public relations effort.

Objective 2.3: To provide relevant, accurate, and timely information in order for the Department to demonstrate it is open and accountable.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Hiring a Public Information Officer,
- Developing a Public Information Plan,
- Creating several communications vehicles to keep staff informed,
- Developing professional relations with members of the news media,
- Sharing information about the Department of Corrections with other criminal justice system agencies, and
- Initiating contacts with the media to communicate Departmental accomplishments and objectives.

The Public Really Does Not Know What Happens in Prisons

Staff generally believe that the public has no idea of what it is like to work in a prison. Staff believe that the public thinks the inmates are confined to their cells most of the day, that staff carry guns inside the

prisons, and that there are two staff for every inmate at all times. Further, the public perceives that staff are regularly abusing inmates. Staff perceive that the average person wants the Department to just “lock ‘em up and throw away the key.”

Because of a lack of information about the Department’s role and activities, the general public is misinformed as to what correctional officers and other staff actually do. The public has been led to believe that prison staff are just one step up from the inmates. They frequently conclude from the media’s messages about corrections that staff use drugs and beat the inmates. As a consequence, the public is likely to be more sympathetic to the inmates than to the staff.

Strategic Message: The public would benefit from first-hand observations of what it is like to work in a prison. Such observations could be made by media representatives who would convey their findings and impressions to the public. As a result, the public would get a more realistic and more complete picture of the Department and its work. Absent that accurate portrayal, the public will continue to assume the worst about correctional staff.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: Three of the objectives contained in the Department’s communications plan are related to this issue. They are:

Objective 2.1: To educate the public about the Department’s mission.

Objective 2.2: To build and maintain positive relationships with the public at large, including representatives of the media, through a full-scale public relations effort.

Objective 2.3: To provide relevant, accurate, and timely information in order for the Department to demonstrate it is open and accountable.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from these objectives include:

- Developing professional relations with members of the news media,
- Sharing information about the Department of Corrections with other criminal justice system agencies,
- Initiating contacts with the media to communicate Departmental accomplishments and objectives, and
- Expanding efforts to increase the number of invitations to organizations and groups to tour Departmental facilities and programs.

DEPARTMENT CLIENTS AS AN AUDIENCE

Relationships Between Staff and Inmates

There is a lack of jobs and programs for inmates. This situation is made worse by a reduction in funding for such programs within the Department. There is a potential backlash to efforts to increase programming. It is a double-edged sword in that the public could react strongly against the idea of spending money or more money for inmate educational programs, when members of the general public are finding it difficult to find the resources to send their own children to college.

Also of concern is the belief that prison industries are not being used optimally. If more inmates were employed, more products could be produced and sold, thereby generating more revenue for the Department and the State.

Strategic Message: The success that the Department achieves in realizing its mission is greatly dependent upon communicating the expectations it has of its inmates and its clients in the community. While the Department retains its authority as the ultimate arbiter, it is also dependent upon its inmates and community-based clients as the recipients of its programs and services and the subject of its authority. The Department's ability to convey its concerns and purpose, particularly as they relate to its inmates and clients, will shape and determine its final success.

The situation is compounded by the fact that a large number of inmates have great difficulty reading and comprehending the spoken word, whatever the language might be. In addition, a large and growing percentage of the inmate population speak only Spanish and have great difficulty with reading and understanding English. As a consequence, it is particularly difficult to explain the Department's rules and regulations to them. Addressing these needs will be an integral part of the Department's strategic communications plan.

Related Communications Objectives and Action Plans: One of the objectives contained in the Department's communications plan is related to this issue. It is:

Objective 1.6: To ensure that channels of communication between the client population and the administration remain open.

Some of the Action Plans that can be derived from this objective include:

- Establishing an inmate newsletter by which to address all inmates,
- Soliciting input from inmates, and
- Maintaining direct contact with inmates and community-based clients.

SUMMARY

Issues and concerns from a wide range of staff within the Department of Corrections as well as individuals outside the Department were elicited to ensure that the communications plan addressed those issues and concerns. Strategic messages, a goal, and objectives were formulated along with suggestions for Action Plans. Other Action Plans will be developed as the Department's communications plan is further refined and updated. That final plan will include means by which Department managers will monitor and guide the implementation of specific action plans. Periodic reviews of the plan will also address the relevancy of the plan's goal and objectives to ensure that the Department is meeting its communications needs and requirements.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Communications Audit and the development of a communications plan were led by key Department staff. The focus of their efforts was the work of one particular group of employees, who formed a Steering Committee for the project as designated by George Vose, Director of the Department of Corrections. Members of the Committee included:

- A.T. Wall, Assistant Director for Administration, Chairperson
- Ann J. Fortin, Assistant Business Management Officer, Vice Chairperson
- Albert S. Bucci, Assistant to the Director
- Richard Frechette, Associate Director for Financial Resources
- Alfred P. Leach, Deputy Warden for Programs, Maximum Security
- Jeffrey Renzi, Planning Coordinator
- Roberta Richman, Administrator, Women's Facility.

Staff support for the Committee's work and for the entire project was provided by George M. Camp of the Criminal Justice Institute. During the course of the project, the Committee met five times to work on formulating the Department's communications plan. The Director participated in the discussions at one of those meetings. The Committee members shared the plan with all senior Department managers at the Director's November 1992 Monthly Managers Meeting.

Of particular value in the process of developing the communications plan was the active and supportive role of Director Vose. His constant support of the work of the Committee gave them credibility and generated genuine enthusiasm for their efforts. The Committee was in every way an extension of the Director and his commitment to improving communications both within the Department and with the public and its representatives.

During the initial phases of the project, meetings were conducted by the Committee's consultant with three different groups of Department staff. Those groups of 10 to 15 people consisted of (1) senior-level managers and administrators from the central office and institutions, (2) middle-level managers and supervisors, and (3) line correctional officers. Two meetings with each group were held. At those meetings, the issues and concerns of those present were solicited. In addition, suggestions for improving both internal and external communications were sought.

In order to ascertain the concerns and issues of as many employees as possible, a survey questionnaire was prepared and distributed to individuals throughout the Department. Thirty-one completed questionnaires were returned. In addition, a similar survey instrument was mailed to 20 key criminal justice officials, members of the media, and representatives of groups and organizations that regularly interact with the Department of Corrections. Ten responses were received. Individual interviews were conducted with several key Departmental leaders and with two members of the Rhode Island media. All the results were tabulated, analyzed, and shared in the aggregate with the Steering Committee. That information was used to facilitate the planning process and to assist the Committee in the development of specific objectives and action plans.

The results of the analysis were summarized. A communications goal and a series of objectives and action plans were formulated. The entire set of information was organized and presented to the Department for ongoing use in refining its communications plan and implementing and monitoring the action plans.

Appendix A: Mission Statement of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections

I. AUTHORITY

R.I.G.L. 42-56-1 (Declaration of Policy); R.I.G.L. 42-56-10 (v) (Powers of the Director)

II. PURPOSE

To provide a clear statement of the philosophy and goals of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections so that staff, the client population, other governmental agencies and members of the public will know and understand the values which underlie all Departmental operations, programs and directions in policy.

III. POLICY

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections, as an integral component of the Criminal Justice System, contributes to the protection of society by providing appropriate safe, secure and humane control of offenders, and also by actively encouraging and assisting offenders through rehabilitative services to become productive and law-abiding members of the community.

IV. VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A. There are five Core Values of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. They are as follows:

CORE VALUE 1: The Community is entitled to protection from offenders.

CORE VALUE 2: The potential of offenders to become law-abiding citizens can be enhanced through intervention.

CORE VALUE 3: The entire Department must operate with openness, integrity, and accountability, and with an unwavering commitment to ethical conduct.

CORE VALUE 4: A sufficient array of treatment and control models must be available in order to achieve the mission.

CORE VALUE 5: The Department's strength and major resource in achieving the mission is its staff.

B. Each Core Value is based on a set of Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles associated with each Core Value are as follows:

CORE VALUE 1: THE COMMUNITY IS ENTITLED TO PROTECTION FROM OFFENDERS.

Guiding Principles

1. The state has a basic obligation to protect the public by making available the option of institutional confinement for offenders and, where appropriate, supervision in the community.
2. It is the responsibility of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections to provide this confinement and supervision as needed.

CORE VALUE 2: THE POTENTIAL OF OFFENDERS TO BECOME LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS CAN BE ENHANCED THROUGH INTERVENTION.

Guiding Principles

1. Successful rehabilitation of offenders directly correlates to the reduction of crime in the community.
2. Offenders are responsible for their actions and must bear the responsibility for abandoning their criminal behavior. The offender must have a sincere desire to be rehabilitated.
3. The Department is responsible for providing offenders with every opportunity to abandon their criminal behavior. Programs and opportunities to assist offenders in developing social and living skills will enhance their potential to become law-abiding citizens.
4. Programs for offenders should incorporate such essential rehabilitative services as substance abuse, mental health treatment, education and vocational training, job skills, and family reunification.
5. Offender employment plays a critical role in developing skills and abilities which will assist offenders in becoming productive members of society upon their release. It also contributes to the good order and management of institutions, and reflects society's belief in the value of work. Offenders should be productively occupied.
6. The involvement of community organizations, volunteers and outside professionals in program development and delivery is actively encouraged.

CORE VALUE 3: THE ENTIRE DEPARTMENT MUST OPERATE WITH OPENNESS, INTEGRITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY, AND WITH AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL CONDUCT.

Guiding Principles

1. Employees of the criminal justice system, by the very nature of their work, have a moral responsibility to support and uphold the laws they enforce through their own actions and personal conduct. For correctional staff, this responsibility is even more critical, since it is a major objective of Corrections to influence and persuade criminal offenders to become law-abiding citizens. Therefore, each individual staff member of the Department must uphold the highest standards of conduct, ethics and behavior at all times and must also avoid any activity, personal or business association, which creates even the perception of impropriety.
2. The provision of relevant, accurate and timely information is important in order for the Department to demonstrate its accountability.
3. The role of the media in a democratic society is recognized and the Department will work actively and constructively with news outlets in order to demonstrate that it is open and accountable.
4. The appropriate segments of the public must be consulted in the development of the Department's key policies.
5. The Department will be sensitive to the economic and political environment in which it operates and endeavor to be a positive presence in the community. As an agency of state government, the Department will demonstrate fiscal responsibility by seeking only those resources which are necessary to accomplish its objectives, and by using them in the best possible way.

CORE VALUE 4: A SUFFICIENT ARRAY OF TREATMENT AND CONTROL MODELS MUST BE AVAILABLE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE MISSION.

Guiding Principles

1. The Department will make every effort to keep abreast of current developments in the corrections field, and to incorporate those programs, practices and technologies which reflect sound and progressive correctional practices.
2. Offenders will be classified to the most appropriate and least secure level of confinement consistent with the public safety, both upon admission and upon review of their classification status.
3. Measures will be taken to ensure that while offenders are in the community, they will be adequately supervised, and that any increase in risk is addressed swiftly through the use of appropriate intervention.

CORE VALUE 5: THE DEPARTMENT'S STRENGTH AND MAJOR RESOURCE IN ACHIEVING THE MISSION IS ITS STAFF.

Guiding Principles

1. It is essential that all staff possess values and skills consistent with the Department's mission, including good and effective interpersonal skills and understanding of and belief in the Department's purpose and mission.
2. All staff, both sworn and civilian, are correctional staff and are equally responsible for being active, visible participants in the correctional process.
3. The Department must be sensitive to the individual needs, interests, abilities and aspirations of its staff.
4. Staff must be consulted and involved in the development of Departmental policies, plans and objectives, and must be free to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns.
5. Staff relationships must be characterized by mutual respect, honesty and a sincere desire to resolve problems for the benefit of all.
6. Training and staff development activities should be directed to meeting the needs of the Department and its individual members.
7. The workforce must fairly represent the diversity of the Rhode Island community.

DISTRIBUTION:

- Director
- Assistant Director for Institutions/Operations
- Assistant Director for Rehabilitative Services
- Assistant Director for Administration
- Legal Counsel
- Training Center

The above parties will be responsible for informing appropriate staff within their units of the contents of this policy.

Appendix D

Sample Interview Form

Communications Audit Questionnaire

Name (Optional):

Date:

Title/Position/Rank/Assignment:

1. What is the mission of the Department of Corrections?
 - 1.1. What do you think the Department of Corrections is trying to achieve?
 - 1.2. What do other officials and private sector leaders think the Department of Corrections is trying to achieve?
 - 1.3. What does the public think the Department of Corrections is trying to achieve?
2. What do you think the Department should be trying to achieve?
3. In your opinion, how well is the Department doing relative to #1 and #2?
 - 3.1 Rank success of #1 on a scale of Low (1) to High (7).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---
 - 3.2 Rank success of #2 on a scale of Low (1) to High (7).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

4. How could the Department of Corrections be more successful with regard to:

#1? _____

#2? _____

5. What is the role that corrections actually plays in the state and in the community?

6. How well does the Department of Corrections communicate what it is trying to accomplish?

6.1 Rank success on a scale of Low (1) to High (7).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. What could the Department do to improve communications relative to its purpose and intentions?

8. Recent history:

8.1 Have there been any externally mandated changes in the Department of Corrections? If "yes," what are they?

8.2 What role have “incidents” played in bringing about these changes?

8.3 What are the major changes/factors/forces affecting corrections in the state?

9. How well does corrections communicate with these individuals/groups/constituencies?

Rank success on a scale of Low (1) to High (7)

9.1 Governor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.2 Legislature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.3 Law Enforcement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.4 Judiciary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.5 Prosecutors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.6 Defense Bar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.7 Parole Board	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.8 Mental Health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.9 Substance Abuse Providers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.10 After-Care	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.11 Local Criminal Justice Officials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.12 Social Service Providers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.13 Victims and Their Families	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.14 Inmate Families	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.15 General Public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.16 Inmates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.17 Media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. How is corrections portrayed by the media?

Comment:

10.1 How often? (Circle)

Daily Weekly Several times per month Monthly Every few months

10.2 How much is spot news vs. investigative reporting vs. analysis reporting?

Predominant type: (Circle)

Spot (% @ _____) Investigative (% @ _____) Analysis (% @ _____)

11. What methods should be used for communicating the Department's message to those outside the Department?

12. What methods should be used for communicating the Department's message to those inside the Department?

13. In your opinion, what are the major issues/concerns facing the Department of Corrections?

Appendix E

Sample Action Plan Form

**Rhode Island Department of Corrections
Communication Action Plan #1**

Action Plan Title: Hire Public Relations Officer

Reference: Objective 1.1 and 2.1

Due Date: January 3, 1993

Responsible Person: George A. Vose, Jr., Director

Action Steps	Person Responsible	Start Date	Finish Date
<u>1. Survey other Departments/Agencies re: appropriate job titles, space, and salaries.</u>	<u>B. Levin</u>		<u>11-5-92</u>
<u>2. Investigate existence of preferred re-employment list.</u>	<u>B. Levin</u>		<u>11-5-92</u>
<u>3. Post and advertise for position.</u>	<u>B. Levin</u>		<u>11-15-92</u>
<u>4. Receive applications.</u>	<u>B. Levin</u>		<u>12-4-92</u>
<u>5. Complete interviews.</u>	<u>B. Levin</u>		<u>12-4-92</u>
<u>6. Hire candidate.</u>	<u>G. Vose</u>		<u>1-3-93</u>
<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>		<u>_____</u>
<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>		<u>_____</u>

Resources Required:

Status of Action Plan	Date
Steps Accomplished: _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Comments: _____

Reviewing Authority: _____

Date: _____

USER FEEDBACK FORM

Please complete and mail this self-addressed, postage-paid form to assist the National Institute of Corrections in assessing the value and utility of its publications.

1. What is your general reaction to this document?

Excellent Good Average Poor Useless

2. To what extent do you see the document as being useful in terms of:

Very Useful Of Some Use Not Useful

Providing new or important information
Developing or implementing new programs
Modifying existing programs
Administering ongoing programs
Providing appropriate liaisons

3. Do you feel that more should be done in this subject area? If so, please specify what types of assistance are needed.

4. In what ways could the document be improved?

5. How did this document come to your attention?

6. How are you planning to use the information contained in the document?

7. Please check one item that best describes your affiliation with corrections or criminal justice. If a governmental program, please also indicate level of government.

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 Jail
 Probation
 Parole
 Community corrections
 Court
 Juvenile justice

Police
 Legislative body
 Professional organization
 College/university
 Citizen group
 Other government agency
 Other (please specify) _____

Federal State County Local Regional

8. OPTIONAL:

Name _____ Agency _____

Address _____

Telephone No. (____) _____

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