U.S. Department of Justice
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Managing Staff: Corrections' Most Valuable Resource

National Institute of Corrections

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Managing Staff: Corrections' Most Valuable Resource

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Contents

Figures

Tables

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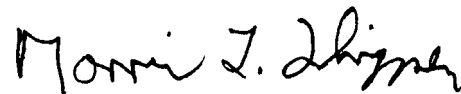
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Foreword

Appropriate and sound management of staff is a significant concern for correctional administrators. Retention of trained and experienced personnel not only maximizes the use of scarce financial resources, but also lends stability to a potentially troubled institutional environment. And beyond the concern with the simple retention of staff is the issue of ensuring that the workforce is invested in the success of the agency and not embittered, unhappy, and possibly a destabilizing influence.

This document presents a comprehensive review of generally accepted staff retention strategies and an assessment of various management strategies in use around the country that have proven successful in both keeping staff and maximizing their potential. The manual also presents research on the issue of retention in four departments of corrections and several commonly held fallacies regarding retention. Further, the document suggests improvements in record-keeping that will help departments track vital statistics on retention more effectively and efficiently.

It is hoped that this document will provide correctional professionals with a valuable tool for the more effective and efficient management of their departments.

Morris L. Thigpen, Director
National Institute of Corrections
January 1996

Chapter I
Overview

The most valuable resource of a corrections agency is its staff. Large portions of agency budgets are devoted to training, developing, and paying (remunerating) staff. As a return on this investment, agencies should be able to expect loyalty, longevity, and peak performance from their employees. This, however, is an ideal situation. Real life usually presents itself somewhat differently.

Staff is corrections' most valuable resource.

For a number of reasons, staff may leave an agency's employ after the investment has been made, requiring the department to expend additional time and funds to replace the employees. Within an agency, employees may tend to leave one particular facility for another, requiring new hires or transfers to fill the void. In either case, the agency must repeat its investment, and it has also lost the benefits provided by long-serving, dedicated staff.

When employees leave, agencies must reinvest in training their replacements.

How can administrators of corrections agencies reduce staff turnover and create a satisfied, dedicated, long-term workforce?

The answer is to treat employees as the valuable commodity that they are. The agency and its administration must know its employees and gain understanding of the employees from that knowledge. That understanding can then be utilized to assist employees in internalizing the objectives, philosophy, and mission of the administration and the agency. When that has been accomplished, the agency can use many tools to maintain its employees' well-being and satisfaction, thereby maximizing its investment and its return.

This study is an example of the entire process of human resource management. From data collection and analysis to suggesting means of retaining experienced staff, administrators can use it as a model within their own agencies. It is structured as a manual, with data presented, analyzed, and summarized in a manner that sets forth staff resource maximization as a manageable, attainable goal.

Impetus for this Study

During advisory board hearings held by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) in 1988, several corrections administrators communicated their concern about high staff turnover rates in their facilities. The loss of experienced staff, the need to hire staff to replace those who left as well as to fill new positions created to staff new facilities, and the need to train more staff was placing an additional strain on prison managers. In part as a consequence of the concerns expressed about high and increasing staff turnover rates, NIC decided to mount a major effort to learn more about the problem and methods to reduce staff turnover. This report is the end product of NIC's interest in addressing the concerns of prison officials about the causes and consequences of high staff turnover rates.

At the time that NIC was developing the statement of work it wished to have completed, the actual staff turnover rates in individual corrections agencies were not readily available. As part of responding to the need for more precise and inclusive information, staff turnover rates were sought and are presented in this report.

At the inception of this study, it was thought that staff turnover was a major problem for most corrections systems. Corrections practitioners identified the loss of experienced staff as an issue of concern warranting national attention. NIC had heard them express alarm at the rate at which staff were leaving the employ of their prisons.

If the expressed concerns were as real as they sounded, the consequences to corrections agencies could be alarming and therefore warranted attention. The loss of experienced staff to other public sector or private sector agencies when the need for experienced staff was increasing could be troubling for prison managers. The cost of recruiting, hiring, and training staff to replace those who were leaving would place additional burdens on a corrections agency's limited resources and would result in an increase in the proportion of inexperienced staff in the workforce.

While the results obtained from the initial screening survey were used to select prisons for in-depth study, they also demonstrated that the nature of the problem was neither as extensive nor quite the same as originally thought. Thus, as we shall see, the intent of the study shifted

from trying to explain why staff were leaving prison work in such great numbers to an examination of how corrections agency and prison practices affect staff. Additional study was directed at determining whether those practices influence staff decisions to remain in the prison workforce or if they are likely to lead to greater numbers of staff departures.

To the degree that experienced staff can be encouraged to remain in corrections, the corrections agency benefits threefold. First, the agency will have much-needed and valuable staff experience. Second, the need to hire staff to replace the loss of experienced individuals will be reduced. Third, the agency will not be forced to rely on inexperienced staff, who are often assigned to high-security institutions and placed in posts having direct contact with the most difficult to manage inmates.

Project Goals

The project began with two major goals. They were: (1) to provide the corrections community with useful, accurate, and comprehensive information on corrections workers' needs, concerns, and reasons for work dissatisfaction that might lead to termination of employment; and (2) to offer a variety of specific, detailed, and viable initiatives and innovative means of retaining a trained and experienced workforce.

In part, the goals were predicated on the assumption that a relationship existed between the conditions in the prison workplace and the likelihood of staff leaving the prison workplace for another job. As it turned out, that assumption was incorrect. What we found was that staff are very much concerned about their work environment, have very definite opinions about it, but that those conditions and management's practices do not seem to be a factor in the employee's decision whether to terminate employment. Although the study findings did not validate the original assumption, the study did reveal other compelling reasons for corrections agencies to address the concerns and issues of their workforce.

Turnover problems in *corrections agencies are not as extensive as administrators originally believed.*

Agency Benefits From Retaining Staff

- *Growth of experienced workforce*
- *Reduced need to replace staff who have separated (reducing training expenditures)*
- *Reduction of problems associated with inexperienced workforce*

Project Goals

1.

Provide information on corrections workers' needs, concerns, and reasons for work dissatisfaction.

2.

Offer a variety of options for retaining an experienced workforce.

What was found was that once staff are hired they are much more likely to remain in the employ of the corrections agency than they are to leave. The consequences of creating a dissatisfied workforce that leaves your employ are entirely different from the consequences of having to live with a dissatisfied workforce. Thus, the emphasis of the study shifted from one that concentrated on ways to avoid the loss of staff to one that focused on ways to avoid producing a workplace that staff found objectionable, but continued to work within.

As we shall see, staff are not leaving prison work at an alarming rate. While the consequences normally associated with high rates of staff turnover are not generally present in corrections agencies, other consequences, perhaps even more significant, were discovered. It is one thing to create a group of "unhappy campers" who leave as a result of their dissatisfaction, but it is an entirely different situation when those "unhappy campers" remain as your employees.

With the discovery that the satisfaction of the corrections workforce is the key element in operating a successful agency came a change in the structure of this report. Restructuring the document to reflect the actual process of data collection and analysis was felt to better serve administrators as they seek to manage their agencies' most valuable resource. This report contains practical applications whose viability has been given a real-life test.

Overview of the Approach to the Study

Our approach to meeting the study's goals and objectives was based on a combination of data collection methods (including the use of aggregate employee data already assembled by state corrections agencies, telephone interviews with former employees, and interviews with current corrections staff and managers). We also relied on appropriate use of consultants with expertise in specific areas of human resource management, maximum use of computerized corrections employee data, selection of representative prisons likely to result in the collection of the most relevant information, and reviews of current human resource literature and state-of-the-art practices in a variety of work settings.

Two one-day project assessment meetings with project staff, consultants, and NIC staff were conducted. These meetings served to guide the project staff in selecting appropriate prisons for gathering the maximum amount of potentially beneficial information and in analyzing the collected data.

This approach was also based on the prior prison work experience of the project staff who conducted the interviews and collected and analyzed the information. Over 40 years of experience as prison wardens and corrections agency administrators is possessed by the project staff. Their understanding of the prison environment, employee concerns, and managers' interest in reducing staff turnover was relied on throughout the project. The data collection tasks were developed based on prior experience in successfully accessing agency reports. The availability and willingness of staff to discuss sensitive issues were crucial, as was the experience of project staff in gaining the confidence of individuals to share their experiences, motivations, and perceptions.

> *The success of this project was in large part due to staff's honesty and willingness to discuss issues they felt were important.*

Data Sources

Our approach to meeting the project's goals and objectives relied on analysis of information drawn from previously collected national data on prison staff and site visits to nine prisons in four state departments of corrections. The study focused on both the prisons' current employees and their recently departed employees as valuable sources of information about how the work environment might influence employees to leave their jobs or remain. Interviews with current prison employees were conducted and, at a later point in time, former employees from those same prisons were interviewed by telephone. The perceptions of these two groups might differ considerably, but both, it was felt, would be honestly expressing their perceptions of the workplace. Perceptions are the grounds on which individuals frequently base important life and organizational decisions. Thoroughly understanding those perceptions, it was thought, could lead to the development of more realistic staff retention strategies, or, as it turned out, could be used to help develop ways that prison administrators might better address the concerns of staff and improve the prison as a workplace.

> *Data Sources:*
> - *National Data*
> - *Former/current employee interviews*
> - *Administrator interviews*

> *The interviews were used to determine the perceptions of current and former staff regarding employment in corrections.*

Interviews with central office administrators from those same four departments of corrections and administrators from the nine prisons were also conducted. Information about department-level and institution-level staff-related policies and programs was also collected and studied.

Listed below are the departments of corrections and the nine prisons that participated in the study.

Connecticut Department of Correction
      Connecticut Correctional Institution - Somers
      Carl Robinson Correctional Institution

South Carolina Department of Corrections
      Broad River Correctional Institution
      Cross Anchor Correctional Institution
      Dutchman Correctional Institution

Indiana Department of Corrections
      Indiana State Reformatory
      Indiana State Farm

Kansas Department of Corrections
      Topeka Correctional Facility
      Lansing Correctional Facility

Framework for the Analysis

Staff Turnover Rates Used In This Study:

The number of employees who departed during the year prior to the study

divided by

The number of employees working at the institution just prior to the site visit

A staff turnover rate was calculated for each prison studied, based on information collected from each of the departments of corrections. The number of employees who departed during the prior year from each prison under study was determined and compared to the number of employees working at that prison just prior to the site visit. That relationship, expressed as a percentage, was used as the staff turnover rate for each prison.

Meeting the Project Objectives

Within the two original project goals, five major objectives were formulated to guide the study: (1) to determine turnover rates and the variation among them for various institution types and employee categories, (2) to determine factors involved in staff terminations, (3) to examine current corrections practice for staff retention, (4) to examine successful staff retention programs, and (5) to develop the information into a viable guide for corrections agencies to use to improve their staff retention practices.

For the first objective-to learn how variations in staff turnover rates relate to the characteristics of prison environments and how staff turnover varies among employee groups-it was important to determine more precisely the turnover rates in corrections agencies and at prisons within those agencies.

Staff turnover rates vary between departments of corrections and there is no reason to believe that there are not similar variations between prisons within the same department. Further, the reasons for those variations may be related to characteristics of those prisons' environments-both internal and external. Therefore, understanding the reasons for high staff turnover rates and developing appropriate retention strategies may depend on taking into consideration different prisons' unique characteristics, as well as the individual concerns of employees.

Agencies and the prisons within them are unique; staff retention initiatives must address that uniqueness.

The following steps were taken. First, the staff turnover rates for the 50 state departments of corrections, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons during 1989, 1990, and 1991 were collected based on agency reporting methods. Additionally, agency-by-agency information with regard to the number of employees, hirings, and departures was gathered, along with data concerning the gender and ethnic composition of the corrections workforce. The results of this data collection effort are presented in Chapter IV, "Putting Together a Staff Information System."

Staff turnover rates were collected for the states, the District of Columbia, and the federal system to provide a national picture.

Second, through a screening instrument sent to each agency, each of the 52 departments of corrections was asked to identify four prisons within their departments that they thought had (1) the highest staff

turnover rate, (2) the lowest staff turnover rate, (3) the most dramatic change from a low to high turnover rate, and (4) the most dramatic change from a high to low turnover rate.

That information was used to select the nine prisons within the four departments of corrections for analysis of factors leading to employee departure and for programs that increase staff retention. During the process of analyzing the responses from the departments of corrections, it became apparent that corrections agencies defined staff turnover in different ways and that frequently employees who transferred to another prison were being counted as employees who had left the employ of the department of corrections. As a result of the use of different definitions, prisons that had been reported to have high staff turnover rates often were found to have low turnover rates. As a result, the number of prisons with high turnover rates was not as great as originally anticipated.

The institutions that were eventually selected were a representative sample of prisons that exhibited a range of turnover rates, were located in diverse areas of the country, and appeared to have characteristics not unlike the vast majority of prisons throughout the country.

For the second objective-to determinefactors involved in staff termination from corrections-site visits to the chosen prisons were arranged. Prior to the field visits to each prison and the central office of the department of corrections, interview questionnaires were prepared for use with line staff and prison and central office administrators. In addition, information on the characteristics of all staff who left the employ of the prison during the prior year was collected. From those lists, representative samples of current and former employees were chosen for interviews. The sample of employees was weighted to ensure that sufficient numbers of female and minority employees were selected and that corrections officers, since they compose the largest group of employees, were well represented.

Two to three days were spent at each prison by one, two, or three members of the study team. In addition, another one to two days were devoted to interviewing administrators and collecting information at the central office. At each central office, the head of the agency, a senior deputy, and the director of the personnel office were inter-

viewed. Within each of the nine prisons, the warden, the personnel director, and an operations deputy were interviewed, as were from 12 to 15 current employees.

At each prison, information was collected with regard to staffing issues. Some information was gathered prior to the site visit and more was collected onsite. A list of current and former employees was requested by letter prior to the visit. Those lists were received prior to each site visit and were used to develop a profile of each group of employees and to select employees and former employees to be interviewed. Those lists usually contained information on the number of employees departing, type of departure, job classification or position title, gender, and date of birth. Questions concerning data in those reports were answered by telephone or during the prison site visits and interviews. From this information, staff turnover rates for all employees were calculated, as were turnover rates based on gender, minority status, uniformed, and non-uniformed staff.

> *Employee Information Collected:*
>
> - *Date of birth*
> - *Date of hire*
> - *Gender*
> - *Ethnicity/race*
> - *Job classification and/or title*
> - *Date of separation (for departed employees)*

At the onset of the study, plans had been made to determine the staff turnover rates over each of the five preceding years and relate those rates to significant events that occurred in the institutions during that time period. Unfortunately, this portion of the analysis could not be completed because the turnover rates could not be calculated. Records were either not maintained or could not be generated that would identify the number of employees who departed during those preceding years. The intent had been to determine what, if any, relationship might exist between unusual institutional events and abrupt changes in turnover rates.

> *Turnover information for the five preceding years was not available from most of the institutions.*

While this relationship was not assessed in prior years, it was assessed with regard to the expressed concerns of current and former employees. Particular attention was paid to events in which staff had been victimized and how such events might have influenced staff to depart. Unusual or significant institutional events were identified through interviews with senior institutional staff and review of prison reports, but could not be related to changes in the rate at which staff left the employ of the prison.

> *No relationship could be determined between unusual or significant institutional incidents and the rate at which staff left the departments or facilities.*

From information provided by each of the four departments of corrections, a profile of the characteristics of the current employees in each of the nine prisons was developed. This profile was used for comparison with the characteristics of the employees who departed each of the same prisons.

Through the interviews with current and former employees, as well as through information gathered from interviews with prison personnel officers, some of the factors that influence staff to terminate their employment were ascertained. Those results are presented in Chapter IV, "Putting Together a Staff Information System."

*The subjects raised **during** the interviews with staff were also analyzed.*

For the third and fourth objectives-to examine current corrections practices for staff retention and to examine successful staff retention programs-the issues raised during the interviews with management personnel and line staff were analyzed. During those interviews, the initiatives taken by the various institutions and agencies were discussed. Chapter II, "The Importance of a Clear Philosophy and Mission," and Chapter VI, "Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies," discuss those initiatives and their success, as perceived by managers and staff.

This document is laid out like a manual to help agency personnel develop unique methods of addressing staff issues.

The fifth objective-developing the information into a viable guide for corrections agencies' use in improving their staff retention practices-is reflected in the overall layout and composition of this report. The report highlights the findings of the study, as well as reinforces the key points of the discussions, to help agency personnel develop and implement programs designed to improve the job environment for corrections workers. A satisfied workforce manifests not only lower turnover, but better quality work.

National Perspective

To add to our understanding of staff turnover in the nine prisons that were studied, it is worth examining corrections staffing on a national basis and placing the rates of turnover found in the four prison systems under study in context with the rate of turnover in prison systems across the country. Some historical perspective is helpful in this regard.

More people are confined in state and federal prisons than at any time in the past. As of January 1, 1993, there were 824,901 inmates, an increase of 6.3 percent over the prior year. [1] The number of inmates has increased by 48.7 percent over the last five years and by 108 percent over the past ten years. Figure 1 shows the number of inmates on January 1 from 1983 through 1993 and depicts graphically the increase over the same period of time.

> *There has been a 48.7 percent increase in the number of inmates in confinement in state and federal prisons over the past five years.*

Our task is not to attempt to explain why the number of inmates and incarceration rates have increased, but rather to note the effect that these sustained increases have had. For example, to accommodate the larger number of inmates, the capacity of prison systems has increased remarkably. From 1982 through 1992, 497 new prisons were opened and the capacities of 1,051 other prisons were raised by creating additional bed space.

> *Between 1982 and 1992:*
> - *497 new prisons were constructed.*
> - *1,051 other prisons increased their capacities.*

Figure 1. Prisoners in State and Federal Prisons on January 1
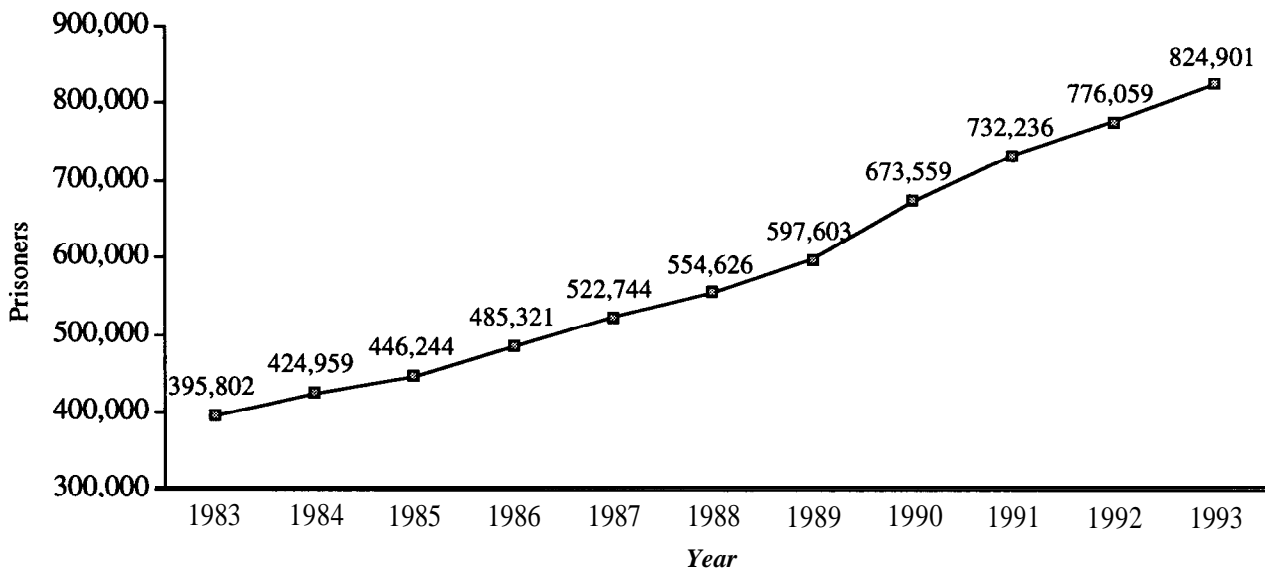
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Yearbook: Adult Prisons, 1989-1992: South Salem, New York.

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[1] George M. and Camille G. Camp, Editors. 'The Newsletter" Volume VII, January/February, 1993, Association of State Correctional Administrators: South Salem, New York.

There has been a 34.5 percent increase in the number of corrections employees over the past jive years.

A further consequence of the increase in inmates and prisons has been that more employees are required to run the prisons and manage the prisoners. In 1988 234,961 people were employed in state and federal corrections agencies. By 1993, there were 320,772 employees, an increase of 85,811 (36.5%) in five years. The total number of staff employed on January 1 of each year and the percentage increase over the preceding year are presented in Figure 2. As can be seen, the rate of increase has slowed in recent years. Between 1988 and 1989, the rate of increase in staff was 8.2 percent, while between 1992 and 1993 it was 3.2 percent.

Yearly increases in the total number of staff employed have slowed.

Figure 2. Total Staff Employed on January 1
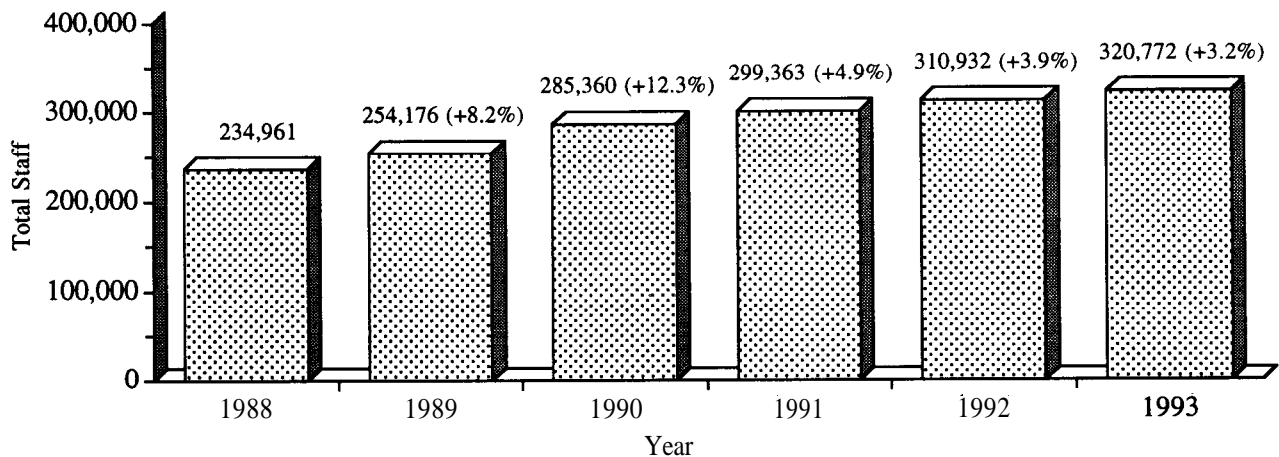
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. <u>The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons,</u> 1989-1992: South Salem, New York.

The increase in the number of uniformed staff between 1988 and 1989 was almost 18 times greater than the increase between 1991 and 1992.

The number of employees who are part of the uniformed supervisory and non-supervisory corrections workforce, which includes corrections officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and majors, also increased over the same period of time. In 1988 there were 133,578 uniformed staff, but by 1993 there were 186,510, an increase of 52,932 (39.6%). Figure 3 presents and depicts the number of staff each year and the percent change in those numbers from 1988 to 1993. Even more dramatic than the annual reduction in the rate of increase in total employees is the reduction in the rate of increase of uniformed staff.

Between 1991 and 1992, the total number of uniformed staff increased by only 667. Three years earlier, from 1988 to 1989, the increase was 11,834 (8.9%), nearly 18 times greater.

Figure 3. Uniformed Staff Employed on January 1
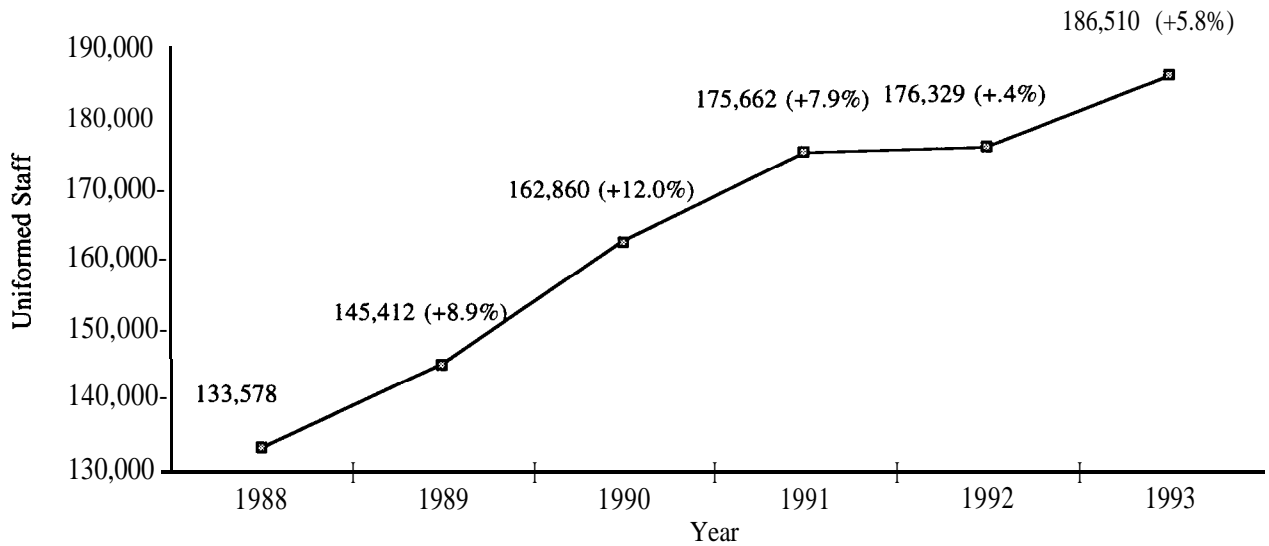
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons, 1989-1992: South Salem, New York.

A similar pattern emerges from an examination of the change in the number of line corrections officers. On January 1, 1990, there were 143,845 line corrections officers employed. One year later, on January 1, 1991, there were 153,248 line corrections officers, an increase of 9,403 (6.5%). However, on January 1, 1992, there were 153,452, an increase of only 248 line corrections staff over the preceding year. In just one year, the rate of increase dropped from 6.5 percent to virtually no increase, while the number of inmates increased by 43,823. In 1993, the number of line corrections officers increased to 161,363 (5.2%), however, the number of inmates increased 6.3 percent to 824,901.

The number of inmates is increasing at a much greater rate than the number of corrections staff.

Staff Hired

The rate of increase in the total number of staff employed is affected by the number of staff hired each year, as well as departures each year. Figure 4 presents the hiring data and the annual percentage increases from 1988 to 1992.

Figure 4. Corrections Officers Hired Annually
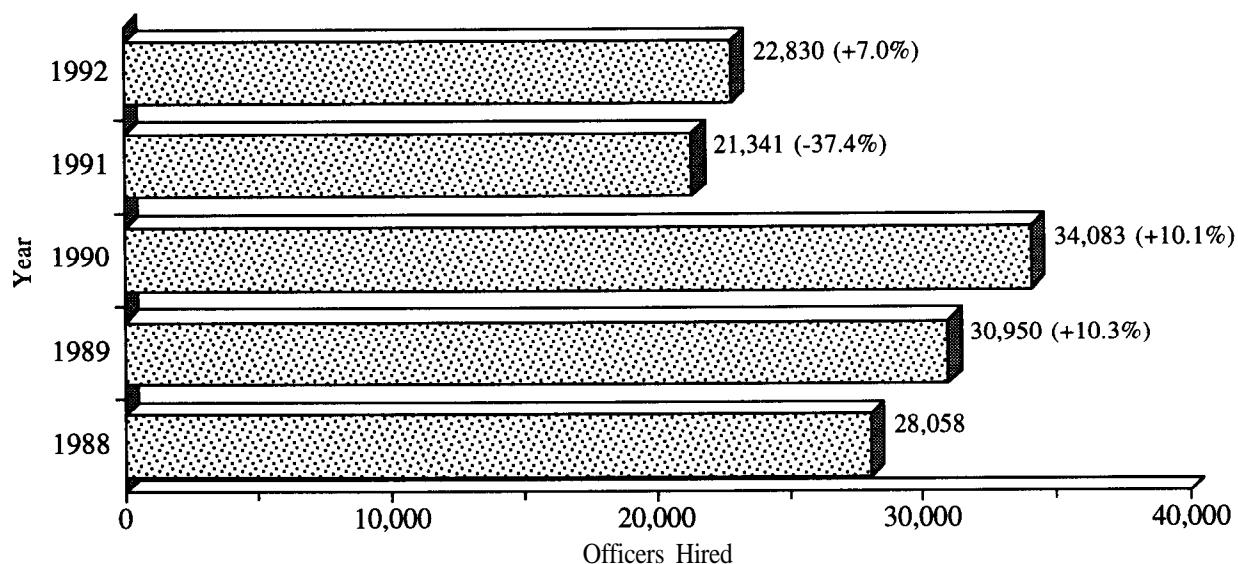
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult prisons, 1989-1992: South Salem, New York.

The number of corrections officers hired annually decreased by 18.6 percent between 1988 and 1992.

Over that period of time, the number of corrections officers hired each year increased between 1988 and 1989 and between 1989 and 1990, and then declined markedly in 1991. The number of corrections officers hired in 1988 was 28,058, and peaked in 1990 at 34,083, but fell to 21,341 in 1991, a decline of 12,742 (37.4% decrease) which brought the level of hiring below that during each of the three preceding years. Hiring of corrections officers in 1992 totalled 22,830, a 7.0 percent increase, but a level still below many preceding years.

A similar pattern is found with regard to the total number of all staff hired annually by state and federal corrections agencies. A total of 49,941 staff were hired in 1989. That number increased to 58,888 (6.4% increase) in 1990, and then declined to 37,577 (36.2% decrease) during 1991. Again, in 1992, there was a slight increase (8.5%) in all staff hired, to a total of 40,775.

Effects of Growth

The number of state and federal inmates has increased each year for several decades. As a consequence, more prisons have been con-

strutted, more staff have been hired to operate them, and more staff work in corrections agencies than at any time in the past. Staff who were assigned to work in the new and expanded facilities came from two sources. Some were hired to work in these new facilities, while others were transferred from older facilities and the newly hired staff replaced them there. The end result was that the movement of staff between corrections institutions began to more closely resemble the movement of inmates between institutions. As we shall see, this movement of staff between facilities and the appearance of newly hired staff in older facilities was frequently referred to as staff turnover, as opposed to an acceleration of movement of staff within the corrections agency.

> *Staff moving between facilities in an agency were frequently included in agency* **turnover** *calculations.*

> *Newly hired staff tended to end up in older institutions, while experienced staff generally were on hand in the newer facilities.*

Staff Departures

The total number of staff who leave the employ of state and federal corrections agencies each year was estimated, based on available data. Figure 5 presents the currently available information.

Figure 5. Total Staff Departures Annually
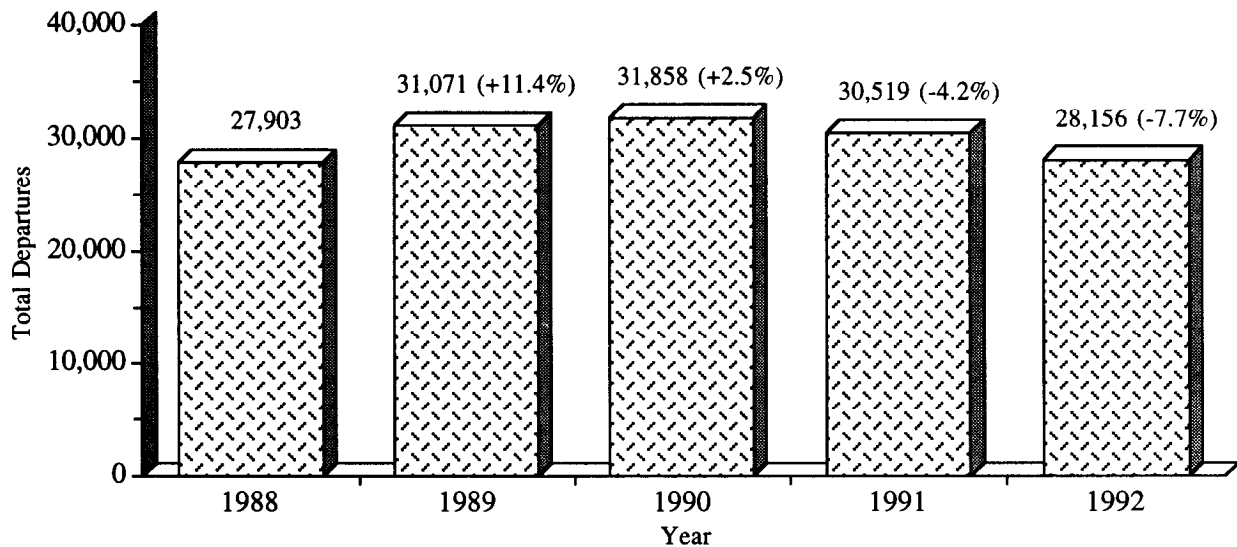
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons, 1989-1992: South Salem, New York.

The information that is available on an annual basis for 1988 through 1992 shows a range of departures, from a low of 27,903 in 1988 to a high of 31,858 in 1990. Between 1988 and 1989 the number of departures increased by 11.4 percent. In each of the next two years, a different picture is observed. Between 1989 and 1990 the number of departures increased by just 2.5 percent. In the following year departures declined by 4.2 percent, and further declined by 7.7 percent in 1992.

Corrections Officer Departures

Corrections officers represent approximately 50 percent of all agency departures annually. During each of the last four years for which departure numbers are available, the number of corrections officer departures declined, as depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Corrections Officer Departures Annually
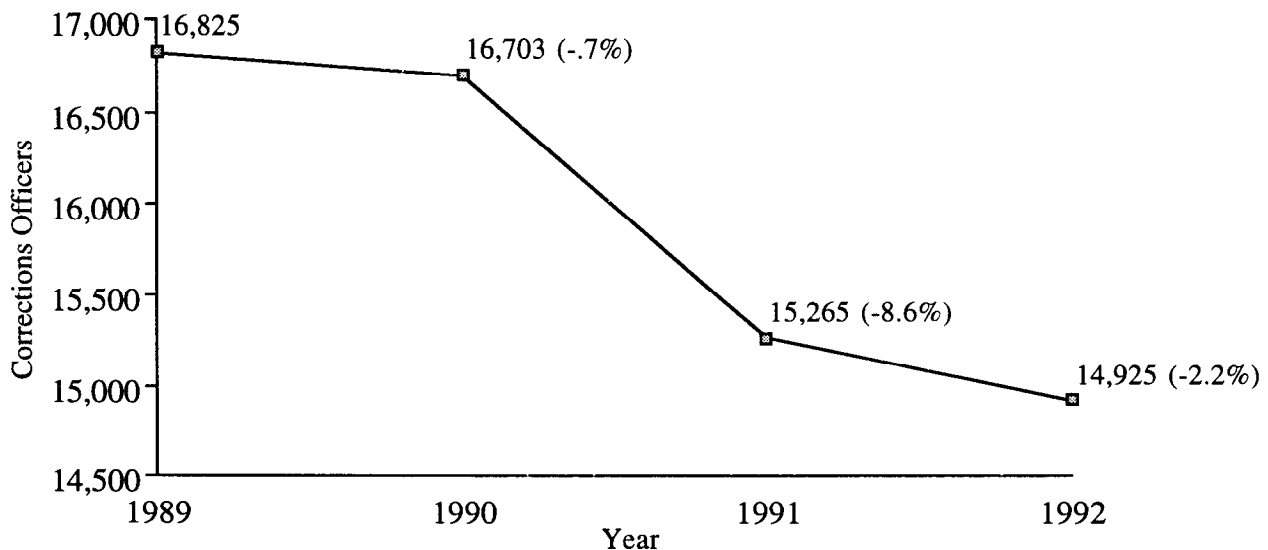
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons, 1990-1993: South Salem, New York.

During 1989, 16,825 corrections officers left the employ of their agencies. That number declined slightly in 1990 to 16,703 (0.7% decrease). In the following year corrections officer departures declined to 15,265 (8.6% decrease), and further to 14,925 (2.2% decrease) in 1992.

Resignations and Retirements

The number of employees who resign annually from corrections agencies far exceeds the number who retire. In the three years for which information was available, the number of resignations was approximately 5.2 times greater than the number of retirements. Figure 7 presents the average number of staff who resigned or retired from corrections agencies during 1990 through 1992.

Types of Agency Staff Departures During 1992:

- *50% resignations*
- *12% retirements*
- *38% other types (e.g. disability, dismissal, death)*

Figure 7. Average Number of Resignations and Retirements per Department of Corrections
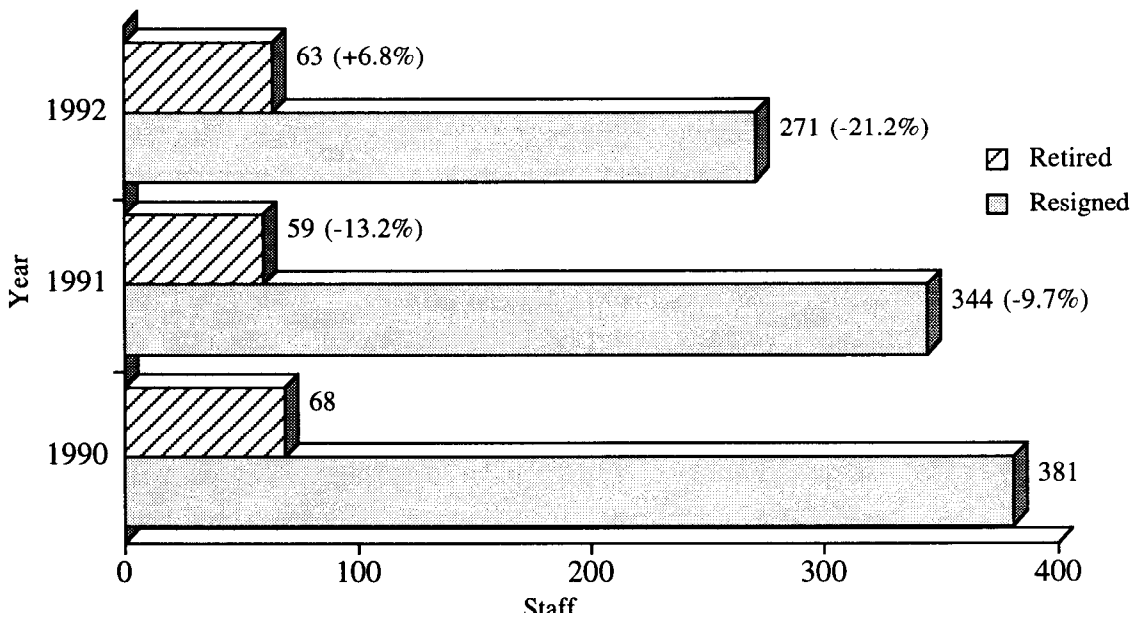
Source: Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons, 1990-1993: South Salem, New York.

Both the number of resignations and the number of retirements fell between 1990 and 1991 in the average corrections agency. Resignations declined by 9.7 percent, while retirements decreased by 13.2 percent. During 1992, resignations declined further by 21.2 percent in the average corrections agency, but retirements increased slightly (6.8%). During 1990, in the average corrections agency, 381 employees resigned (approximately 62% of all departures), while 68 retired (approximately 11% of all departures). In 1991, 344 resigned (approximately 59%) and 59 retired (approximately 10%). In 1992, 271 resigned (approximately 50%) and 63 retired (approximately 12%).

Turnover Rates

Uniformed staff turnover rates reported by corrections agencies for 1989,1990,1991, and 1992 produced an average agency rate of 15.0 percent, 14.7 percent, 10.6 percent, and 11.6 percent respectively. The more recent decline is consistent with the previously reported reduction in the number of staff leaving the employ of corrections agencies in recent years. While the average rates are informative, they only reveal part of the picture. As seen from the reported rates in Table 1, in which the individual corrections agency rates are listed by jurisdiction for each of the four years, a wide range of rates is apparent. Rates are as low as 1 percent and as high as 51 percent.

Variations in agencies' definitions of "turnover" affect the reporting of turnover rates.

The variation in reported turnover rates between corrections agencies may be due in part to how the agency defined staff turnover. During the course of the work on this project it became evident that corrections agencies defined staff turnover in different ways. In many instances, corrections agencies included in their agency turnover rates staff who were transferred between corrections facilities.

Administrators saw reallocation of agency staff as staff turnover.

As a consequence, in those agencies, the reported turnover rate exceeded the rate at which employees were leaving the agency. To what degree these differences influenced the level of concern expressed by prison administrators at the NIC advisory board hearing is difficult to determine. However, it can be concluded that what had been defined as a loss of corrections agency staff to other public agencies or private firms was more likely to be a reallocation of staff within the corrections agency. To many wardens and other prison administrators, the consequence of the loss may be the same-the need to recruit, hire, train more staff. However, the reasons for the movement in staff-transfer and/or promotion, as opposed to resignation or dismissal-suggest different strategies on the part of corrections administrators for addressing the problem.

The fact that staff turnover means different things to different prison administrators was reinforced in another way during the course of the study. As part of the process of selecting prisons for study, each corrections agency was asked to identify specific prisons within its agency that exhibited different levels of staff turnover. Based on the information gathered from that screening survey, prisons with high turnover and low turnover rates were to be selected for in-depth study

Table 1. Agency Turnover Rates

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Alabama		9.0%		10.4%
Alaska			1.5%	4.0%
Arizona	20.0%	14.0%	18.0%	20.0%
Arkansas	22.0%	24.0%	22.0%	22.0%
California				5.4%
Colorado	5.6%	4.5%	12.2%	14.5%
Connecticut	13.5%	32.0%	8.5%	10.0%
Delaware			6.5%	4.2%
Dist. of Col.	9.6%	6.2%	6.3%	2.6%
Florida	16.1%	7.9%	6.8%	7.8%
Georgia	20.0%	20.0%		20.0%
Hawaii	15.0%	11.5%	8.0%	6.0%
Idaho	13.1%	12.9%	14.4%	10.5%
Illinois	7.9%	8.5%	5.7%	*7.0%*
Indiana	26.0%	20.0%		
Iowa	14.8%	7.0%	7.4%	8.5%
Kansas	16.9%	14.0%	14.0%	17.0%
Kentucky		7.0%	5.1%	51.0%
Louisiana	36.0%	26.0%	25.1%	21.0%
Maine	17.0%	10.0%	8.0%	10.8%
Maryland	13.8%	13.8%	12.0%	10.0%
Massachusetts		35.0%	9.0%	
Michigan	9.5%	5.0%	3.0%	8.7%
Minnesota	11.0%	9.0%	6.1%	9.6%
Mississippi		18.3%	13.6%	18.3%
Missouri	9.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%
Montana	16.0%	31.0%	12.2%	
Nebraska	20.9%	18.0%	17.8%	16.3%
Nevada	18.6%		9.1%	12.5%
New Hampshire	17.0%	14.5%	5.0%	10.7%
New Jersey	15.0%	9.8%	8.5%	
New Mexico		27.0%	12.1%	11.6%
New York	2.4%	7.5%	2.5%	2.4%
North Carolina	10.8%	9.8%	7.3%	
North Dakota	6.0%	6.0%	3.0%	5.0%
Ohio	14.0%	13.8%	13.8%	10.9%
Oklahoma	11.5%	10.5%	8.0%	8.0%
Oregon	9.7%	10.5%	8.9%	6.0%
Pennsylvania			5.4%	3.5%
Rhode Island		14.0%	13.0%	5.0%
South Carolina	24.5%	26.0%	24.0%	19.1%
South Dakota	23.0%	19.4%	6.0%	
Tennessee	22.6%	22.4%	21.3%	14.1%
Texas	12.0%	13.0%	19.2%	8.4%
Utah	5.0%	5.0%		
Vermont		3.5%	1.0%	1.0%
Virginia	15.9%	14.8%		13.3%
Washington	14.3%	21.5%	7.0%	11.0%
West Virginia	20.0%	20.0%	15.0%	8.0%
Wisconsin	11.0%	11.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Wyoming	18.0%	24.5%	27.3%	29.0%
Federal System	10.4%	9.4%	7.5%	5.6%
Average	**15.0%**	**14.7%**	**10.6%**	**11.6%**

> *Overall agency turnover rates declined between 1989 and 1992.*

for the purpose of determining what factors contribute to high and/or low turnover rates and what those prisons found to be successful in reducing staff turnover.

As expected, the responses revealed prisons within the same agency with widely differing staff turnover rates. On first inspection, these results led to an initial conclusion that within the same corrections agency, individual prison practices and characteristics played a significant role in staff leaving the employ of some prisons and not others. Further study led to a different conclusion. Two factors quickly became evident. First, by design, some corrections agencies assigned newly hired staff to only one or a few of their many institutions. This increased staff movement into and out of those particular prisons at a rate greater than those of the remaining prisons within the agency. This agency policy/practice may have been implemented for any number of reasons, but resulted in a process of rapid movement of staff through those facilities and into others. Second, frequently the order in which staff were transferred to other prisons was based on their length of service-that is, their seniority. In addition, in other instances, the staff vacancies that existed were located in prisons at considerable distance from the residences of the staff who had been recruited to fill those vacancies. Staff members transferred from these facilities to ones closer to their homes as soon as vacancies occurred for which they were either qualified or eligible, again usually on a seniority basis.

The picture that began to emerge was that most corrections agencies were not experiencing a significant loss of employees, but many were experiencing a marked increase in the movement of staff between institutions within the agency, particularly as a result of opening new facilities. How that movement was interpreted and reported by corrections agencies in large part helped to define whether or not a staff turnover problem existed. More often than not, facilities counted the employees who transferred to other prisons within the agency as part of their "departed" employees, and therefore included them in the numbers utilized to determine agency turnover. Thus, while the turnover of staff at selected prisons was higher than in many other prisons in the department, it was a result of the application of a specific staff assignment policy. Further, the departure of staff from one institution did not usually mean that the employees were leaving the

employ of the department. While there was movement of staff into and out of the prison, they were not leaving the department at anywhere near the rate that was thought.

Organization of the Report

This report is divided into nine major sections. This chapter presents a discussion of the nature and content of the report, along with a description of how the study was conducted, and notes the reason(s) for conducting the study. It also presents some nationwide background information on the corrections workforce and places the current study in perspective. Chapter II, "The Importance of a Clear Philosophy and Mission," begins the manual with a discussion of the importance of a philosophy to a corrections agency, as it is enumerated in a mission statement and the goals that support the mission.

CHAPTER II:

The Importance of a Clear Philosophy and Mission

Chapter III, "Management's Responsibilities," examines the importance of management to a successful agency, including the attitudes of management and the communication of those attitudes to staff, the different types of management personnel, and the actual role of a manager. That discussion is put into perspective by an examination of the findings of a study of management staff in the targeted institutions, which administrators can use as a basis for comparison.

CHAPTER III:

Management's Responsibilities for Staff Retention

Chapter IV, "Putting Together a Staff Information System," traces the study's collection of data describing the staff in the four target agencies. It presents the mechanics of the data analysis in a manner that allows administrators to adapt the methods to their own particular agencies. The chapter includes methods of data collection and analysis, and provides guidance regarding the types of data to gather in order to create a staff information system.

CHAPTER IV:

Purring Together a Staff Information System

Chapter V, "Using Your Staff Information System," is a presentation of the analysis of the data that were collected for the study. It draws conclusions based on the characteristics of current and former agency staff, as well as the issues and concerns they bring to work from outside the agency and home from work from within the agency.

CHAPTER V:

Using Your Staff Information System

Chapter VI, "Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies," surveys some "tried-and-true" tenets and approaches toward successful staff management, and integrates the conclusions drawn from the findings with recommendations to corrections practitioners for shaping an overall personnel management approach. It describes actual programs and practices of corrections agencies as they relate to staff issues and concerns, and contains the opinions and perceptions of managers and line staff alike concerning those practices.

Chapter VII, "Self-Assessment for Administrators," summarizes the main findings of the study through a series of self-assessment questions for managers. Analysis of possible answers provides administrators with insights into their approaches to staff management.

It is hoped that the findings will lead to greater understanding of employee needs and concerns and that application of the recommendations will result in a work environment that generates and supports a productive workforce.

Chapter II
The Importance of a Clear
Philosophy and Mission

What's All the Fuss About a Mission Statement?

A mission statement is more than just an idealistic statement on a piece of paper. Outlining exactly what the organization aims to accomplish gives value to the work of the agency's employees, and therefore makes them feel like an important and necessary part of the agency. What this means to the overall issue of staff retention is that employees are more likely to stay with and work hard for an agency that they understand, believe in, and feel a part of. Staff members internalize the organization's philosophy, which in turn aids them in understanding the organization as a whole. Allegiance and loyalty are fostered by understanding.

> *Staff are more likely to remain with an organization that they feel a part of. A mission statement helps employees to feel part of the organization.*

Substance of a Mission Statement

Corrections departments are the agencies within county, state, or federal governments that are charged with the detention and/or incarceration of individuals accused and/or convicted of breaking laws. Each corrections agency's existence is set forth by a legal mandate promulgated by the governmental unit that it serves. The mandate contains the agency's legal authorization for existence and its purpose, as well as the basis for its overall operational philosophy.

All employees of corrections agencies are responsible for ensuring that the legal responsibilities of the agency are met. Each employee does his or her part in working toward the purpose of the agency and doing so under its guiding philosophy. Therefore, all staff members must know exactly what the agency mission is, as well as how to go about incorporating it into their daily activities.

A mission statement is a restatement of the legal mandate and contains the agency's reason for existence, purpose, and philosophy. It serves to shape the agency's future by providing guidance for operations and planning.

While most agencies have at least an idea of the purpose of their operations, many may find it difficult to adhere to their main missions because of the complications of day-to-day operations. Such complications can include tugs-of-war between officials wielding power over or within the agency (such as those handling budgets), increasing populations, or natural disasters like hurricanes and flooding.

Changes to an agency's mission statement can be made to reflect the effect of such pressures or complications on the agency's functioning. In times of budget reductions, the mission statement can be amended to include the concept of cost-efficiency in departmental operations. Responses to crowding pressures can be incorporated into the agency's philosophy. The statement must be responsive to changes in the agency's role as well as changes in its operational priorities. However, the statement must also be strong enough to support the goals, objectives, policies, and procedures that will arise from it and ensure adherence to it.

The construction of a unified statement of an agency's purpose serves to guide its future by setting forth the framework for its operation. Without a purpose, there is no direction for the agency and no real commitment to the agency by its staff. Without a purpose, the necessary level of effective functioning within the agency is not likely to occur. When an agency is disorganized, so is its staff; since people tend to desire organization, staff in an agency without a clearly defined mission will tend to feel less a part of the agency and more "on their own." Without commitment to the agency, employees are more likely to leave.

Supporting a Mission Statement with Goals

Once an agency's mission has been delineated, goals for achievement must be set. The existence of a mission statement ensures that the broad purpose and principles of the agency are expressed. However, in order to achieve that purpose according to those principles, a more detailed course of action is required. Goals provide the agency with a list of specific desired outcomes of its operations. They provide the framework for organizing everyday functioning that will uphold the agency's mission.

Measuring Progress with Objectives

Goals, while relatively easy to formulate, are difficult to conceptualize without some method of measurement. Objectives, formulated to accompany the goals, define the milestones involved in reaching the goals. While the words "goals" and "objectives" are nearly synonymous, they are used here to delineate the difference between the ends that the agency is striving to achieve and the measurable steps toward reaching those ends.

> **Objectives**
> *are the measurable milestones on the path to achieving goals.*

Carrying Out the Mission Every Day with Policy and Procedure

Goals and objectives are operationalized into policy and procedure. Policies are agency directives designed to determine decisions, actions, and other matters as they arise during daily operations. Policy statements are based on the agency's overall mission and goals and include any specific standards for operations that have been adopted by the agency. As with missions and goals, policy statements must be supported by the actual measurable steps involved in carrying them out. Once a policy is developed, procedures for its actual operation must be developed and implemented. Procedures provide standardized methods for carrying out a particular policy in order to ensure that the agency's objectives, goals, and overall mission are supported in day-to-day operations.

> **Policies**
> *state the agency's position on all aspects of daily operations.*
>
> **Procedures**
> *prescribe the methods for carrying out a particular policy.*

Direct Effects of Mission Statements, Goals, Objectives, Policy, and Procedure on Staff Satisfaction and Retention

Between the legal mandate and its influence on the daily operations of a corrections agency lie several steps, including the formulation of a mission statement, goals, and objectives to ensure its continued influence, and the development of policies and procedures that reveal its relation to the elements of day-to-day functioning. However, not all agencies have such a linear system for mission dissemination. Some may have missions, but may have been diverted from them. Others have mission statements, goals, objectives, and policy and procedure, but staff may not be familiar with them, or they may be so archaic as to no longer reflect the agency's direction.
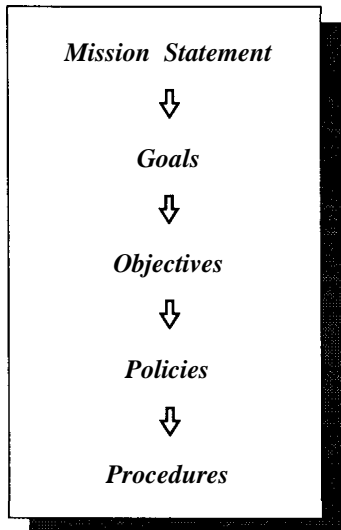
Like any group of individuals working toward a common purpose, a corrections agency's staff will function more effectively under the guidance of a clear mission and goals formulated to assist in the continuing work toward that mission. On an individual basis, understanding what the mission is and how to achieve it gives staff at all levels guidance for performing their various duties. On a unit basis within the agency, a clear mission helps the unit to function in the manner that best serves the agency's stated philosophy and goals.

Policies and procedures, formulated to translate the agency's mission and goals into day-to-day operations, are the most tangible means of communicating to all employees the purpose of their daily contribution to the agency. Comprehensive policies and procedures make each staff member's job relevant to the overall functioning of the agency. When policies and procedures are used daily by employees and are coupled with familiarity with the agency's overall mission and goals, each staff member can see where his or her individual functioning within the agency fits into the "big picture."

With a mission, goals, objectives, and policies and procedures, the agency benefits through its employees' and divisions' efforts, which serve to advance the agency's stated purpose. However, it is not only the agency that benefits, but also the individual employees. Having measurable goals toward which to strive is a positive force within a work environment, in that individual and unified effort toward that goal are satisfying.

Making Sure the Mission Is Known

Methods for Communicating a Mission Statement and Goals

- *Pre-Service Training*
- *In-Service Training*
- *Bulletin Boards*
- *Postings*
- *Newsletters*

Just as important to employees as the substance of the mission and goals statement may be the simple concept of having a purpose. Addressing each staff member as being responsible for continued progress toward goals may be as important to them as the goals themselves. The symbolic gesture of placing trust and responsibility for the agency's success into the hands of staff may mean as much to them and foster as much commitment as the words of the mission and goals statement. Giving the agency a purpose and communicating to staff that they are crucial to that purpose is the bottom line.

In order to work toward goals, however, staff must know and believe in the mission and goals of their agency. Familiarity with policy and procedure, at the baseline level, helps employees see the direction in which they should be heading and exactly how to accomplish tasks in their own particular assignments. When each individual across the agency accomplishes this understanding, the entire workforce becomes committed to assisting the agency as an entity with adherence to its mission.

Internalization of and subsequent commitment to the mission is impossible if employees are not aware of it. While they may have more contact with policy and procedure, which serves to advance the mission's essential concepts, the overall picture must also be familiar to employees. Many agencies are now printing their mission statements and goals in their employee newsletters. Others require them to be posted all over each institution as a daily reminder to staff of the agency's, and their own, ultimate purpose.

Employees should be exposed to the agency mission on a constant basis, beginning in pre-service training and extending to job assignments and in-service training. Unity of purpose (the advancement of the agency's mission) is achieved when each individual can see the global picture as well as their individual parts in it. With unity of purpose comes commitment to the adopted ideals and effort toward upholding them.

Changing with the Times

Another element crucial to the continued success of an agency in operating under its mission and moving toward its goals is flexibility. Sudden external pressures may be brought to bear upon an agency; other forces that act upon it evolve gradually. In either case, the mission and the agency itself must sometimes reflect those forces; its goals, objectives, policy, and procedure will also reflect the change. Authenticity and applicability are important to an individual being asked to internalize a philosophy.

Incorporating the changes brought to bear by outside forces into a mission statement is a process that should include staff from all areas.

A mission statement gives the agency and its staff a direction.

⬇

Organization occurs when there is a common direction.

⬇

Each individual sees his or her place in the organization.

⬇

Each individual realizes that he or she is important to the overall success of the agency.

⬇

The work of each individual becomes important to the whole.

⬇

Each employee becomes invested in the success of the agency in carrying out its mission.

⬇

Employees realize that their own work is special and important.

⬇

Employees' self-worth is reinforced.

⬇

Employees are satisfied with their jobs and the agency.

⬇

Employees remain with the jobs and agency with which they are satisfied.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│    Forces That Change       │
│     Agency Mission          │
│   Statements and Goals      │
│                             │
│                             │
│        Changes in           │
│      political climate      │
│              │              │
│  Lawsuits,   │              │
│  settlements,│              │
│  or other    │              │
│  judicial    │   Public     │
│  findings    │   opinion    │
│         ◁   ▽   ▷           │
│                             │
│         Mission             │
│        statement            │
│        and goals            │
│       ◁    △    ▷           │
│      /     │     \          │
│           State or          │
│  Budget   federal           │
│  surpluses legislation      │
│  or shortfalls              │
│              │              │
│    Gradual or sudden        │
│    shifts in size or        │
│   characteristics of        │
│   inmate population         │
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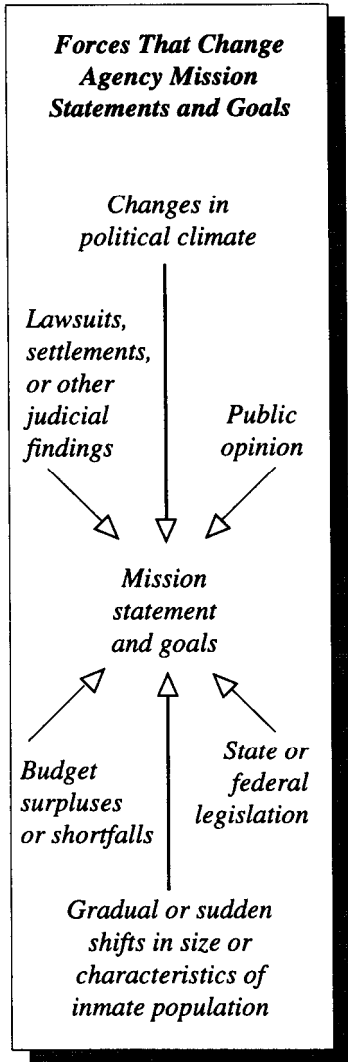
Accepted practice involves an annual review of policy and procedure, the baseline level of mission adherence. Feedback by staff regarding the viability of policy and procedure is essential to its successful implementation. If employees feel that they have had input into the guidelines that shape their daily activities, they are far more likely to accept those guidelines. The concept of participatory management (detailed in Chapter VI, "Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies") is particularly well suited to the development, review, and revision of mission statements, goals, objectives, policies, and procedures.

Chapter III
Management's Responsibilities for Staff Retention

At the start of this study, and even during the study, corrections managers expressed their feeling that line corrections staff were leaving agencies in great droves. However, as the study progressed, it was discovered that this was not necessarily the case. While managers are correct in being concerned about employee turnover, it did not appear to be occurring at the magnitude described. What was found was that experienced staff were transferring between institutions and that often there existed concentrations of relatively new employees in some institutions, particularly higher-security prisons. These factors and others combined to give the appearance of a mass exodus of staff from corrections careers.

Corrections employees are ***NOT*** *leaving agencies at the rate that corrections managers thought they were.*

This chapter summarizes the results of discussions with management staff in each of the nine institutions and four corrections departments studied. During those interviews, issues such as employee morale, communication, agency policy, pay, and retention initiatives were discussed. By integrating what was learned during the interviews with an overview of corrections management practices, we can outline agency and institutional management's responsibilities in the handling of staff issues.

General Findings

While managers in states surveyed for this study perceive a problem with staff retention, their opinions on its causes differ. Historically, turnover among corrections personnel was credited to unavoidable staff burn-out, low pay, and a general unsuitability for the profession. Whatever the influence of these factors, the situation has been exacerbated by several other factors. They include early retirement opportunities for senior staff and rapidly expanding prison bed capacity that results in inter-facility staff transfers. More general stresses are put on personnel who work every day in a rapidly growing system that appears to be chronically short-staffed and under-budgeted. As if this were not enough, the inmate population profile is changing, with the average prison housing younger and more violent inmates.

Historical Reasons for Corrections Separation

- *Burn-out*
- *Low pay*
- *Professional unsuitability*

Managers' opinions and approaches to remedying retention problems also differ somewhat. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and staff recognition/award programs are commonplace. Among management staff, these programs are perceived as helping to boost morale and assist employees in dealing with some of the stress associated with their jobs. Child care, organized recreation, and flexible scheduling are used sporadically in a scattering of institutions and have also been implemented on a system-wide level. Salary and staffing levels are recognized by agency managers as concerns among staff, but are generally felt to be beyond the control of wardens and directors. Instead, most departments seem to focus on the intangibles-creating an open work environment, empowering corrections employees, and developing a level of professionalism among employees that fosters understanding, advancement, and pride in one' s work.

> *Most agencies have some programs in place that are designed to make and keep employees happy.*

Staff retention is an overall goal that must be facilitated at all levels of corrections agencies. While some needs of line-level staff can be met with programs, awards, and incentives, management staff must also do its part to make the agency a place where employees want to stay. In essence, managers hold the keys to creating such an environment. From commissioners on down the line, managers have the ability to reinforce or undermine the department's mission. Fairness, strength of purpose, respect, and humanity go a long way toward creating loyalty to the agency among line-level employees. Favoritism, weakness, and "kissing up to top brass" destroy it.

> *Management has the responsibility for making the corrections workplace satisfying for the employee.*

Management personnel are central players in the creation and promulgation of the department's ethic and purpose. As a result, their personalities and performance have a major impact on rank and file employees' satisfaction with their jobs and with their desire to either stay with the corrections profession or look for other work. Managers can encourage innovation or they can inhibit it; they can instill pride or they can kill it. Through their functions, managers have the ability to unite the different constituencies within an institution into a cohesive unit. They can also connect institutions with the common goal of making the entire department of corrections work. Where sound management practices are in place, institutions become vital and the workforce loyal. Where poor management is exercised, the workforce is bitter and institutional operations suffer.

> *Managers can create a unified and satisfied agency and institutional workforce by word, example, and practice.*

Corrections institutions present a full range of personalities, political and union affiliations, and views on the purpose of incarceration. It is the job of management to get the different camps to "buy into" a common goal and to work toward that goal. It is management's responsibility to nurture a sense of partnership with staff so that a well-run institution becomes their "product," their responsibility. The more responsibility an employee feels for the agency's success, the greater his/her feeling of importance to the agency and sense of self-esteem.

MANAGERS MUST BUILD *UNITY*
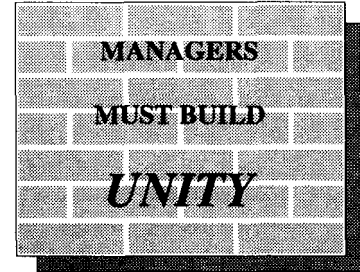
Management's View of Its Role

The methods managers use to foster a cooperative and productive environment vary from person to person. Each administrator subscribes (either formally or informally) to a particular philosophy or style of management. Accordingly, approaches to the actual task of managing the workforce differed among the administrators interviewed. One commissioner, following up on his philosophy of empowerment of the workers, believed that the best approach to managing was to set standards, empower mid- and lower-level managers, and then allow employees to do their jobs. Another agency head took a more hands-on approach. He advocated delegating responsibility and auditing performance as a preferred style. He stated that good managers and employees are not threatened by being held accountable for their performance. Overall, the administrators interviewed generally believed that they should not micro-manage, but should set broad goals and a philosophy for their department. Then, they reasoned, they should let managers manage, supervisors supervise, and workers work.

All four interviewed agency heads endorsed the importance of getting out to the institutions on a regular basis. Three of the four specifically cited weekly tours of at least one institution as a means of personalizing their positions with prison staff. While two of the commissioners characterized their site visits as "inspection tours," all of them reported activities on their tours that would best be described as programs of "managing by walking around" (see Chapter VI, "Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies," for a further description). These directors believed in the importance of being visible to institutional staff. One of the commissioners had expanded this site visit concept to include his deputies as well. The program was called

Managers must listen to employees as they tour institutions.

"Inspection and Listening Tours." It was apparent during the commissioner's description of the program that the listening aspect of the tours was every bit as important as the inspection aspect.

There appeared to be a certain amount of frustration, especially among managers at institutions, about issues that they felt particularly affected staff at their institutions but in which institutions (and in some cases the corrections departments) have no involvement. Budget issues (including salaries, bonuses, and incentives), training, filling vacancies, and the quality of new hires all affect staff morale and facility operations. Budgetary decisions, which have a direct impact on staffing levels, employee incentives, and salaries, tend to be made by politicians. Corrections management staff perceive those politicians as generally satisfied with corrections operations, yet disinterested or apathetic overall.

The Responsibilities of Agency Directors

Agency directors have a special responsibility in managing staff. As the leaders of the departments, they represent to their staff a figure for emulation or blame, depending on the individual employee's point of view or opinion of the department. Directors' communication with staff and his or her visibility are important in formulating the employees' opinions of the agency. Staff who feel that the agency leader is accessible tend to feel that the agency cares about them as individuals.

Approaches used by directors to show this concern varied among the directors interviewed. Attendance and speaking at graduation ceremonies for new employees was universally cited as a preferred means to reach out to every new recruit. One commissioner teaches a four-hour segment on "History and Values" at every pre-service recruit class. Having the commissioner deliver the message about professionalism and ethics to the line employees still in training is considered a necessary function of good leadership in that particular state. Another commissioner gives a "Vision and Values" program at each Academy class as a means of personalizing his relationship with the staff and endorsing the concept of professionalism.

Management's Role in Mission, Goal, Policy, and Procedure Development

The development of a mission statement, goals, objectives, policies, and procedures, as outlined in Chapter II, "The Importance of a Clear Philosophy and Mission," is one of management's most crucial responsibilities. A unified philosophy for the agency must originate with its leaders, and the expression of that philosophy in a mission statement is the crucial next step. When direction has been provided by the philosophy and mission, it is up to management to translate that direction into daily operations with goals, objectives, policies, and procedures. Staff must be involved so that their feedback is incorporated, thus building their sense of ownership and involvement with the agency's growth and operation. By facilitating and supervising policy and procedure development, management improves relations with line staff while ensuring that the agency has a logical process for reaching attainable goals. Management's responsibilities in the development of mission statements, goals, policies, and procedures are as follows.

> *Management must lead the mission statement, goal, policy, and procedure development process,*
>
> *and*
>
> *involve staff in it so that they develop ownership.*

1.   They must define, clarify, and communicate the agency's mission.

2.   They must preside over the process of setting goals and objectives for the agency that are consistent with the mission statement.

3.   They must promulgate clearly defined and well-thought-out policies and procedures to achieve the agency's goals and objectives.

4.   They must procure, organize, and allocate sufficient resources to enable the agency to attain its goals and objectives.

5.   They must create a two-way communication process that enables them to speak directly to staff and to gather feedback and response from them.

6.   They must install a system to evaluate performance, monitor use of resources, and audit results of the agency's efforts.

Informal conversation appeared, according to the comments of employ-
ees, to be an effective communication tool for management to explain the
reasons behind policies. What seemed clear to top management as the
purpose for implementing changes in policies and procedures was often
lost in the long paper trail from the central office to the officer in the cell
block. Wardens, deputies and department heads who could communicate
easily with employees while walking through the institutions provided an
important and highly appreciated service to the line-level workers. Not
surprisingly, employees were more likely to buy into the policies when
they understood them. When they adopted them as their own, successful
implementation was assured.

Management's View of Issues Important to Staff

The general consensus of managers surveyed was that corrections em-
ployees, like their private sector counterparts, want to feel respected and
appreciated. How best to impart that feeling was an issue for discussion.
While several managers believed that financial compensation was a
definite factor in employee contentment, another emphatically stated that
low pay was not an issue. As gleaned from interviews, the ideal
corrections employment environment would involve both concrete and
intangible elements. Managers felt that employees tend to be happier at
newer facilities and in lower security settings. Adequate staffing levels
were felt to be important, as were institutional stability, adept manage-
ment, and the possibility for career advancement. Proximity of home
environment to work also ranked as a factor when defining employee
satisfaction. While issues concerning institutional recreation/social func-
tions, child care, awards and incentives, racism and sexism, and employee
assistance programs were raised during the discussions, no manager
highlighted them (or the lack of them) as fundamental to employee
satisfaction or dissatisfaction. An open, impartial, and fair management
team supportive of line staff and free from charges of nepotism or
favoritism was perceived as being important to staff. Most managers
surveyed spoke of opening the lines of communication and
of being available to listen to staff complaints and concerns.

Communication

As agency leaders, management staff have responsibility for good communication within and outside their departments. Most people, line corrections employees included, feel more secure when they are well-informed, and are happier when they feel they are being listened to. Additionally, due to the public sensitivity of corrections, providing the public and other governmental branches with honest and timely information results in more support from both sectors. There are two basic types of communication with which managers must become involved, intra-agency and external communication.

Intra-Agency Communication

Especially in corrections, where the concepts of "chain of command" and obedience to authority are the general rule, a manager must be able to impart the department's goal to his/her subordinates. Employee empowerment, however, involves upward as well as downward communication. Relaying the concerns and ideas of line staff to higher echelons is as important as ensuring that agency policy and directives are disseminated through the ranks.

> *Communication goes*
> ⇧ **up**
> # AND
> **down** ⇩
> *the chain of command.*

Intra-agency communication involves being "plugged in" and responsive to what's being said among employees and what's being done within an institution. Management should open the channels of communication, discussing good news, bad news, and operational issues with staff. This ranges from congratulations, when in order, to addressing rumors and problems. Staff who feel excluded or lied to tend to sense a hidden agenda behind every action.

Employees are interested in keeping current on events and issues. They want to know facts, values, priorities, directions, resources, and achievements. Armed with this knowledge, they now have the answers to the following questions: "What is going on?" "What is important?" "Where is the department headed?" "How long is it going to take to get there?" "What has the department accomplished?" Perhaps the most important employee question to be answered is, "How do I fit into this department and what is it doing?"

> *Management Qualities Important to Line Staff*
> - *Fairness*
> - *Openness*
> - *Visibility*
> - *Accessibility*
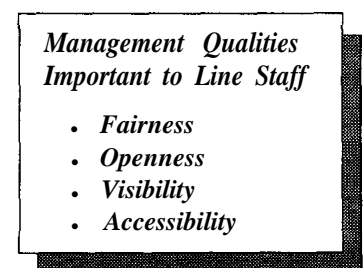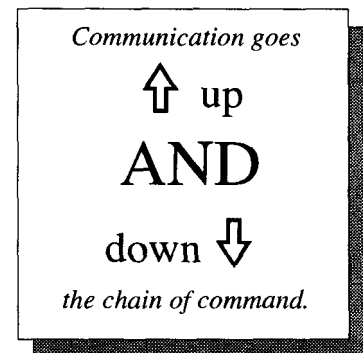
According to management, the most commonly cited means of communication from management to staff could best be characterized as personal. Frequenting institutions, encouraging open-door policies, meeting with staff, and reading and responding to grievances were the most frequently mentioned. Staff newsletters and personal contact through meetings and conferences were the means of communication most frequently used by institutional management.

Open-door policies are a widespread way of keeping communication lines open, according to institutional and agency management personnel. Varying degrees of formality in this practice were described, but most managers understood the importance of being accessible to staff. The actual success of the open-door approach may be limited somewhat by line-level employees' reluctance to criticize for fear of reprisals. In order to ensure that open-door policies actually perform as intended, all managers must be certain that employees have no reason to fear seeking them out. One state has established an annual meeting between employees and a "facilitator" who can communicate employee concerns to the department without compromising the employee. Suggestion boxes were another means noted to solicit involvement from employees. Most wardens acknowledged a need to get information out to the institutional employees.

The interviews did not reveal any great focus on the importance of transmitting expectations to employees or on methods of doing so. Directors and wardens emphasized the need to be "firm but fair," and to have written and consistent policies and procedures so that employees would understand what was expected of them. Almost without exception, the policies, procedures, rule books, and other directives were written in the negative. Employees regularly were told what not to do and what type of behaviors were against the rules or outside the bounds of the law and thereby punishable. Rarely were behavioral expectations stated in the positive.

External Communication

While communication within the agency is an important function of management, so too is the external communication process. Top corrections management personnel need to forge an alliance with numerous individuals and bodies outside the agency. External com-

> *A successful open-door policy is one in which staff feel that they will not be penalized for making criticisms.*

> *Employees are generally told what **not to do,** as opposed to what **to do**.*

munication is necessary in order to secure the resources and support so necessary for long-term planning and operations. Staff take more pride in their performance when governing bodies and the public react positively to their work.

The Public

Educating the public begins by clearly defining the agency's mission(s) and by sharing realistic and attainable goals and objectives. The media is the primary tool for communicating directly with a large portion of the public. Cultivating relationships with editorial boards, reporters, and other media staff can assist the corrections administrator in developing a better educated and more supportive public.

The media's power to influence the public is not always negative.

Community relations boards and public meetings are also good tools to open and promote communications with the public. A well-informed and supportive host community can become a corrections constituency group that can add its voice to department requests for resources and legislative changes. As a rule, knowledgeable people make better-informed decisions.

The community needs information to combat fear and rumors.

Government and Judicial Bodies

Keeping the governor, legislature, and judiciary up to date on events, plans, needs, consequences, and achievements within the department is another important task. In general, the more knowledge and understanding the other governmental players have, the more likely they will be to share in the ownership of problems and solutions. Corrections cannot have sole responsibility for crime control or rehabilitation, for it surely will fall short of success if those standards are used. However, well-informed executive, legislative, and judicial branches are far more willing to come together with corrections to present a united front.

Corrections managers should strive to build partnerships.

Departments of Corrections

Other Branches of Government

Recruitment, Training, and Promotional Practices

Comparisons of the four agencies studied revealed differences in the level and type of screening of candidates for hire by the agency. Such screening included criminal record checks, interviews, and hire lists. One department did not have a set screening procedure; the stringency of others varied. Generally, the agencies studied attempt to select carefully individuals for promotion; however, there are some problems with promotional practices. Managers' perceptions of the quality of training for new candidates and newly promoted workers also varied.

Among the management and line employees in the four states surveyed, there was general agreement on one fact-corrections as a profession is not for everyone. The basic unsuitability of some individuals to work in a corrections environment was consistently cited as a major factor contributing to high turnover rates. However, incompatibility with corrections does not mean unsuitability for law-enforcement-related professions, which are perceived by management as a corrections department's major competitor for recruits and trained employees.

> *Careful screening of prospective employees reduces the chances of those employees leaving when they discover their unsuitability for a corrections career.*

The managers interviewed acknowledged that the recent nationwide expansion of corrections facilities has resulted in an unprecedented hiring of new recruits. The anemic external job market has also made available a more qualified pool of applicants than in the past, but the sheer number of new positions being filled is taxing agencies' ability to screen for professional suitability as well as sample qualifications. Determining the suitability of new candidates for corrections careers as early as possible is an important method of reducing turnover once those new candidates have joined the agency's workforce (see Chapter VI, Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies).

> *On one hand, centralized hiring allows for more background checks*
>
> *and*
>
> *a larger applicant pool.*
>
> *On the other hand, localized hiring ensures that staff will live close to where they work*
>
> *and*
>
> *allows institutional managers to hire personnel according to the individual facility's climate.*

There were varied opinions regarding whether it was best to screen and hire centrally or on an institutional basis. Centralized hiring makes available greater resources for criminal, health, and background screening, while localized hiring gives the warden greater control over the type of staff he or she wants in the institution. Localized hiring also alleviates the problem of staff separation because of commuting distance. As expected, wardens supported local hiring and directors opted for central hiring. In the words of one director who had also served a stint as a warden, "Where you stand depends on where you sit."

Promotional Practices

Managers in the states studied acknowledged that existing promotional practices are not always successful in putting the best people in the positions in which they can do the most good. Part of the problem lies with civil service promotional lists, and part lies with the lack of coordinated efforts to identify and nurture talent within the departments. Another

factor is the continuing need to counter widespread perceptions that promotions are "fixed" and that even trying for a promotion is pointless. In fact, lack of available promotional opportunities was cited only once. For the most part, with the opening of new facilities and early retirement options, the positions are available. The need is to identify and train personnel to become good managers.

> *Many staff interviewed felt that promotions were "fixed" and not worth trying for.*

Attitudes Toward Training

All managers perceived training at all levels as being key to the successful operations of their departments and institutions. Improperly prepared managers were cited as a factor in employee discontent, and most department leaders expressed concern about the quality of their management-level employees. At the same time, the ratings given by agency leaders for management training programs were substantially less than those for incoming corrections officers. While ratings for corrections officer training averaged 7.8 on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most positive), management training programs warranted only a 5. "Managers don't know how to supervise," was cited by a personnel specialist as a primary reason for high staff turnover. "There's a lot of training, but it doesn't sink in." Another manager made a note about "morale issues that center around the autocratic style."

> *Management and line staff both felt that managers should receive more and better training.*

In addition to changing agency management training programs, there are steps that management staff can take to improve the quality of the training provided to promoted personnel, such as mentoring (see Chapter VI, Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies). On-the-job training is not limited to new recruits; as an individual's career with an agency advances, he or she should be shown by supervisors and/or peers how to meet his or her new responsibilities.

> *Steps to improving supervision skills of new managers:*
> - *Mentoring or shadowing,*
> - *Peer supervision training, and*
> - *Continuing on-the-job training.*

Team Building and Employee Empowerment

The treatment and management of staff was a high priority for directors and wardens, all of whom emphasized attempts to make staff feel as if they are part of a team, not merely a part performing a function. One warden evoked a Socratic approach to management, explaining how he "challenges staff to make decisions." Others referred to "open door policies,"

> *Fairness, consistency, and openness are the most successful tools for team building in corrections staff management.*

"management by wandering around," "team building," and "personalizing relationships" between line staff and upper management. Several administrators write notes to employees on their birthdays, and one wrote weekly to staff activated during Operation Desert Storm.

In addition, wardens refer to the need to erase the perception among staff that management decisions are based more on institutional connections than on objective criteria and professional suitability. Developing criteria for promotion and advancement, implementing progressive discipline, stating goals and policies and sticking to them, and consistency were seen as methods for reducing staffs perception of favoritism. Managers also cited the need to open communication channels, letting staff know what is going on in the department and involving them in the decisionmaking process. The process of accreditation encourages communication and staff involvement in institutional decisions by requiring policy and procedure development (see Chapter VI, Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies).

Managers' Ideas for Empowering Employees

- *Decentralization of operations*
- *Delegation of decision making responsibility to institutional management*
- *Visibility in institutions*
- *Goal-setting.*

Management expressed the opinion that empowering employees would result in a more stable, effective workforce. Decentralization of agency operations and the delegation of responsibility to institutional management, as well as "management by walking around," were seen by administrators as means by which to achieve employee empowerment (see Chapter VI, Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies).

Favoritism and Fairness

In the opinion of employees, real recognition and sound institutional management are essential to the creation of a sense of professional worth. Employees bristled at any policy and/or practice that they interpreted as being open to favoritism or abuse by management. Despite the intentions and efforts of management, awards programs, scheduling assignments, and promotions were often dismissed as being preferential and rewarding cronies or, in some cases, people in familial or personal relationships.

The most common complaint of line employees interviewed was what they saw as favoritism on the part of management.

With regard to favoritism, administrators are in a difficult position. They are required to protect the interests of groups and/or individuals at odds

and to make decisions that will leave one party unsatisfied. That dissatisfaction is sometimes at the heart of perceptions of favoritism. This is also apparent in the employee grievance process. Often, the resolution of grievances involves compromise, which can leave one or both sides feeling slighted.

Managers must also find a balance between the need to diversify the corrections workforce and employees' perception of unfairness. The attitudes of some staff toward the recruitment and advancement of females and minorities can create a contentious atmosphere.

Another element of fairness that was an issue for line-level concern was the perceived difference between the rights of staff and those of inmates. Staffs perception of their worth in those terms was an item frequently mentioned by management andemployees. There was a pervasive feeling that, at some institutions, "inmates have more rights than staff." Management, meanwhile, is in the tough position of protecting the rights of both parties.

Employees were not always pleased with the grievance process.

Staff and management alike were concerned about the rights of inmates, as compared to the rights of staff.

Employee Assistance Programs

Management staff in all of the states studied recognized that there was a need within corrections for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). They expressed their recognition that corrections is a high-stress career and talked about the employee assistance programs that their agencies offered. Employee involvement was difficult to quantify, however, as confidentiality is key to the success of such programs. Estimates of employees believed to abuse drugs and alcohol ranged from a low of 2 percent to a high of 40 percent. Most institutions have taken relatively little disciplinary action for substance abuse in the past year, with one facility disciplining 25 percent, plus or minus 5 percent. It was discovered that most of the institutions studied had had one or more staff members resign due to substance abuse problems that interfered with their performance or violated institutional policies. Not surprisingly, not one employee selected at random from the institutional workforces and interviewed admitted to using or abusing drugs or alcohol.

Most institutions studied had had one or more staff members resign because of substance abuse problems.

It was encouraging to find that most administrative-level staff know what kind of everyday stress line staff is under. Successful staff management

involves sensitivity to what the staff go through and ensuring that resources for coping with stress are available. Top management, respecting the need for confidentiality with such programs, had no knowledge of who was using them. Without that knowledge, they did not have the means to assess the quality or success of their EAPs. However, they also realized that it was crucial that employees knew how strictly confidentiality requirements were observed.

Awards and Incentives

Employees' perceptions of efforts by management to recognize their performance are often at odds with management's intent. This dichotomy was perhaps most evident in the opinions advanced on management incentive programs and employee performance programs. For the most part, only top management (i.e., commissioners, directors, superintendents, and wardens) viewed such programs as a meaningful and well-received means for recognizing employee performance. On the other hand, line employees routinely referred to incentive and performance programs as "beauty contests" or "a joke" with the sole purpose of rewarding favored employees. Most employees at the institutions stated that these programs, with their incentives of plaques, special parking places, letters, and luncheons, were meaningless. Employees in at least one institution reported feeling unappreciated. "We do a lot of dangerous work and we're not acknowledged," is how one officer put it. In order to make awards and incentives credible, management must strive to show all employees that good conduct and hard work are rewarded. In addition, providing everyday informal feedback to all employees is critical. While not all staff members can be "Employee of the Month," they place value on receiving "attaboys" from their supervisors.

Pay, Benefits, and Job Security

As a government function, corrections is subject to the same employee pay structures and regulations as other agencies. The performance incentives available to the private sector, such as bonuses, merit raises, and other financial rewards are generally not open to corrections administrators. Managers can, however, lobby for higher pay for their employees, communicating to staff that they are valued.

Employee Satisfaction Depends on Institutional and Agency Management

In the opinion of employees and management personnel alike, effective management and leadership are the key to employee satisfaction. Satisfied employees are less likely to leave the corrections profession and have a greater probability of becoming career employees with a desire for advancement through the department. The perceived challenge facing management is how to nurture this feeling of loyalty in the face of budget and personnel realities.

Administrators need to be good leaders as well as good managers. As good leaders, they need to be out front on issues, policies, and philosophies, but not so far out front that those who are expected to follow lose sight of them. When the employees are spending their time trying to survive another shift in an ill-equipped or poorly run facility, it cannot be expected that their thoughts and deeds will be governed by altruistic motives. Leaders need to know the workforce, the workplace, and the issues that the workers struggle with on a daily basis. Once the administrator has this knowledge, it becomes easier to impart a direction and a means for the employees to accomplish goals and objectives. Improvements in the work environment benefit employees and inmates alike and can go a long way in improving functionality and morale within the facility.

Based on this study, those administrators who spent time touring and visiting the facilities, talking and listening to employees, were perceived in a more positive light than those whose tours and visits were formal and structured as institution inspections. Employees easily differentiated between the perfunctory facility tour and the more relaxed site visit that included conversations between management and line staff. Employees seemed eager to identify with the administrator who showed an interest in the work and the workforce. Employees tended to resent and distrust administrators who were perceived as agency mission types. Management by walking around and "catching people doing something right" and praising them were very effective strategies and tactics. For the most part, employees perceived this type of instant feedback more favorably than the employee-of-the-month awards.

> *Both employees and management feel **effective** management and leadership are key to employee satisfaction.*

> *Management Practices and Characteristics Noticed and Respected by Staff*
>
> - *Regular presence in the institutions*
> - *Familiarity with institutional operations*
> - *Accessibility during facility visits and regular office activities*
> - *Visibility in going to bat for staff salaries and benefits*
> - *Fairness in disciplinary and promotional activities*
> - *Interest in lives and activities of line staff*
> - *Immediate feedback on employee activities*

Chapter IV
Putting Together a Staff Information System

> Staff salaries represent corrections agencies greatest single budget category.

Prison systems spend approximately two-thirds of their budgets on salaries and fringe benefits for the people who staff their institutions. Salaries alone represent the single largest budget category. Not only are prison staff the most valuable corrections resource, they are also the most expensive resource. For all the money that is expended on this resource, what do we know about it? What do we know about the return on this investment? What do we know about what motivates and influences those in the prison workforce?

> Corrections managers need staff information systems just like their inmate information systems.

Knowing who makes up the workforce and understanding staff concerns, beliefs, and attitudes should provide managers with pertinent information upon which to plan and act. Corrections administrators devote considerable energy to collecting inmate information in order to assess needs, classify, and program appropriately. Automated record-keeping systems have been developed and implemented in order to expedite and systematize the process. Those inmate information systems have become indispensable to prison managers. While the level of knowledge about the offenders in our care has advanced, we have not produced a similar reservoir of knowledge about those entrusted to provide that care and custody.

There is general recognition that the critical variable in the corrections process is represented by staff because of their frequent and extended contact with inmates. The influence that staff have on inmates directly affects their behavior in prison, and indirectly affects their behavior after they leave prison.[2] The outcomes derived from the link between staff and inmates, the results of those interactions, can be either beneficial or not so beneficial.

Generally, inmates remain confined in prison for a shorter period of time than the tenure of staff who work in the prison system. The average length of stay for inmates released in 1992 was 26 months;[3] the average length of time that currently employed staff have worked in the prison system is

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[2] Glaser, Daniel. The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole Systems. 1965, Bobbs-Merrill Co.: U.S.A., p. 146.

[3] Camp, George M. and Camille G. The Corrections Yearbook: Adult Prisons. 1993, Criminal Justice Institute: South Salem, New York, p. 16.

60 months. [4] Furthermore, the turnover rate for inmates is many times greater than it is for staff. The number of inmates released from prison annually is approximately 400,000 (out of a total population of 825,000),[5] while the number of staff separating from corrections agencies is 27,000 (out of a total employed workforce of 321,000).[6] The inmate turnover rate is 48.5 percent, as opposed to an 8.5 percent turnover rate for staff. Thus, the turnover in inmates is more than five times as great as the turnover in staff.

Once hired, staff are very likely to remain in the employ of the prison sytem for a considerable period of time. Staff play a singularly important role in the corrections process. Additionally, the largest portion of the $17.5 billion annual operating budget for United States corrections systems [7] is devoted to staff salaries and fringe benefits. These are good reasons to learn more about this resource.

The foundation for and means of implementing a successful staff retention strategy include an accurate and complete set of information about the staff employed by the agency and the institutions in which they work. Such a database should take into consideration the individual characteristics of staff members and should avoid "pigeonholing" staff into artificial and oversimplified categories. The information gathered should highlight the individualities of staff members so that their specific needs and strengths are never overlooked. If all agencies were to address their retention initiatives to single white males between the ages of 22 and 25, the needs and interests of all staff who do not fit that mold would be overlooked, leading to dissatisfaction and possibly separation from the agency.

If, however, an agency understands the wide range of characteristics of all of its staff, it can more fully address the needs and concerns of each individual. Maintaining staff information at an institutional level within the agency allows administrators to make comparisons among facilities and against other jurisdictions. When comprehensive data exist, analysis and interpretation become more valid, and more accurate conclusions can be drawn (as demonstrated in the following chapter, "Using Your Staff

Staff generally work in the corrections system for a longer period of time than inmates remain incarcerated.

Information about the institutions where staff work is also important for a staff information system.

Managers need comprehensive information on their staff and their institutions.

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[4] Data developed for this study by Camp, George M. and Camille G. for the Association of State Correctional Administrators. The data encompasses four departments of correction (CT, IN, SC, KS).
[5] Op. cit., Corrections Yearbook p. 3 and p. 16.
[6] Ibid., p. 67 and p. 76.
[7] Ibid., p. 47.

Information System"). This section of the report provides an example of how employee data can be collected and what types of data to collect by describing the data amassed (and, in some cases, not amassed) during this study. Learning how to collect information about and from staff is a key first step in putting together an overall staff retention/resource management strategy.

Most agencies already collect much of the information needed.

Data collection is an enormous task. When confronted with all of the various types of information that it is possible to amass and analyze, it is easy to become overwhelmed. The point to keep in mind is that most agencies already collect at least some of the data required in some form. Computerization and automation have eased the collection process and enhanced our ability to analyze the information. This chapter summarizes the data that was collected during this project and discusses how to set up a system of data collection to fit a particular agency. Much was learned during the course of this study, and we hope that our experience will prove valuable to others as they pursue similar assessments.

Accurate Representation and Sampling

Where time, staff, and/or funds are limited, sampling is acceptable.

Selecting prisons within your own agency for examination should be done carefully. In most cases, you will face limitations with respect to the length of time available to complete your study, staff to work on it, and funds to support the effort. Therefore, you may not be in a position to survey all of the facilities in your department. Sampling will be required. The criteria you use to draw that sample of institutions should reflect the diverse nature of your facilities.

Each institution in a system is as unique as its individual employees.

The essential element of choosing institutions for study is accurate representation. Within a single agency's jurisdiction are differences between institutions. Those differences can be in the external surroundings of the institutions, such as geographical differences; the availability of other employers in the community; or the general cost of living in the area. These items do not necessarily need to be entered into a staff information system per se, but they are factors to be considered. The system should, however, record differences between the institutions themselves, including their ages, security levels, and sizes. Inmate populations may differ in custody level or average age. Differences between overall staff characteristics are also a

factor; for instance, there may be, more minority employees at one facility than at another.

In cases where all of an agency's institutions can be surveyed, accurate representation is easier to ensure. However, when only a few facilities are selected from the entire agency, it is important to include as many of the varying characteristics as possible. The selection of prisons and data collection process employed during this study are presented as models for other corrections systems, not because the process we followed is perfect, but because we believe that others can profit from the experience gained from conducting this study.

Because no two institutions are identical in terms of size, security level, geographic area, or other characteristics, institutions that were diverse among themselves as well as representative of many other institutions were chosen for this study. Within each institution, information was collected about the facilities themselves, the employees currently work- ing there, employees who had separated from the institution, and the institution's actual turnover data.

Characteristics of the Selected Prisons

A corrections system is made up of at least one institution. That system, the sum of one or more parts, can be examined in terms of its parts. Knowing the characteristics of each institution within a system can be a valuable tool for later analysis of trends in staff retention or attrition. Information about the facilities themselves can provide at least some global reasons for influxes or outpourings of staff. Some common trends can be seen when comparing institutions against each other. For example, experienced staff tend to transfer laterally into new institutions from older facilities. In a similar common occur- rence, staff tend to gravitate toward lower-security institutions from higher-security facilities.

Age of the facility, security level, number and gender of inmates in custody, and capacity are the bare-bones elements of data that can be utilized in examining staff retention from an institutional perspective. The institutions themselves can be compared to others within the system or outside the system to gain a clearer picture of the particular facility's work environment.

The prisons that were selected for study represent a cross section of all state prisons. They include a variety of inmate custody levels and institutional security levels. Some of the institutions are relatively new, while others have been in operation for a considerable period of time. They represent ranges of physical size, geographic areas of the country, number of staff, and number of inmates. Table 2 presents a summary of the characteristics of each of the nine prisons within the four state departments of corrections that were studied.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Nine Focus Prisons

Prison	Year Opened	Capacity	Staff	Inmates & Gender	Custody Levels
Somers (CT)	1963	1,391	599	1,435M	Max, Med
Carl Robinson (CT)	1985	1,360	390	1,347M	Med, Min
State Ref (IN)	1923	1,615	657	1,600M	Max, Med
Topeka (KS)	1962	815	328	479M 222F	Med, Min
Lansing (KS)	1864	1,633	75 1	1,467M 47F	Max, Med, Min
State Farm (IN)	1914	1,650	629	1,635M	Med
Cross Anchor (SC)	1983	528	191	640M	Min
Broad River (SC)	1988	1,235	509	1,320M	Max, Med
Dutchman (SC)	1980	528	213	523M	Med, Min

Geographic Location and Proximity

Two of the prisons are located in state capital cities-Topeka and Broad River (Columbia, South Carolina). Several are located in rural areas of the state, such as both the State Reformatory and State Farm in Indiana and Cross Anchor and Dutchman in South Carolina.

In two departments of corrections, Connecticut and South Carolina, two of the prisons are located on the same site. In Connecticut, Somers and Carl Robinson are adjacent to one another, and in South Carolina the Cross Anchor and Dutchman prisons are located next to each other.

Indiana

The Indiana Reformatory, constructed in 1923, houses medium- and maximum-custody males. It has been subject to a federal court order since 1983 that limits its population and sets requirements for service and program provision. The Reformatory has been expanded to include dormitory housing outside the actual institution's walls, new housing areas within the walls, and service and program areas in spaces originally used for other purposes.

The Indiana State Farm was opened in 1914 and serves as the state system's male misdemeanor intake unit. Inmates are housed in dormitories, with the exception of 50 cells in a maximum-security unit for disciplinary and administrative segregation. The general population consists of male misdemeanants and felons. Four inter-institutional custody levels are used within the main level in order to best serve the inmates' needs and maintain security.
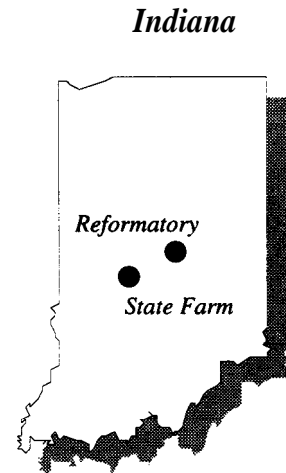
Connecticut

The two Connecticut prisons are situated 15 miles from Hartford in semi-rural areas of the state. The Connecticut Correctional Institution (Somers) was constructed in 1963 and, until very recently, housed a medium- and maximum-custody population and was the location for the state's death row (while the state does have a capital punishment statute, no inmate has been executed since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1972). At the time of the study, it also functioned as a reception and diagnostic center for the state system, processing male inmates into the system and out to other institutions.

The Carl Robinson Correctional Institution is located on the same general site as Somers, although it is a separate institution. Opened in 1985, it houses minimum- and medium-custody male inmates. Housing units are open dormitories.
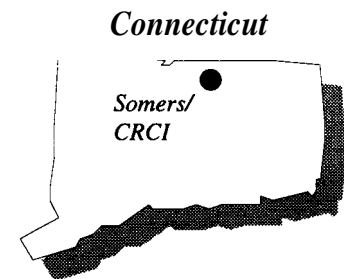
Kansas

The Lansing Correctional Facility is located in close proximity to the U.S. Penitentiary and the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, both of which are in Leavenworth, Kansas. It is the state's largest prison and houses special management, maximum-, medium-, minimum-, and community-custody inmates. Lansing is also the oldest institution that was studied, with original construction dating back to 1864. A federal court order caps Lansing's total population at 1,940. The maximum-security area is

Kansas

Lansing

Topeka
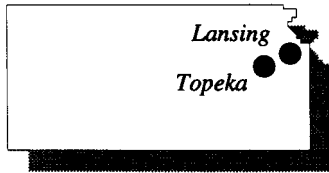
walled; outside the wall is another perimeter housing the medium security area and a minimum-security dormitory. An additional site holds the female facility, which includes all custody levels, as well as an area housing minimum-custody males.

The Topeka Correctional Facility contains four separate units that were recently consolidated into one corrections facility. The Central Unit houses medium- and minimum-custody females and minimum-custody males and was constructed as a corrections vocational training center in 1971. The Reception and Diagnostic Unit for all of the state's male and female inmates was converted from a college campus in 1962. Expansion has provided space for housing work release inmates in this unit. The West Unit, which houses male and female inmates approaching parole, was converted in 1984 from an existing state hospital. The South Unit was established in 1987 and houses work release inmates in a converted barracks.

South Carolina

The Cross Anchor and Dutchman prisons are located next to each other. Dutchman Correctional Institution was opened in 1980 and was originally a minimum-security institution. It began housing medium-security male inmates in 1988. The institution consists of five dormitories and a separate building housing administrative segregation inmates, as well as other buildings for support services, programs, and administration. The Cross Anchor Correctional Institution was constructed with a similar basic layout and houses minimum-security male inmates who are nearing parole or reclassification to a lower custody level. It was opened in 1983 and has not been converted to a higher security level.

South Carolina

Cross Anchor/ Dutchman
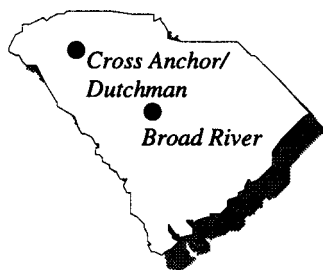
Broad River

The third institution studied in South Carolina, the medium/maximum security Broad River Correctional Institution, contains a Reception and Evaluation Unit for inmates in intake status. The Reception and Evaluation Unit stands apart from the rest of the institution, and houses the administrative segregation and death row areas. The Holding Unit, which is part of the Reception and Evaluation Unit, is actually located at another corrections facility but its inmates are included in the counts for the Reception and Evaluation Unit. The medium-custody general population is housed in four units situated around the administrative and support buildings.

While the information about each facility within a system may seem extremely elementary, it is crucial in developing an overall picture of the

characteristics of the system's workforce. Once that picture has been developed, conclusions can be drawn from it and strategies designed to address the trends, concerns, and issues that become apparent during analysis.

Staff Turnover Rates

Another set of data to be collected at the facility level is information regarding turnover. In order to address retention initiatives in an effective, yet efficient manner, it is important to know how many employees are separating from each institution within the system. The definition of staff turnover is the number of staff members who leave the employ of the agency during a particular period of time (with turnover rates expressed as a percentage of the total number of agency employees during the same period). Large variations within systems are not uncommon, and getting to the roots of those variations with the help of comprehensive data goes a long way toward building a foundation for successful methods of managing the agency's most valuable resource.

A staff information system will help managers determine some causes of turnover.

The first step in amassing turnover information is determining the number of employees who have left each institution. It is crucial that when this information is being developed, actual separations from the agency are distinguished from transfers out of a particular institution. In an agency-wide study of staff retention, the overall number of employees who have left is the bottom-line figure upon which the analysis is based. Intra-system transfers do not represent a loss of agency resources at this level of study; they have merely relocated within the system. Table 3 presents the total numbers of employees who left the focus institutions during 1991.

FIRST STEP:

Determine the number of employees who left each institution.

Table 3. Total Employees Departing from Focus Prisons

Institution	Departures
Somers	16
Carl Robinson	19
Lansing	70
Topeka	25
State Reformatory	52
State Farm	78
Cross Anchor	25
Dutchman	59
Broad River	104

When the focus turns to individual institutions, as opposed to examining overall departmental separation, looking at the numbers of transfers is important, so that unusually high or low transfer rates are highlighted. The transfer of experienced staff members away from a particular institution represents a loss of the institution's resources (assuming that a new hire or promotion with less experience must be brought in to fill the slot of the transferring staff member). At the institutional level, the number of transfers, as well as the number of separations, should be documented. During this study, it was found that transfers and separations were often lumped together at both the institution and agency levels. For this study, the data regarding transfers between institutions was eliminated from the information about separations, or actual turnover. One of the lessons learned during the study was the importance of this distinction in personnel information systems.

Developing Turnover Rates for Institutions

Wide variations in turnover rates between institutions are not uncommon.

As noted in Chapter I, on average, state corrections agencies, along with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, reported correctional officer turnover rates of 10.6 percent during 1991. During approximately the same period of time, the average staff turnover rate for the nine prisons that were studied was 10.5 percent. As with the agency-wide turnover rates, a range in turnover rates was found in the nine prisons. This result was intended, in that the agencies and the prisons within them were selected to include a diversity of turnover rates.

Turnover Rates In Focus Institutions

LOW   HIGH

SOMERS   DUTCHMAN

2.5%   22.0%
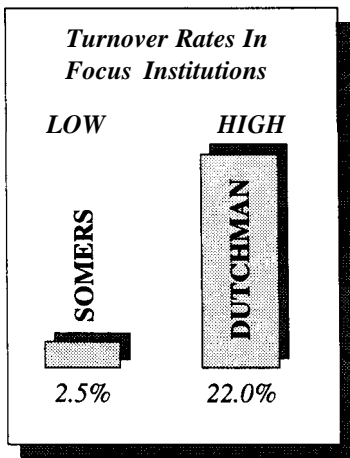
Turnover rates were calculated for the focus prisons by dividing the number of employees who departed during the year prior to the study by the total number of employees working at the institution just prior to the site visit. The turnover rates calculated for the nine prisons are presented in ascending order in Table 4. They range from a low of 2.5 percent at Somers (Connecticut) to a high of 22.0 percent at Dutchman (South Carolina).

High variations between institutions are common, as can be seen from this table. Documenting turnover rates at each institution within a system is a step in developing a total picture for analysis and interpretation.

Table 4. Reported Staff Turnover Rates
in the Nine Focus Prisons

Prison	Turnover Rate
Somers	2.5%
Carl Robinson	4.3%
Reformatory	.7.3%
Topeka	.7.3%
Lansing	8.8%
State Farm	11.1%
Cross Anchor	11.8%
Broad River	19.5%
Dutchman	**22.0%**
Average	**10.5 %**

Characteristics of the Current Prison Workforce

An effective staff retention strategy's most obvious element is the effort to keep staff currently working for an agency in the agency's employ. By developing and implementing programs and initiatives designed to respond to the concerns and issues of those employees, the agency seeks to improve the staff's professionalism, state of mind, and loyalty to the agency. Knowing where to begin with those programs and initiatives is based on knowing the staff.

Staff retention strategies are aimed at building

professionalism

state of mind

and

loyalty of staff.

Collecting information about the gender, race, age at the time of hire, supervisory-to-line ratios, and experience of staff provides important tools for managers. In order to address the specific issues and needs of particular ethnic groups or female employees, for example, an agency's managers need to know the distribution of employees in those groups across the agency as a whole and within each institution. The development of special programs designed as incentives for making corrections a career can be aided with knowledge of the age of the employees at the time of hire (age-at-hire).
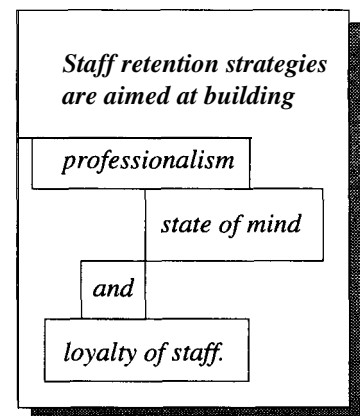
Information About Current Employees

Table 5 shows a sample of data that can provide a detailed view of certain characteristics of the current workforce, such as their ages at the time of

hire and their average length of service with the agency. This information may be helpful in determining, for example, where the most experienced staff are concentrated. Table 5 presents that data for the staff studied at the focus institutions.

Table 5.
Average Age of Current Staff at Hire and
Current Employees' Years of Agency Service

Institution	Average Age	Avg. Yrs. Svc.
Somers	30.5	5.8
Carl Robinson	30.6	4.6
Reformatory	33.0	6.8
Topeka	33.0	10.3
Lansing	33.8	5.8
State Farm	34.1	6.4
Cross Anchor	37.1	5.2
Broad River	31.5	4.4
Dutchman	36.5	4.9
Institutional Average	32.9	6.0

An overview of the workforce in the nine prisons studied is presented in Table 6 and includes information on the gender and ethnic composition, uniformed staff, age-at-hire, and length of service in the prison system.

Characteristics of the Former Prison Workforce

While an effective staff retention strategy is intended to keep employees from leaving the agency, it is inevitable that some will leave. Some retire, some move out of the agency's jurisdiction for reasons beyond the agency's control, some die; there are many reasons. However, these separations can still provide the agency with valuable information. The importance of exit interviews with all separating employees cannot be overstated. Administering an exit interview is not enough, however. The concerns and comments of the separating employee must be analyzed to determine the efficacy of the agency's efforts at retention.

Table 6.
Characteristics of Staff in the Nine Focus Prisons (in Numbers)

Employee Groups	Somers	Carl Robinson	Lansing	Topeka	Refor-matory	Cross Anchor	State Farm	Dutch-man	Broad River
Total Current Employees	631	422	725	318	662	624	187	209	430
Whites	425	330	624	250	607	521	125	149	179
Nonwhites	202	92	99	67	50	14	62	60	251
	*4		*2	*1	*5	*89			
Males	547	340	550	206	580	471	121	130	364
Females	84	82	172	112	81	136	66	79	66
			*3		*1	*17			
White Males	364	269	472	161	534	400	86	97	88
Nonwhite Males	179	71	78	44	43	11	35	33	229
White Females	61	61	152	89	73	110	39	52	49
Nonwhite Females	23	21	21	23	7	2	27	27	64
	*4		*2	*1	*5	*101			
Uniformed	393	275	527	199	402	368	106	115	304
Non-Uniformed	238	147	198	118	260	254	81	94	126
				*1		*2			
Hired at 24 or younger	200	137	141	79	141	134	22	36	117
Hired at 25-29	183	109	147	60	157	107	38	32	108
Hired at 30-34	95	66	127	41	117	114	25	20	61
Hired at 35-39	53	36	111	35	92	93	30	30	39
Hired at 40 or older	99	68	185	79	144	163	68	82	89
	*1	*6	*14	*24	*11	*13	*4	*9	*I6
cl year service	101	120	60	10	74	69	25	40	81
1-2 years service	94	62	71	5	117	102	18	23	55
2-3 years service	58	27	91	20	54	49	18	20	37
>3 years service	377	207	489	259	406	391	122	117	241
	*1	*6	*14	*24	*11	*13	*4	*9	*16

* denotes the number of employees for whom data was missing in that category

Separations of employees from the agency represent a loss to the agency, whether the separation was due to retirement, medical reasons, disciplinary reasons, or any other reason. It is important for the agency to have information on hand regarding the types of separations. A high turnover rate can be examined by its own component parts to determine at least some of its causes. If an agency experienced large growth rates, thereby adding many new staff all at once, the eventual retirement of those staff when they reach the 20- or 25-year mark with the agency will cause a spike in turnover rates. An agency with the ability to distinguish between retirement separations and separations due to dissatisfaction with the agency will not be misled by that high rate.

During this study, the importance of this type of data was not initially realized. Therefore, that information was not consistently collected. In some cases, it was unavailable. Making sure that the reason for each employee's separation is recorded is very important to developing an accurate staff information system. Moreover, simply distinguishing between retirements and resignations is not enough. Knowing how many employees retired or resigned in lieu of termination, for example, can bring to light an unusual number of substance or sick leave abuse problems among staff.

In cases where employee separation seems inexplicable, the use of an exit interview is crucial to the prevention of more inexplicable separations. In addition, the global picture of separated employees provided by the agency's MIS can provide further insight for managers. If, for instance, a disproportionate number of female employees are leaving the agency for reasons other than "natural" attrition (i.e. retirement, moves out of state, or medical reasons), managers may wish to re-examine their equal opportunity or sexual harassment policies or look into forming support groups for female employees. While the general characteristics of the separated population cannot tell managers about employees' dissatisfaction with an agency that may have led to separation, they can provide a starting point for investigation into the causes of separation.

Collecting the same types of information about the former employee group as for current agency employees allows comparisons between the two groups. For example, comparing the average ages and average lengths of service of the employees who left the focus institutions against those of the current employees may bring to light a previously unnoticed trend, or at least highlight differences (or similarities) between the current

employees and those who left the agency. Table 7 presents the same average age and length of service information for the former employee group that Table 5 showed for the current employees.

Table 7. Average Age of Former Staff at Hire and Former Employees' Years of Agency Service

Institution	Average Age	Avg. Yrs. Svc.
Somers	30.7	1.8
Carl Robinson	30.5	2.1
Reformatory	34.1	4.6
Topeka	37.9	4.4
Lansing	30.2	1.6
State Farm..	33.8	2.1
Cross Anchor	32.4	1.6
Broad River	30.4	2.3
Dutchman	33.0	2.1
Institutional Average	**32.4**	2.4

Table 8 presents the same type of information about the employees who had left the nine focus institutions as was presented in Table 6 for current employees.

Data Collection as an Everyday Occurrence

Collecting data about the agency's staff is not a one-time occurrence. A responsive, proactive strategy for retaining staff must be flexible so that it can respond to a changing workforce. Through natural, unavoidable attrition (retirements, moves out of state, etc.), an agency's staff characteristics will change when replacements for the departed staff come on board. The data concerning staff must keep up with these changes, and retention strategies changed (if necessary) to reflect them.

A staff information system not only gives a "picture" of employees, but can be used to help managers with personalizing their relationships with staff. For example, if the information system records dates of birth, it

Table 8.
Characteristics of Former Employees from the Nine Focus Prisons (in Numbers)

Employee Groups	Somers	Carl Robinson	Lansing	Topeka	Refor-matory	cross Anchor	State Farm	Dutch-man	Broad River
Total Former Employees	16	19	70	25	52	78	25	59	104
Whites	13	12	56	19	37	56	14	36	44
Nonwhites	3	7	14	6	8	7	11	23	60
					*7	*15			
Males	11	12	48	17	47	54	22	30	79
Females	5	7	22	8	5	24	3	29	25
White Males	10	7	37	12	32	38	11	21	27
Nonwhite Males	1	5	11	5	8	5	11	9	52
White Females	3	5	19	7	5	18	3	15	17
Nonwhite Females	2	2	3	1	0	2	0	14	8
					*7	*15			
Uniformed	9	11	69	11	33	57	23	42	80
Non-Uniformed	7	8	1	14	19	21	2	17	24
Hired at 24 or younger	6	9	9	2	15	17	7	12	30
Hired at 25-29	2	3	8	5	13	19	9	18	27
Hired at 30-34	3	1	5	4	5	16	3	7	20
Hired at 35-39	2	0	0	2	5	5	0	10	14
Hired at 40 or older	3	6	4	8	14	21	6	12	13
			*44	*4					
< 1 year service	9	13	31	4	22	37	13	37	39
1-2 years service	2	1	20	4	9	16	3	5	19
2-3 years service	1	0	8	4	1	4	5	3	20
>3 years service	4	5	11	9	20	21	4	14	26
				*4					

* denotes the number of employees for whom data was missing in that category

could generate reports that would enable managers to send cards to the staff members celebrating birthdays. Likewise, service anniversaries could be flagged and noted in the agency or institutional newsletter. Maintaining a "personal touch" with many individuals is much easier when information about each of those individuals is available.

As with many of the successful management methods for corrections agencies, flexibility is the key to a successful staff information system. It may start off small and eventually grow to contain huge amounts of information, or the opposite may be true. Institution-level information could be kept on a single PC in a spreadsheet format, or it could be included in the agency's large-scale MIS and downloaded as necessary. Information to be included in the system could come from agency-level personnel office forms from the time of hire and separation, as well as institution-level payroll and personnel forms from the time of assignment. It was discovered during this study that some institutions' data was missing ethnic or gender information for some employees. For the most part, this information had been collected from agency-level MIS offices. Agency-level and institution-level staff information systems can be used in these cases to fill in each other's blanks, providing a complete picture.

One thing to keep in mind when developing a staff information system is that the type of information collected will, to some extent, define the type of comparison that can be performed. In that much of the information presented in this chapter is categorical (i.e., gender, race/ ethnicity) and not numerical, it is best suited to developing percentage comparisons between institutions, populations, or population subgroups. Chapter V, "Using Your Staff Information System," demonstrates how the information collected from the focus institutions was used to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

Data Sources
- *Employment applications*
- *Payroll forms*
- *Interviews*

Agency/Institution

When staff information systems are kept at both the agency and institutional level, each can fill in the other's missing information.

Most information collected from staff information systems will be categorical.

Quantifying the Unquantifiable: Employees' Feelings

A staff information system must be tailored to easily provide the most useful information for an individual agency's management and planning personnel. For example, at the inception of this study, a questionnaire for the purpose of determining staff satisfaction with various elements of employment with the agency was designed and field-

tested. The questionnaire contained a section on personal information about the employee, as well as questions regarding training, quality of supervision, perception of management concern and visibility, and career plans. It was designed to give numerical ratings to many of these issues for later data analysis. Table 9 presents a sample of the information gathered in this fashion for current and former employees, who were asked the same questions.

Table 9. Current and Former Employee Issue Ratings

Question Asked	Current Empl.	Former Empl.
Rating of Challenge Presented by Corrections Work	7.6	6.5
Rating of Importance of Person's Job to Institutional Functioning	9.0	7.6
Rating of Strength of Family Support	7.3	5.7
Rating of Quality of Institutional Work Environment	7.1	6.8
Rating of Way in Which Management Handles Problems	7.1	5.2
Frequency Person Witnesses Violence in Institution	3.1	4.7
Frequency Person Sees Supervisors Inside Institution	7.1	5.7
Rating of Management's Concern for Employees	5.3	4.2
Rating of Management's Concern for Inmates	7.1	5.7
Rating of Harmony Among Employees	6.4	6.2
Rating of Racial Tension Among Staff	3.8	4.5
Rating of Harshness of Discipline of Staff	6.2	4.9

1 = lowest rating/frequency, 10 = highest rating/frequency.

Although information regarding staffs feelings was collected, it became obvious that the issues that were talked about during the interviews were more important than ratings on general issues.

As the study progressed, the numerical information gathered through the use of the questionnaires was eclipsed by the things that staff members were actually saying. In many cases, the questions intended to provide ratings gave the staff members opportunities to discuss issues that were not necessarily included in the questions. The resulting discussion told the interviewers much more than the numerical ratings. As time progressed, the interview format grew less dependent on the interview instrument (although it was used in all of the interviews with current and former employees) as a repository for information and became focused on discussions with staff members about the issues.

This evolution became part of the larger change in the focus of the study. As more interviews with staff members were carried out, the overall trends observed were borne out again and again. Staff satisfaction was less dependent on programs designed by management for staff retention and far

more dependent on the employees' perceptions of the quality of management. The words of staff proved to be far more valuable than any numerical expression of their feelings.

For this reason, it is crucial that managers get around and speak directly with staff members in an honest effort to determine their issues and concerns. Using that information, in concert with the general information contained in a personnel database, to formulate strategies and approaches to staff retention is the basis for successful management of employees.

Developing and using a staff information system is as important as talking with staff about whatever issues are important to them.

Chapter V
Using Your Staff Information System

Once a staff information system is in place, the data it contains can be manipulated and analyzed in order to maintain a good staff satisfaction and retention initiative. Institutional information and current and former employee information can be compared, providing a "snapshot" of one institution's current employee profile or an overview of the staff population that has left a facility. By examining the current and former staff characteristics of each facility and the turnover patterns of each institution in terms of those characteristics, it may be possible to discern reasons for especially high, low, or unstable turnover rates.

Each of the institutions chosen for study during this project manifest differing characteristics in terms of size, inmate population, age, and administration. Comparing them to each other for the purposes of this analysis provides a model for comparing different prisons within one jurisdiction. Whether the analysis provides clear answers or just a springboard for more in-depth investigation, it is an important tool in preparing a comprehensive staff retention strategy.

Types of Data and Analysis

As comparisons were made in this chapter, it became more clear that the types of data collected in a staff information system defined the type of analysis that could be performed. As stated in Chapter IV, much of the information collected from the nine focus institutions was categorical. As a result, we had total numbers of staff (current and former) falling into particular categories, which allowed us to make comparisons. However, it was much more difficult to perform more specific statistical analysis with the data collected because some categorical data requires manipulation, such as coding, before statistical analysis can be carried out. For instance, determining the statistical significance of differences between current and former employee populations was not practical, because the data collected did not lend itself to such complicated operations.

This fact, taken together with the finding that open dialogue with staff is crucial to their satisfaction, reinforces the conclusion that using a staff

information system should not be the only approach to managing staff. Determining the statistical significance of differences between employee groups may be over-analyzing the data. On the other hand, comparing basic information about those populations can be very enlightening.

Chapter IV provided an overview of the types of information to be collected in a staff information system. This chapter presents some examples of the types of analysis and comparisons that can be drawn from the tabulated data in a model staff information system. Several levels of analysis can be performed, from simple comparisons of one particular characteristic of the staff population to advanced multi-characteristic comparisons.

Percentage Analyses Among One Population

While overall totals of specific types of information are the basis for analysis, they provide more insight into trends when converted into percentages (usually percentages of the entire current or former staff population). When the data is presented in percentage format, the information from different institutions can be compared side by side, which is the first level of analysis. This type of comparison can highlight differences in staff profiles between institutions; for example, the racial/ethnic composition of one institution's staff may be very different from that of another in the same agency. Managers may then want to tailor specific programs or training modules to the staff in one of those institutions.

> *Percentages* *can provide insight into trends.*

Current Employee Information

Specific types of information, such as racial/ethnic composition, gender, and length of service can be compared within and among the institutions, both numerically and graphically. Another good basis for comparison is an average of the information for all of the institutions being studied, which will provide an overall view of the characteristics of the "average" staff in the agency. Table 10 presents information about the focus institutions' current employees in percentage format.

> *Compare numbers side-by-side and graphically.*

Table 10.
Staff Characteristics in the Nine Focus Prisons (in Percentages)

Employee Groups	Somers	Carl Robinson	Lansing	Topeka	Refor-matory	Cross Anchor	State Farm	Dutch-man	Broad River	Inst. Avg.
Whites	67.8	78.2	86.3	78.9	92.4	59.0	97.4	71.3	41.6	74.8
Nonwhites	32.2	21.8	13.7	21.1	7.6	41.0	2.6	28.7	58.4	25.2
Males	86.7	80.6	76.2	64.8	87.7	64.7	77.6	62.2	84.7	76.1
Females	13.3	19.4	23.8	35.2	12.3	35.3	22.4	37.8	15.3	23.9
White Males	58.1	63.7	65.3	50.8	81.3	46.0	76.5	46.4	20.5	56.5
Nonwhite Males	28.5	16.8	10.8	13.9	6.5	18.7	2.1	15.8	53.3	18.5
White Females	9.7	14.5	21.0	28.1	11.1	20.9	21.0	24.9	11.4	18.1
Nonwhite Females	3.7	5.0	2.9	7.2	1.1	14.4	0.4	12.9	14.8	6.9
Uniformed	62.3	65.2	72.7	62.8	60.7	56.7	59.2	55.0	70.7	62.8
Non-Uniformed	37.7	34.8	27.3	37.2	39.3	43.3	40.8	45.0	29.3	37.2
Hired at 24 or Younger	31.7	32.9	19.8	26.9	21.7	12.0	21.9	18.0	28.3	23.7
Hired at 25-29	29.0	26.2	20.7	20.4	24.1	20.8	17.5	16.0	26.1	22.3
Hired at 30-34	15.1	15.9	17.9	13.9	18.0	13.7	18.7	10.0	14.7	15.3
Hired at 35-39	8.4	8.7	15.6	11.9	14.0	16.4	15.2	15.0	9.4	12.7
Hired at 40 or Older	15.7	16.3	26.0	26.9	22.1	37.2	26.7	41.0	21.5	25.9
cl Year Service	16.0	28.8	8.4	3.4	11.4	13.7	11.3	20.0	19.6	14.7
l-2 Years Service	14.9	14.9	10.0	1.7	18.0	9.8	16.7	11.5	13.3	12.3
2-3 Years Service	9.2	6.5	12.8	6.8	8.3	9.8	8.0	10.0	8.9	8.9
>3 Years Service	59.8	49.8	68.8	88.1	62.4	66.7	64.0	58.5	58.3	64.0

Racial/Ethnic Composition

Among the nine prisons, a very wide range in minority representation was found in the workforce. The staffs racial composition at the nine prisons averaged 74.8 percent white and 25.2 percent nonwhite. Table 11 shows the percentage of minority employees (nonwhite) in each of the nine prisons and the average percentage of minorities in all nine prisons.

Table 11.
Racial Composition at the Nine Prisons
and Overall Average

	Percent White	Percent Nonwhite
Somers	67.8	32.2
Carl Robinson	78.2	21.8
Lansing	86.3	13.7
Topeka	78.9	21.1
Reformatory	92.4	7.6
State Farm	97.4	2.6
Cross Anchor	59.0	41.0
Dutchman	71.3	28.7
Broad River	41.6	58.4
Institutional Average	74.8	25.2

At two prisons (Broad River and Cross Anchor), the workforce had minority representation significantly higher than the average and at two other prisons (Indiana State Farm and the Indiana Reformatory), minority representation was much lower than the average. This may indicate a number of situations; for example, managers at the State Farm and the Reformatory may wish to examine their staff recruitment practices to determine ways in which to reach more minority candidates.

There was a lot of variation among institutions regarding race.

A further step in simple comparisons can be made by looking outside the agency into the surrounding community. For example, it was found that, with the exception of the two prisons in Indiana, the percentage of minority employees in the prison workforce was higher than the percentage of minority residents in each particular state. Large disparities between institutional workforces and the surrounding communities (particularly when the institutional workforce has very low minority representation) may also prompt managers to examine hiring and retention practices.

In addition to comparing institutions to each other, sometimes it is interesting to compare an individual institution with the community surrounding it.

Gender

The extent to which females are members of the prison workforce is somewhat more uniform among the institutions than the extent to which minorities are represented. The percentages of male and female staff in the nine prisons averaged 76.1 percent male and 23.9 percent female. At three prisons (Dutchman, Cross Anchor, and Topeka), the percentage of females in the workforce was significantly greater than the nine-prison average. At those prisons the percentage of female staff was 37.8, 35.3, and 35.2, respectively. In three other prisons, the percentage of female staff was significantly smaller. At the Reformatory, Somers, and Broad River, the percentage of female staff was 12.3, 13.3, and 15.3, respectively. Figure 8 illustrates the differences in the distribution of male and female staff at each of the nine prisons and the nine institutions' average.

Figure 8.
Gender Composition of Focus Prisons' Workforces
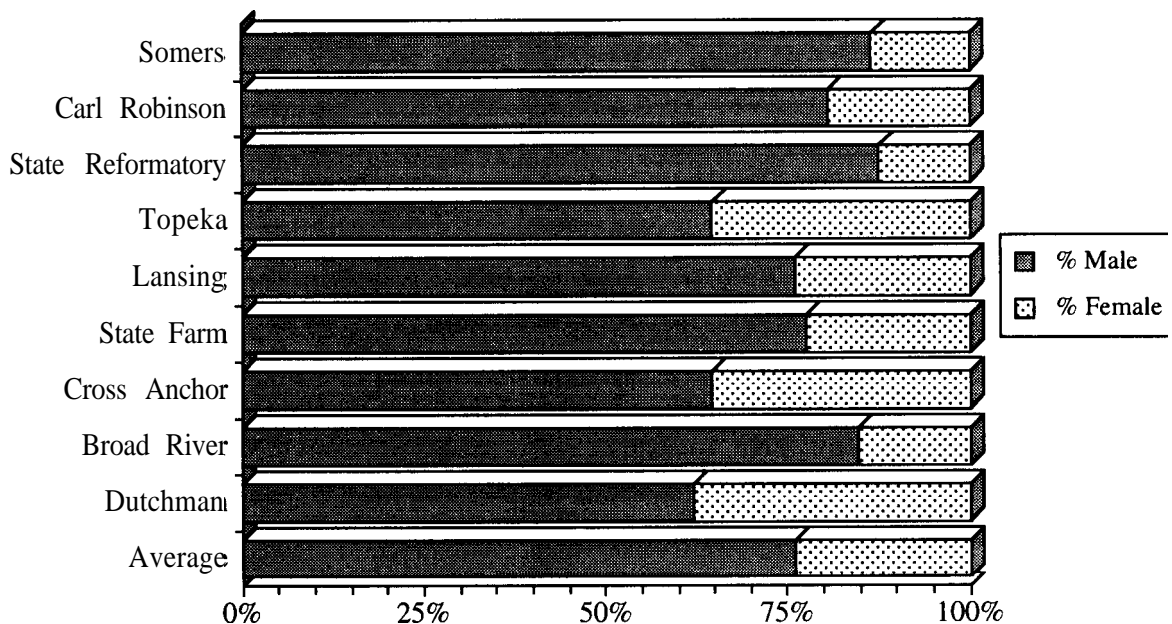
As with the inferences that can be made by examining race percentages, discovering large disparities in the gender composition of prison workforces can point managers toward potential problems. Not only would they be signaled to examine the institution's or agency's hiring practices, but they might also want to determine whether gender sensitivity training might be in order. If an examination reveals problems with an institution's hiring

practices, for example, or the assignment of female officers, and the problems are corrected, not only has the administrator improved the workplace for all concerned, but he or she has also headed off potential legal problems for the institution or agency.

Age Entering the Prison Workforce

The average age that prison staff began their careers in the surveyed institutions masked the actual trend of when people were entering the corrections workforce. In the institutions studied, it appeared that employees were entering into prison work either in their 20s or when they were 40 or older. This pattern is quite consistent across all nine prisons' workforces.

People in the focus institutions started working generally early in their 20s or when they were older than 40.

The nine-prison average age for staff when they began prison work was 32.9 years. The workforce with the youngest average age at hiring was at Somers (30.5 years old), and the oldest age at entry into prison work was found at Cross Anchor (37.1 years old). Further analysis of the age of staff when they started to work in corrections was accomplished by dividing the workforce into five age categories: 24 years old or younger, 25 to 29,30 to 34,35 to 39, and 40 or older. Table 12 presents the percentage of current staff in each age-at-hire category for each institution, as well as the nine institutions' average.

Table 12.
Percentage of Current Staff by Age at Hire
in Focus Prisons and Average

Institution	<24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+
Somers..	31.7	29.0	15.1	8.4	15.7
Carl Robinson..	32.9	26.2	15.9	8.7	16.3
Lansing	19.8	20.7	17.9	15.6	26.0
Topeka..	26.9	20.4	13.9..	11.9	26.9
Reformatory	21.7	24.1	18.0..	14.0	22.1
State Farm	21.9	17.5	18.7	15.2	26.7
Cross Anchor..	37.2	16.4	13.7	20.8	12.0
Dutchman	18.0	16.0	10.0..	15.0	41.0
Broad River	28.3	26.1	14.7	9.4	21.5
Inst. Average	26.5	21.8	15.3	13.2	23.1

A glance at the institutional average shows that the 24 and under group was largest overall, representing 26.5 percent of total staff, with the 40 and over group the second largest, at 23.1 percent. Employees hired between the ages of 35 and 39 represented only 13.2 percent of the total group of employees.

Looking a bit more closely at the data, relatively wide variations are found between institutions within the age categories. For example, 37.2 percent of the current staff at Cross Anchor were 24 or younger when they were hired. Conversely, only 18 percent of the employees at Dutchman were that age, but 41 percent of its employees were 40 or older when hired. At Cross Anchor, only 12 percent of the employees were over 40 when hired.

Knowing age-at-hire, administrators can provide benefits that target specific age categories.

Knowing this, managers may want to target age-specific information to institutional staff. Employees over the age of 40 may be looking for a second career after retiring young from a first, while new hires under 24 are generally just starting out. While all new hires would be interested in information regarding the promotional ladder and retirement, older employees, who are statistically more likely to have families, would most probably be very interested in information regarding health insurance benefits and retirement.

Extent of Prison Work Experience

Inasmuch as concern has been expressed by prison administrators that the experience level of staff working in prisons had declined, our finding that prison staff had accumulated considerable experience appears to either run counter to prevailing opinion or reflects a reverse in the pattern that previously was the case. Rather than finding concentrations of relatively inexperienced staff, we found that the employees in the nine focus institutions generally had considerable experience in the prison environment.

Topeka had the most experienced staff, which had, on average, over ten years of prison experience.

For example, on average, staff currently employed in the nine prisons had been working in corrections for 72.1 months, or just over six years. Table 13 presents this average and each institution's average, in months and years. At the extreme, staff at Topeka were the most experienced in that, on average, they had been in prison work for 123.6 months, or 10.3 years. At the other end of the spectrum, employees at Broad River had accumulated an average of 52.8 months, or 4.4 years, of prison experience. Since

the length of time that staff at Topeka had been working appeared to be unique among the nine prisons, an average for the other eight prisons was also calculated. That average was found to be 65.7 months, as opposed to 72.1 months for all nine prisons.

Table 13. Length of Service of Current Employees in Focus Prisons

Institution	Months	Years
Somers	69.6	5.8
Carl Robinson	55.2	4.6
Reformatory	81.6	6.8
Topeka	123.6	10.3
Lansing	69.6	5.8
State Farm	76.8	6.4
Cross Anchor	62.4	5.2
Broad River	52.8	4.4
Dutchman	58.8	4.9
Institutional Average	72.1	6.0

We can convert the data to percentages and separate the employees into groups by experience level. We created four groups of employees, those with: (1) less than one year of experience, (2) more than one but less than two years, (3) two, but less than three years, and (4) more than three years of experience.   This analysis revealed that less than 15 percent of all employees in the institutions studied had less than one year of prison work experience, and nearly two-thirds (64.0 percent) had three years or more. The patterns in each of the individual prisons mirrored the overall averages. Exceptions were Carl Robinson, where less than one half (49.8%) of the staff had been employed in the department of corrections for three years or more, and Topeka, where 88.1 percent of the staff had been working in corrections for three years or more. Figure 9 shows the percentage of current staff in each experience category by facility, as well as the overall average.

Less than half of Carl Robinson's employees had more than three years of prison experience.

Figure 9. Length of Service of Current Employees in Focus Institutions

Legend:
- □ Percent with < 1 yr
- ▩ Percent with 2 < 3 yrs.
- ▦ Percent with 1 < 2 yrs.
- ■ Percent with over 3 yrs.
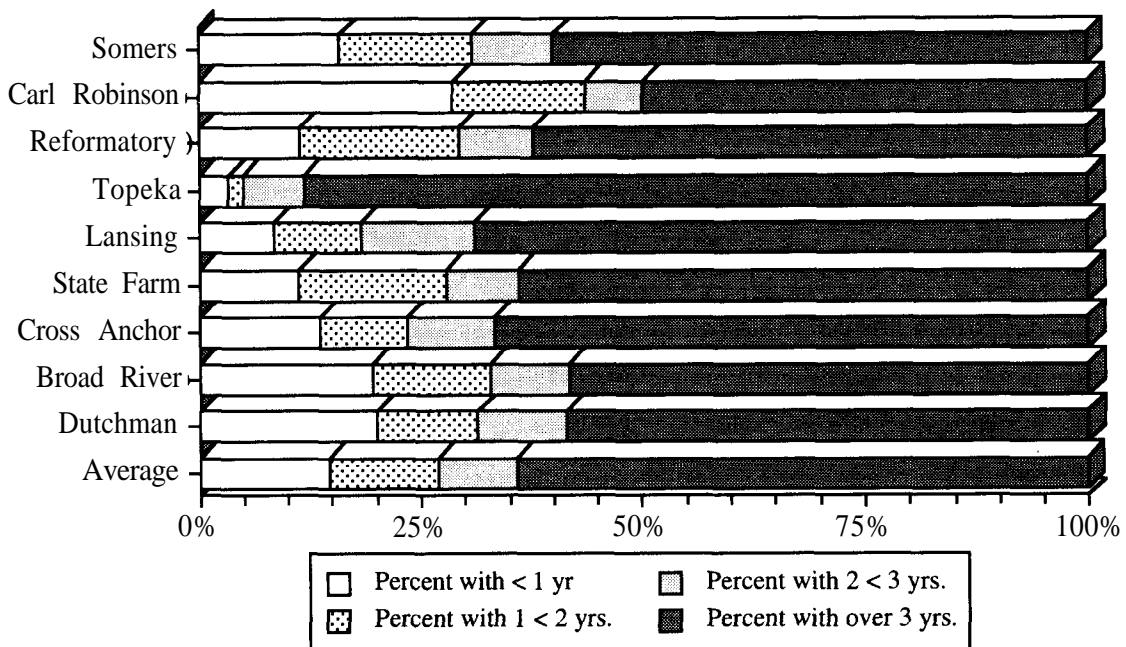
Information concerning experience can assist managers in making some general predictions about the behavior of an agency's or institution's workforce. For example, the current average length of service among Topeka's staff is a little over ten years. Obviously, because of the nature of averages, some staff will have less experience, and some will have more. However, on the basis of that average, a manager at Topeka could predict a large increase in the number of retirements in approximately ten years (assuming that retirement benefits require a minimum of 20 years' service). In this example, the institutional average points out a possibility, and a manager can investigate further to determine a strategy for addressing that possibility.

Between the years 2000-2010, corrections managers can expect staff turnover as the employees hired during the 1980's retire. Therefore, average experience will eventually drop.

To a certain extent, these predictions can be extrapolated to a more universal level. Additional staff were hired in considerable numbers during the 1980s, as new prisons were opened to meet the demands of rising inmate populations. More recently, when the revenues available to state governments did not keep pace with the level of expenditures required to staff all available prisons (or at least to staff them as fully as in the past), the rate of hiring additional staff declined. As a consequence, during the first decade of the 21st century, departments of corrections are

likely to experience a large turnover in staff as employees hired during the 1980s retire. The subsequent impact on prison operations may be substantial, in that the overall level of experience among staff will drop. Further, it is likely that departments will have to mount sustained recruitment and hiring efforts to fill the vacancies created by the retiring employees. In the near term, however, prison administrators will have the benefit of an increasingly experienced workforce.

Former Employee Information

A staff information system should collect and be able to produce the same types of information about employees who have left an institution or agency as it does regarding those who are still employed. When the same types of simple comparisons between institutions are made as with current employee information, a fuller picture of staff turnover and retention begins to emerge. Table 14 presents the same information as that in Table 8 regarding former employees of the nine focus institutions. The difference between the tables, as with the current employee information, is in their formats; the raw data from Chapter IV has been converted to percentages of the total departed employee group.

> *It is extremely useful to compare characteristics of former employees with characteristics of currently employed prison staff.*

Racial/Ethnic Composition

While the average for all nine institutions revealed only a small difference between minority representation among former employees (29.9%) as opposed to current employees (25.2%), that small difference masked the range of large differences found in the individual prisons. A prison with very low minority representation in its workforce may be creating a barrier to retaining minority employees. As the percentage of minorities in the workforce increases, it may serve to encourage minorities to remain at the facility. Examination of each prison's practices and the views of their employees may shed more light on the reasons for the variations in minority representation in the former employee group.

> *A very low minority representation in prison staff may create a barrier to retaining minority employees.*

It might have been expected that minority groups would have been over-represented in the former employee groups, and in all but two of the prisons, that result was found to be the case. It is noteworthy that the two prisons in which the reverse was true were the prisons with the lowest turnover rate (Somers) and the highest turnover rate (Broad River).

Table 14.
Former Staff Characteristics in the Nine Focus Prisons (in Percentages)

Former Employee Group	Somers	Carl Robinson	Lansing	Topeka	Refor-matory	Cross Anchor	State Farm	Dutch-man	Broad River	Inst. Avg.
Whites	81.3	63.2	80.0	76.0	82.2	56.0	88.9	61.0	42.3	70.1
Nonwhites	18.7	36.8	20.0	24.0	17.8	44.0	11.1	39.0	57.7	29.9
Males	68.8	63.2	68.6	68.0	90.4	88.0	69.2	50.8	76.0	71.4
Females	31.2	36.8	31.4	32.0	9.6	12.0	30.8	49.2	24.0	28.6
White Males	62.5	36.8	52.9	48.0	71.1	44.0	60.3	35.6	26.0	48.6
Nonwhite Males	6.2	26.3	15.7	20.0	17.8	44.0	7.9	15.3	50.0	22.6
White Females	18.8	26.3	27.1	28.0	11.1	12.0	28.6	25.4	16.3	21.5
Nonwhite Females	12.5	10.5	4.3	4.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	23.7	7.7	7.3
Uniformed	56.3	57.9	98.6	44.0	63.5	92.0	73.1	71.2	76.9	70.4
Non-Uniformed	43.7	42.1	1.4	56.0	36.5	8.0	26.9	28.8	23.1	29.6
Hired at 24 or Younger	37.5	47.5	34.6	9.5	28.8	28.0	21.8	20.3	28.8	28.5
Hired at 25-29	12.5	15.8	30.8	23.8	25.0	36.0	24.4	30.5	26.0	25.0
Hired at 30-34	18.8	5.3	19.2	19.0	9.6	12.0	20.5	11.9	19.2	15.1
Hired at 35-39	12.5	0.0	0.0	9.5	9.6	0.0	6.4	16.9	13.5	7.6
Hired at 40 or Older	18.8	31.5	15.4	38.1	26.9	24.0	26.9	20.3	12.5	23.8
<I Year Service	56.3	68.4	44.3	19.0	42.3	52.0	47.5	62.7	37.5	47.8
1-2 Years Service	12.5	5.3	28.6	19.0	17.3	12.0	20.5	8.5	18.3	15.8
2-3 Years Service	6.3	0.0	11.4	19.0	1.9	20.0	5.1	5.1	19.2	9.8
>3 Years Service	25.0	26.3	15.7	42.9	38.5	16.0	26.9	23.7	25.0	26.7

Gender

The percentage of females in each prison's former employee group varied from a high of 49.2 percent at Dutchman (South Carolina) to a low of 9.6 percent at the Reformatory (Indiana). Figure 10 graphically represents these figures. The nine-institution average was 3 1.2 percent. As with other characteristics, asking why one particular institution's percentage is significantly higher than another's or the average can lead a manager to investigate the climate of that institution and possibly find a problem to be addressed.

> *If the gender breakdown of a group of former employees is not similar to the breakdown of current employees, the manager may want to investigate the climate of the institution.*

Figure 10.
Gender of Former Employees
of the Nine Focus Prisons
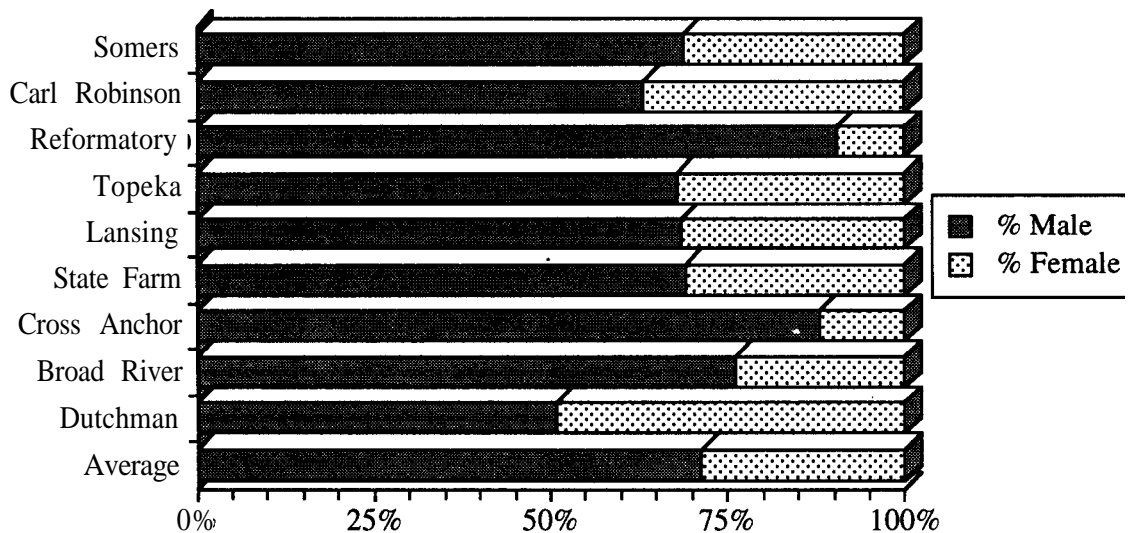
Age Entering the Prison Workforce

Among employees leaving the nine selected institutions, the percentage of employees who were 24 years of age or younger at hire was 28.5. Those between 25 and 29 years old at hire constituted 25 percent of the group of workers who left the facilities. 23.8 percent of the workers who departed were 40 or older at hire. Employees who were between 30 and 34 years old constituted 15.1 percent of the group, and those between 35 and 39 represented 7.6 percent of the total number.

Among the institutions, Carl Robinson had the highest rate of departing employees hired at or below the age of 24, at 47.5 percent. By contrast, only 9.5 percent of the employees in that age-at-hire bracket left Topeka.

38.1 percent of the employees who left Topeka were 40 or over at hire, while only 12.5 percent of the employees in that bracket left from Broad River. Table 15, which is comparable to Table 12, presents the age-at-hire of former employees.

Table 15.
Percentage of Former Employees
in Each Age-at-Hire Category

Institution	<24	25-29	30-34	35-39	>40
Somers..	37.5	12.5	18.8	12.5	18.8
Carl Robinson..	47.5	15.8	5.3	0.0	3 1.5
Lansing	34.6	30.8	19.2	0.0	15.4
Topeka..	9.5	23.8	19.0..	9.5	38.1
Reformatory	28.8	25.0	9.6..	9.6	26.9
State Farm	21.8	24.4	20.5	6.4	26.9
Cross Anchor..	28.0	36.0	12.0..	0.0	24.0
Dutchman	20.3	30.5	11.9	16.9	20.3
Broad River	28.8	26.0	19.2	13.5	12.5
Inst. Average	28.5	25.0	15.1	7.6	23.8

Extent of Prison Work Experience

Among the total number of employees who left the nine focus institutions, 47.8 percent had been working in corrections for a year or less. 15.8 percent had been employed between one and two years, and 9.8 percent had between two and three years of prison work experience. 26.7 percent had worked in corrections for over three years. Table 16 presents this information for each of the focus institutions.

Table 16.
Percentage of Former Employees
in Each Length-of-Service Category

Institution	cl Year	1-2 Years	2-3 Years	>3 Years
Somers	56.3	12.5	6.3	25.0
Carl Robinson..	68.4	5.3	0.0	26.3
Lansing	44.3	28.6	11.4	15.7
Topeka	19.0	19.0	19.0	42.9
Reformatory..	42.3	17.3	1.9	38.5
State Farm..	47.5	20.5	5.1	26.9
Cross Anchor..	52.0	12.0	20.0	16.0
Dutchman	62.7	8.5	5.1	23.7
Broad River	37.5	18.3	19.2	25.0
Inst. Average..	47.8	15.8	9.8	26.7

Employees who had been working in corrections for a year or less comprised the largest number of departures in most of the nine institutions. 68.4 percent of the departures from Carl Robinson were in that bracket, as were 62.7 percent of the departures from Dutchman. Far smaller were the percentages of former employees in the one- to two-year and two- to three-year experience groups. The percentage of employees with between one and two years of experience who left ranged from 5.3 percent at Carl Robinson to 28.6 percent at Lansing.

Generally, employees with over three years of corrections experience leaving the institutions fell between 20 and 30 percent. Exceptions were Lansing, with 15.7 percent of the departures in that bracket; Topeka, with a high of 42.9 percent; and the Indiana Reformatory, from which 38.5 percent departed.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this information almost immediately is that there is a definite problem among newly hired employees. What is the basis of this problem? There are several possible answers; for example, if an agency or institution has no formal pre-hire screening process, more employees may leave in their first year of employment because they are psychologically or emotionally ill-suited for corrections work. If prospective corrections employees have an unrealistic picture of what the job entails, they may leave when they discover that the reality is very different from what they pictured.

Pre-hire screening and other programs designed to ensure that candidates and corrections careers are suited for each other will reduce first-year turnover.

This fact is true about many industries, not just corrections. However, in a professional environment where experience is extremely valuable, such as corrections, administrators must combine initiatives for portraying the reality of corrections to prospective employees with measures for ensuring that workers already in place are satisfied with corrections as a career.

Types of Departures

It can be helpful to managers to study the "types" of employee departures, such as resignations, retirements, moves out-of-state or to the private sector, or for other reasons. For example, comparing Lansing and Topeka shows that the departure types for employees leaving those institutions were much the same. At Lansing, 17.1 percent of the staff departures were terminations or dismissals, 82.9 percent were resignations, and there were no retirements or other types of departures. At Topeka, 4.0 percent of the

departures were dismissals or terminations, 80 percent were resignations, and retirements and other types of departures each accounted for 8 percent of the staff separations (it is important to note here that while there were 70 separations from Lansing, there were only 25 from Topeka, resulting in somewhat skewed percentages).

While these comparisons are interesting, it should be noted that even more can be seen when the "actual" reasons for separation are recorded, as well as the "formal" reasons. For example, an employee may resign in lieu of termination. This would drive up the number of resignations, while overlooking the fact that the employee would have been terminated anyway. Comparing those two separation categories would provide managers with interesting insight regarding the real reasons that employees are leaving the agency. Are there disciplinary problems related to substance abuse, for instance? Are employees resigning in order to accept other employment? This information can be gathered through exit interviews and tabulated in the same manner as the other data placed into the staff information system.

> *Separation reasons can be misleading. A staff information system should track both the reason given and the "real" reason that an employee separates.*

During our study of the focus institutions, we spoke with institutional personnel directors about a random sample of the separated employees from each facility. The personnel directors were able to provide us with the "actual" reason for those employees' separations, as opposed to the "formal" reason. Of the 16 separated employees detailed at Carl Robinson, five, or 31.25 percent, resigned in lieu of dismissal. At Somers, four of a total of 15 separated employees studied, or 26.6 percent, left on disability. This information could indicate a need for workplace safety training or merit an examination of departmental disability policy.

These relatively simple comparisons provide at-a-glance information regarding the individual institutions in an agency, whether the characteristic highlighted is that of current or former employees. As the most basic level of staff information analysis, percentage comparisons may seem too elementary to be of importance, but they are the groundwork of a successful staff retention initiative. Because such initiatives must first take place at the institutional level, it is important to know the makeup of the staff at each institution. Programs and services intended to increase staff satisfaction and reduce turnover can be developed and tailored specifically to the needs of each institution's particular, unique staff.

Other data that should be examined on a percentage basis is the actual turnover rate at each of the institutions. By dividing the number of former employees by the total number of employees (former plus current), a turnover rate can be calculated (and was in Chapter IV). The information collected about the agencies' current employees during this study was presented in its raw form in Table 4. The same information, converted into percentage format, is presented in Table 17. The table shows total turnover rates by institution and also within each specific employee group shown earlier.

Table 17 reveals a high turnover among nonwhite employees as compared to turnover among white employees (15.4% versus 9.6%). There is also a higher rate of turnover among females than among males (12.3% versus 10.1%). As expected, more uniformed employees tend to leave than non-uniformed employees. Employees hired between the ages of 25 and 29 have a 12.7 percent turnover rate, the highest among any of the age groups, while employees with less than one year of service with the agency had the highest turnover rate among employee experience groups.

Employees with less than one year of service had the highest turnover rates.

From this table, it could be assumed that the employee population manifesting the highest discontent (and therefore the highest turnover) is nonwhite males who are uniformed employees, were hired between the ages of 25 and 29, and have less than one year of experience in corrections. This statement, however, represents only the averaged employee populations of all nine focus institutions. It is necessary to examine each institution individually to understand their specific employee characteristics. It is also necessary to review the raw data to see specific numbers, since low numbers result in inflated percentages. This would also be important to note, however, since small numbers of departures at the institutional level may indicate that the problem may not be with retaining a certain group of employees, but rather with hiring enough of them. While turnover rates do reveal important information, raw data and percentages must also be reviewed. Examining all three types of data together highlights exactly what the turnover rates mean.

Looking at the raw data, percentage data, and averages together will provide the best total picture.

Table 17.
Turnover Among Various Employee Groups (in Percentages)

Employee Groups	Somers	Carl Robinson	Lansing	Topeka	Refor-matory	cross Anchor	State Farm	Dutch-man	Broad River	Inst. Avg.
Total turnover	2.5	4.3	8.8	7.3	7.3	11.8	11.1	22.0	19.5	10.5
Whites	3.0	3.5	8.2	7.1	5.7	10.1	9.7	19.5	19.7	9.6
Nonwhites	1.5	7.1	12.4	8.2	13.8	15.1	33.3	27.8	19.3	15.4
Males	2.0	3.4	8.0	7.6	7.5	15.4	10.3	18.8	17.8	10.1
Females	5.6	7.9	11.3	6.7	5.8	4.3	15.0	26.9	27.5	12.3
White Males	2.7	2.5	7.3	7.5	5.7	11.3	8.7	17.8	23.5	9.6
Nonwhite Males	0.6	6.6	12.4	10.2	15.7	23.9	31.3	21.4	18.5	15.6
White Females	4.7	7.6	11.1	7.3	6.4	7.1	14.1	22.4	25.8	11.8
Nonwhite Females	8.0	8.7	12.5	4.2	0.0	0.0	50.0	34.1	11.1	14.3
Uniformed	2.2	3.8	11.6	5.2	7.6	17.8	13.4	26.8	20.8	12.1
Non-Uniformed	2.9	5.4	0.5	10.6	6.8	2.4	7.6	15.3	16.0	7.5
Hired at 24 or Younger	2.9	6.2	6.0	2.5	9.6	24.1	11.2	25.0	20.4	12.0
Hired at 25-29 yrs	1.1	2.7	5.2	7.7	7.6	19.1	15.1	36.0	20.0	12.7
Hired at 30-34 yrs.	3.1	1.5	3.8	8.8	4.1	10.7	12.3	25.9	24.7	10.5
Hired at 35-39 yrs	3.6	0.0	0.0	5.4	5.2	0.0	5.1	25.0	26.4	7.9
Hired at 40 or Older	2.9	8.1	2.1	9.2	8.9	8.1	11.4	12.8	12.7	8.5
< 1 Year Service	8.2	9.8	34.1	28.6	22.9	34.2	34.9	48.1	32.5	28.1
1<2 Years Service	2.1	1.6	22.0	44.4	7.1	14.3	13.6	17.9	25.7	16.5
2<3 Years Service	1.7	0.0	8.1	16.7	1.8	21.7	7.5	13.0	35.1	11.7
3+ Years Service	1.0	2.4	2.2	3.4	4.7	3.2	5.1	10.7	9.7	4.7

Comparisons Between Two Populations

At the next level of analysis of employee turnover, a staff information system can provide information that can be used to compare a particular characteristic of current staff and former employees of the same institutions. Large differences can serve as indicators of problems in an institution's climate that lead to employee turnover. If, for example, a particular institution has a low percentage of female employees in its current staff population, but a high percentage of females among the group of employees who departed, it would be beneficial to find out the reasons for the disparity.

Comparing the makeup of the current workforce with the composition of the group of departed employees is a good strategy.

It is important to note, however, that percentages can sometimes be misleading in this type of comparison. Converting data about small groups into percentages can result in inflated (and somewhat less reliable) percentage data; for example, if two of four employees leaving an institution are minorities, 50 percent of the former employee group is in the minority category. This 50 percent figure, compared with a lower percentage of minorities in a much larger current staff group, may be somewhat misleading. While it would still be important that half of the employees leaving were minorities, it would also be necessary to remember that the total group of employees departing was very small. With that in mind, we compared several of the characteristics of the current and former employee groups in the nine focus institutions.

Converting small numbers into percentages results in large percentages; this can be misleading.

Racial/Ethnic Composition

The percentage of nonwhites in the former employee group averaged 29.9 in all nine of the prisons, slightly higher than the 25.2 percent in the current workforce. It ranged from a low of 11.1 percent at the Indiana State Farm to a high of 57.7 percent at Broad River. In seven of the nine prisons, the percentage of nonwhite former employees exceeded the percentage of nonwhite current employees. The largest differences were found at the State Farm, where the percentage of nonwhite former employees (11.1%) was more than four times the 2.6 percent of nonwhite current employees. Figure 11 illustrates these statistics.

The exceptions to the trend were Somers, where the percentage of nonwhite former employees was 18.7, as opposed to 32.2 percent of current employees, and Broad River, where the percentage of nonwhite former

Figure 11. Percentages of Nonwhite Current and Former Employees

Figure 11. Percentages of Nonwhite Current and Former Employees
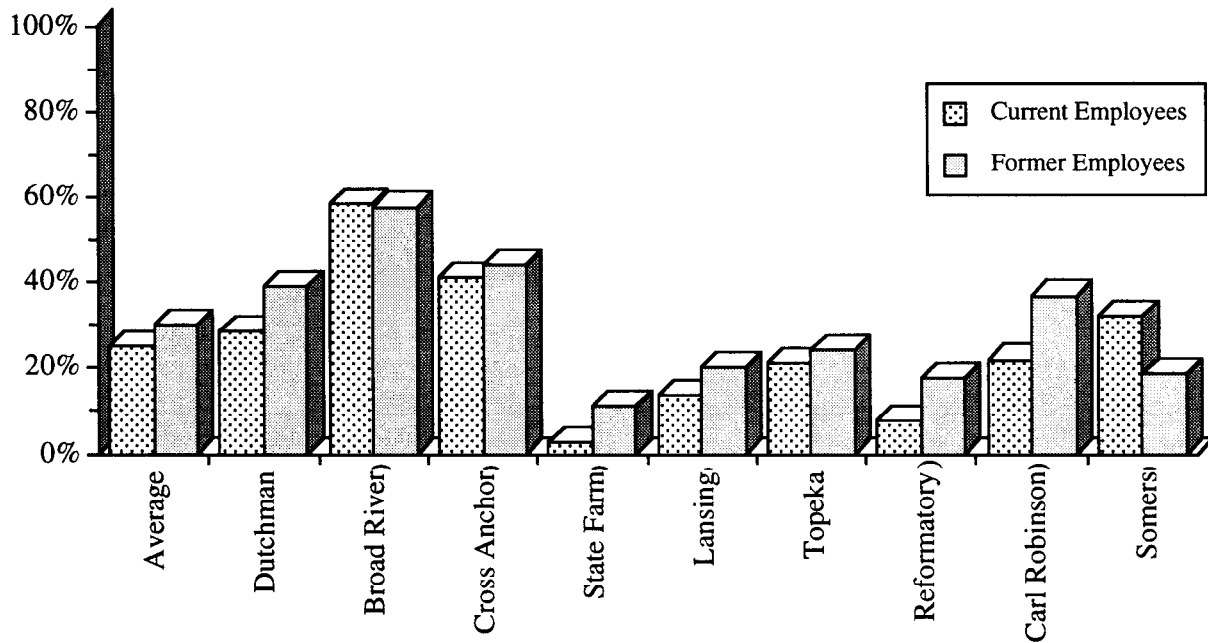
employees was just slightly smaller (57.7%) than the percentage of non-white current employees (58.4%).

Gender

At six of the nine prisons, the percentage of females in the former employee group was greater than the percentage of females in the current group of employees. At two of those six prisons, the differences were large. At Somers, the percentage of females in the former employee group was 31.2, two and a half times greater than the percentage in the current employee group (13.3%). A similar pattern was found at Carl Robinson, where the percentage of females in the former employee group was 36.8, twice as great as in the current employee group (19.4%).

The percentage of females in the former employee group averaged 28.6, as opposed to 23.9 percent in the current employee group, a difference of 4.7 percent. The three prisons in which the percentage of females in the former employee group was smaller than in the current employee group were Topeka, the Indiana Reformatory, and Cross Anchor. While at Topeka the relative difference was small (approximately 10% smaller), the differences at the Reformatory and Cross Anchor were larger. At the

Reformatory, females in the former employee group were 22 percent fewer than in the current employee group (9.6% as opposed to 12.3%). The widest difference occurred at Cross Anchor, where the percentage of females in the current employee group (35.3%) was nearly three times that in the former employee group (12.0%).

Some information collected is beneficial for comparison purposes prior to being converted into a percentage format. For example, information on current and former employees' age at the time of hire and length of service in corrections was gathered from the nine focus institutions. Comparing that information between the current and former employee groups, just as it was collected and tabulated, reveals some employee characteristics before conversion to the percentage groups. Figure 12 graphically compares the length of service of current and former employees in each institution studied.

> *In every institution, the employees who separated had less experience than the employees who stayed.*

Figure 12.
Years of Service of Current
and Former Employees

Current Employees
Former Employees

Years
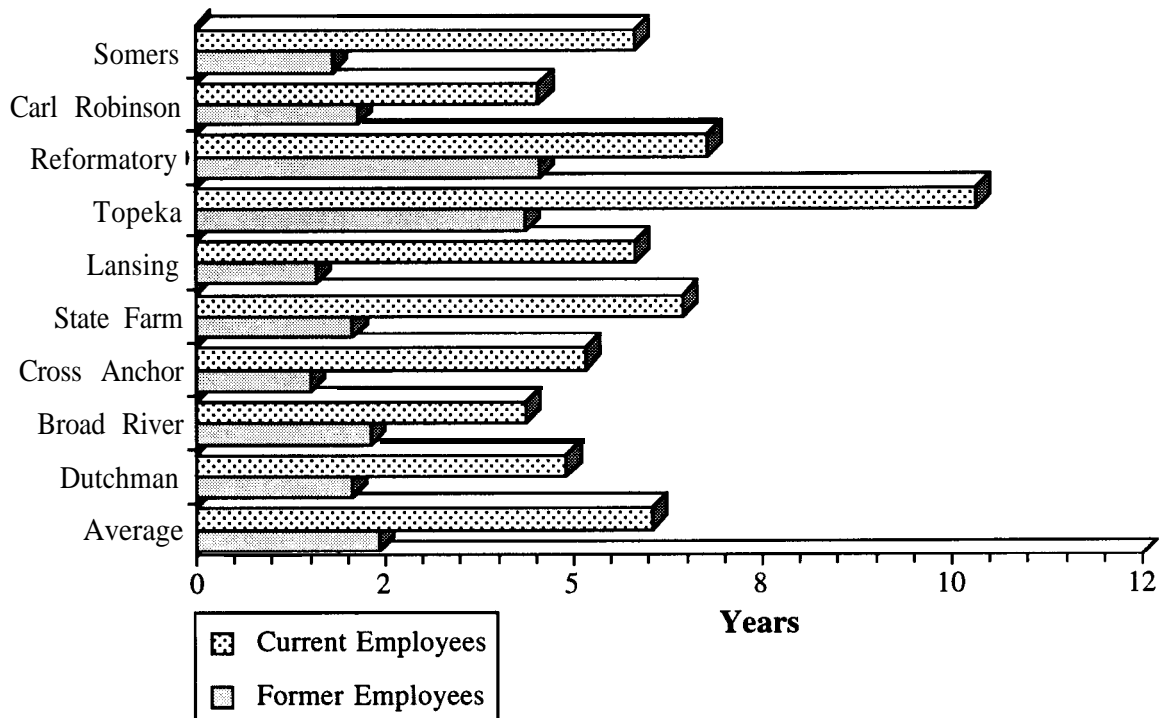
The fact that people enter the corrections workforce at different points in their lives would seem to have implications for corrections administrators and adds one more dimension to the notion of staff diversity. Levels of maturity are in some measure dependent upon the amount of life experience a person has gained. Entry-level employees supervise inmates, some of whom are very difficult to manage and who may require a seasoned and experienced person to effectively supervise and direct their behavior. In some prison systems, corrections officers are assigned or select their assignments based on their length of service. A consequence of the latter practice is that the more senior and experienced staff select assignments that frequently place them in little or no contact with the more difficult-to-manage inmates and sometimes in no direct contact with any inmates. Should assignments also be based on age? Should the age of an employee be taken into consideration? Managers might raise these questions based on the data in a staff information system. For example, Figure 13 presents the average age at hire of current and former employees. A manager may want to try to find out why there are great disparities at Cross Anchor and Topeka.

Figure 13. Age of Current and Former Employees at Hire
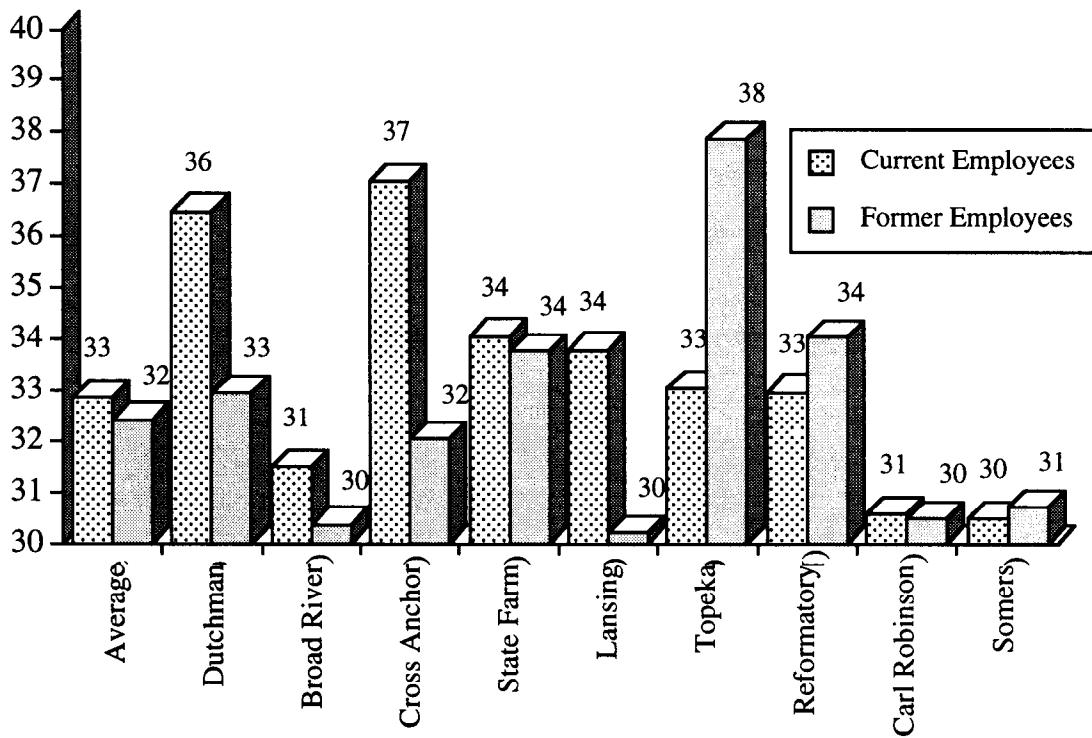
Important trends in employee turnover can be highlighted by examining the differences between employees who stay with institutions as opposed to those who leave. While these comparisons do not provide easy answers, they do provide starting points for investigations into the reasons behind staff departures. Knowing who left an institution and who stayed with it will help administrators to tailor management styles, programs, and practices to increase the satisfaction of current staff and thereby reduce turnover.

Analyzing More Than One Characteristic at Once

After examining the differences in one particular characteristic between the current and former employee groups, managers can benefit by looking at more than one particular piece of information at a time. People are much more complicated than one specific statistic can express. Gender information, for example, may provide a good starting point for managers to learn about their staff, but gender and ethnic information, taken together, will provide a more finely drawn portrait of the staff.

The more characteristics examined, the more detailed the picture.

Several types of information can be obtained by manipulating the data in this manner. For example, this analysis could tell managers that the largest "subpopulation" among the current staff at an institution is composed of white males between the ages of 30 and 40. Conversely, it could show that there are only three nonwhite females at the same institution. Managers could then ensure that those three employees are not overlooked by programs and services aimed at the largest "subpopulation."

Current Employees' Race and Gender

Within the nine prisons as a whole, most employees in the workforce were white males (56.5% average), while nonwhite females formed the smallest category (6.9%). Nonwhite males and white females were represented just about equally, at 18.5 and 18.1 percent, respectively. The range and diversity of the race/gender composition of each prison's workforce were extensive. The percentage of white males was as high as 76.5 at the State Farm and as low as 20.5 at Broad River. Nonwhite males formed the largest portion of the staff at Broad River (53.3%) and the smallest at the Indiana State Farm (2.1%). White females within the prison workforce ranged from a high of 28.1 percent at Topeka to a low of 9.7 percent at Somers.
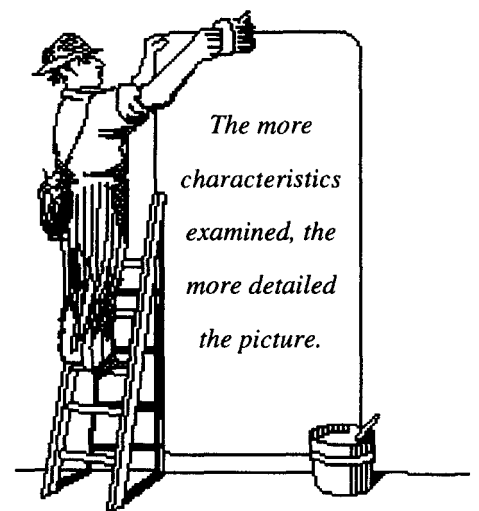
Nonwhite females were most represented at Broad River (14.8%) and were absent from the prison staff to the greatest degree at the State Farm (0.4%).

The average percentage of the workforce in each race/gender category masks the wide differences in the race/gender composition of each of the nine prisons. With the exception of one prison, Broad River, the largest segment of the workforce is white males. The size of the remaining three categories, however, varied dramatically from prison to prison. For example, the second largest gender/race component was nonwhite males at two prisons (Somers and Carl Robinson); white females at six prisons (Lansing, Topeka, Indiana Reformatory, Cross Anchor, Indiana State Farm, and Dutchman); and white males at one prison (Broad River). The smallest category at eight of the prisons was nonwhite female employees, again with the exception of Broad River (where it was the white female category). The degree to which the percentages varied is more clearly seen graphically. Figure 14 depicts the percentage of staff in each of the four race/gender categories.

Figure 14. Percentage of Current Staff in Four Race/Gender Categories

Legend:
☐ % White male employees
▨ % Nonwhite male employees
▨ % White female employees
■ % Nonwhite female employees
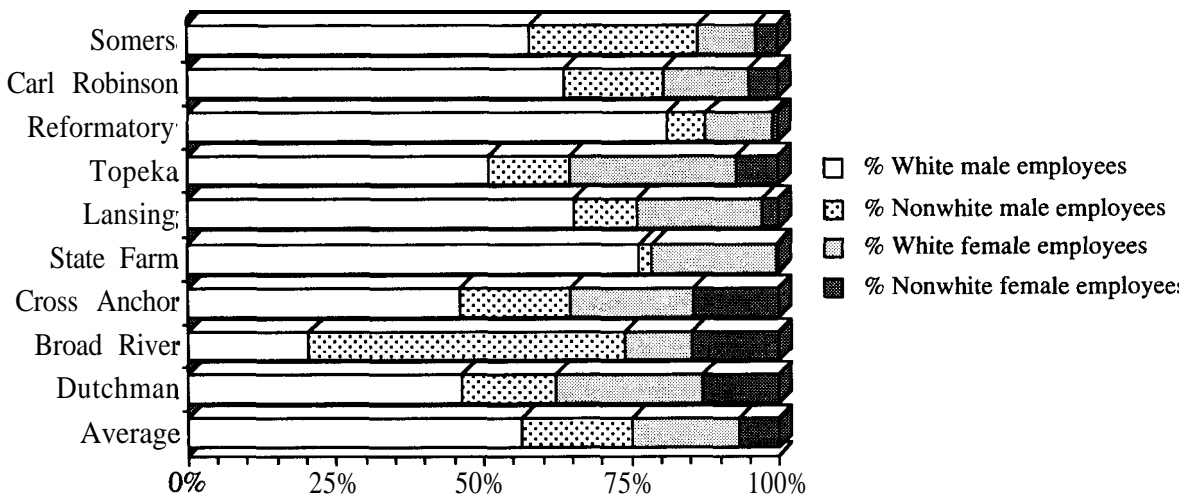
Former Employees' Race and Gender

Figure 15 depicts the racial and gender characteristics of employees leaving each institution and the average among the facilities. The greatest percentage of employees leaving the nine focus institutions were white males. Of the group that departed, 48.6 percent were white males, 22.6 percent were nonwhite males, 21.5 percent were white females, and 7.3 percent were nonwhite females.

Figure 15. Percentage of Former Staff
in Four Race/Gender Categories

	% White male employees	% White female employees
	% Nonwhite male employees	% Nonwhite female employees
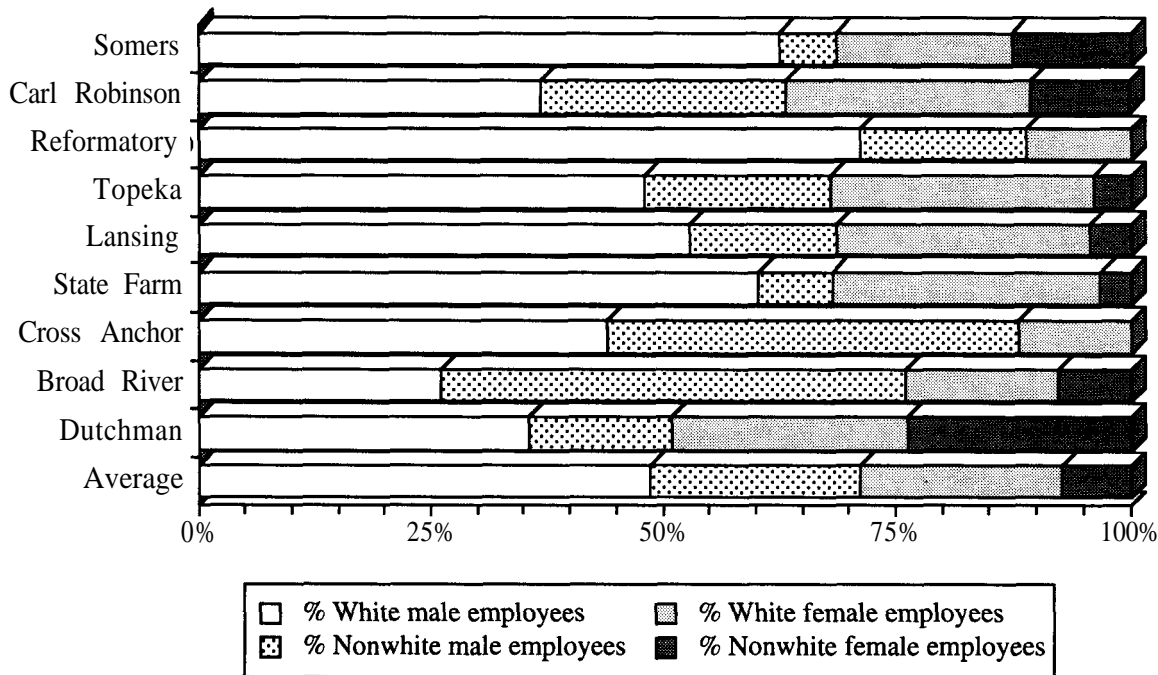
The highest percentage of white males leaving an institution was 62.5 from Somers, while the lowest was 26.0 from Broad River. Fifty percent of the employees leaving Broad River were nonwhite males, while only 6.2 percent of the departing staff at Somers were nonwhite males. Among the nine institutions, the highest concentration of white females left from the Indiana State Farm, and the lowest percentage left the Indiana Reformatory. While 23.7 percent of the employees leaving Dutchman were nonwhite females, no nonwhite females departed from the Indiana Reformatory or Cross Anchor.

Up to this point, analysis has focused on comparing one or two characteristics of the current and former employee populations to determine differences and similarities. From that analysis, we have found that there is a possible problem with the number of females actually employed by the institutions. This accounts for their high turnover as a group. It may be helpful for managers to examine the groups with the highest turnover rates more closely. While these specific comparisons can be helpful to discover who exactly is in the highest turnover groups, a note of caution is needed. Over-focusing on one group may mean losing sight of the overall retention

problem or the larger group that needs attention. This micro-analysis can be useful, however, as an added picture of the employees who are leaving.

High-Level Analysis

We have already separated female employees by their age at the time of hire and by their length of service, but we can go further. We can separate this group by ethnic origin to see whether white females or nonwhite females are more likely to leave (or are under-represented in the workforce), their age at hire, and length of service. This can help managers determine the specific problems that may cause females to leave the employ of the agency or if there should be more comprehensive hiring efforts aimed at this specific group.

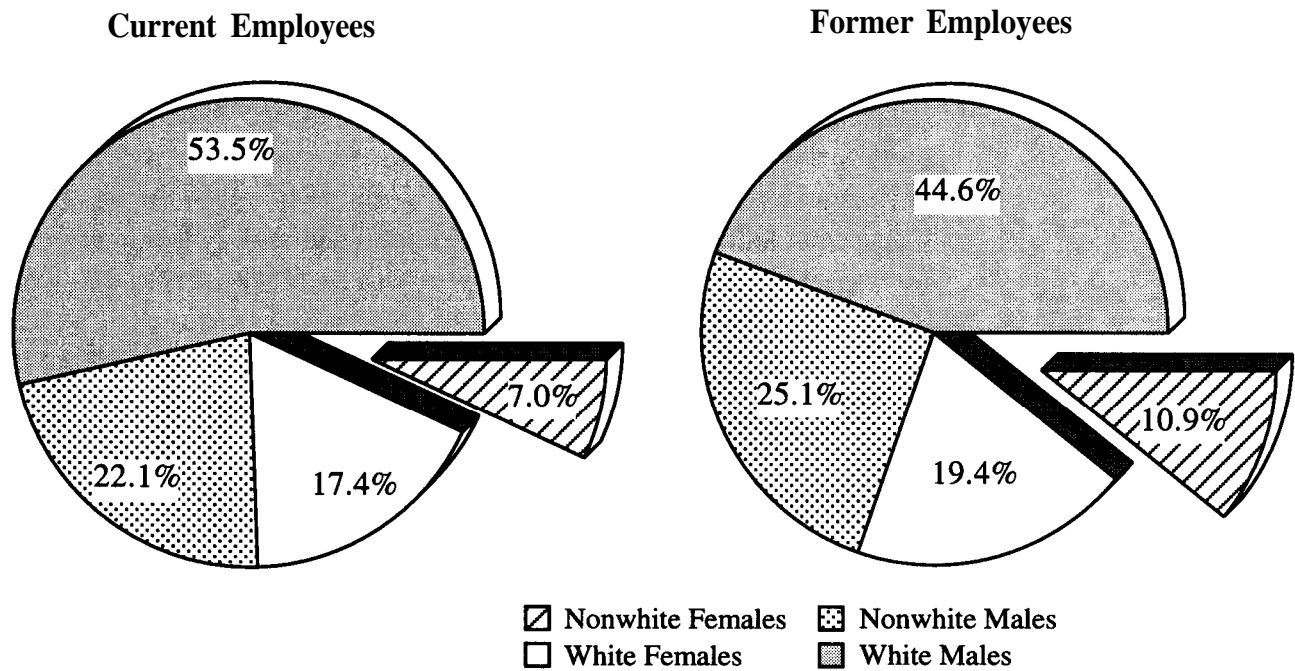### Ethnic Background. Gender, and Length of Service

When looking at the three categories together (ethnic background, gender and length of service), we first find that the group with the highest turnover rate among the nine surveyed institutions consisted of employees with less than one year of service (28.1%). A breakdown of this particular group by race and ethnic origin reveals a substantial disparity between the percentage of current nonwhite female employees in this group. Nonwhite females make up 6.9 percent of the current employees with less than one year of service, while representing 10.9 percent of the former employees with less than one year of service. The results of analysis of both groups can be seen in Figure 16.

Nonwhite females make up 6.9 percent of the current employee group with less than one year of service, while representing 10.9 percent of the former employees with less than one year of service.

Ethnic Background. Gender, and Age at Time of Hire

We can run the same analysis of the group with the highest turnover among the age at time of hire categories. This reveals that the highest turnover rate was found in the group of employees hired between the ages of 25 and 29 (12.7%). A closer look at the gender and ethnic makeup of this category reveals a large difference between current and former employees, specifically in the nonwhite female group. Nonwhite females make up 14.3 percent of this category among former employees, while nonwhite females hired between 25 and 29 represent only 6.4 percent of the current employees.

This analysis shows that among these institutions, nonwhite females hired between the ages of 25 and 29 are the group most difficult to hire and

Figure 16.
Percentage of Current and Former Employees
with Less Than One Year of Experience by Race/Gender Categories

Current Employees

53.5%

22.1%

17.4%

7.0%

Former Employees

44.6%

25.1%

19.4%

10.9%

☑ Nonwhite Females ⊡ Nonwhite Males
☐ White Females ▨ White Males

retain. We have also found that nonwhite females with less than one year of experience are a group manifesting comparatively high turnover. What does this mean? The answer will vary from institution to institution and agency to agency. In some cases, the findings may reflect the ethnic distribution of the community outside the prison or within the jurisdiction. In others, managers may want to examine recruitment practices, gender and/or ethnic sensitivity training for staff, or promotion practices. Exit interviews with all departing employees are important; however, examination of the results of the exit interviews of nonwhite females may produce facts not otherwise known about the institution or agency climate.

Conclusions

The use of a staff information system to collect and analyze data is one element of a well-rounded staff management initiative. Determining "who staff are" based on demographic data can help managers build and maintain staff morale. However, it is crucial to remember that each staff

member, regardless of the categories into which he or she falls, is as individual as the institution in which he or she works.

At the outset of this study, we assumed that much of the information we sought would be numerical and would lend itself to manipulation and analysis. As shown in Chapters IV and V, that numerical data is very important. However, as time went by, we discovered that how employees felt and what they thought could not be reduced to numbers. It is this fact, more than any other, that should guide corrections administrators. Not only should you know "who your staff is" by studying the numbers, but it is crucial to their opinion of the institution and agency that you know what troubles and pleases them. The way to find that out is to talk with them, not to them.

Chapter VI
Overview and Assessment of Generally Accepted Staff Retention Strategies

As a general rule, top managers in corrections (directors, deputy directors, etc.) have an insight into and empathy for the rank and file that comes from having once been a line worker themselves. Across the board, top management respect their employees, and also have a sense of the root causes of employee dissatisfaction that may contribute to staff turnover. All of the departments studied had instituted at least several programs aimed at raising morale or assisting employees with personal problems that might adversely affect their work or that might be exacerbated by the work environment.

Managers' respect for their employees is not in doubt.

The impact of these programs as vehicles for employee empowerment and/or increasing retention is questionable. Staff who were interviewed appeared to place a higher emphasis on tangible evidence of management concern (such as support in dispute situations, a good work environment, performance-based promotions, and adoption of employee suggestions) than on organized programs specifically aimed at letting employees know that management is concerned with their well-being. In most cases, employee satisfaction was linked directly to the quality of institutional management. In those institutions where wardens exercised hands-on management, where staff perceived that management supported employees, and where perceived favoritism and preferential treatment were minimal, indicators of job satisfaction were the highest.

Some management strategies adopted over time by various agencies seek to increase an employee's sense of loyalty to the employer; some work toward increasing an employee's competence and therefore confidence. Others assist individuals with personal problems that may be affecting their performance on the job. Still others involve employees in the management process. These strategies, designed to respond to the needs of employees in both their professional and personal lives, serve to heighten employee satisfaction and increase their job commitment.

Some of the programs and initiatives target staff directly, by recognizing them for good work or assisting them with personal problems. Others are intended to improve the management of the entire organization, which filters down to staff in their everyday contact with first-line supervisors as well as their less frequent contact with top-level agency management personnel.

The programs surveyed are all viable initiatives for managers to consider when setting up an overall staff retention strategy. However, what is their practical worth? How do they "stack up" in reality? During the course of this study, we asked management and line staff from the nine institutions what their perceptions and opinions were of various programs in practice in their agencies and institutions. The findings of those discussions can assist other administrators in gauging the success of practices they may adhere to or wish to implement. The concerns and opinions of both-management and line personnel are presented together so that in cases where a dichotomy exists, practitioners can benefit from both perspectives.

> *To benefit the whole agency, this chapter reflects the concerns of both management and line personnel.*

Agency-Wide Initiatives
Designed to Retain Employees

While instituting programs geared toward reducing turnover was one issue raised by management during interviews, recruiting and training an appropriate workforce was another. In the departments surveyed, directors feel hamstrung to some extent by freezes on budgets, hiring, and pay raises which, coupled with rapid corrections expansion, had resulted in a thinly spread, stressed staff that feels "overworked and underloved." Experienced staff are scattered among too many institutions, and the demand for additional staff limits the ability to pick and choose employees that corrections managers would like to have.

Screening and Hiring

Many managers, especially those in personnel, were interested in fine-tuning the hiring process to screen out candidates who are not appropriate for the job. They cited employees who had been hired despite arrest records and/or poor physical conditioning and who were psy-

chologically unsuited for working with inmates. It is crucial that new hires, especially newly hired correctional officers, be given an accurate picture of what to expect when they go to work inside an institution. Just as in all other professions, there are people who are suited for corrections employment and people who are not. Many of the former employees interviewed indicated that working in corrections was not what they thought it would be, and that this was the main factor or a contributing factor in their decision to leave. The time for an employee to discover that he or she is not cut out for the job is before the agency makes the investment in training. If the potential hiree knows what he or she is getting into, and feels that he or she cannot handle what is expected, the likelihood is high that the person will leave before the training investment is made. If, however, a newly assigned correctional officer begins his or her duties and finds only then that he. or she cannot "cut it" and leaves the agency, the investment must be repeated.

> *If new hires know what their jobs will really be like, they will know whether they want to stay in training or find other employment.*

> *Pre-screening of prospective employees reduces turnover by eliminating unsuitable candidates before hiring.*

Training

Once suitable candidates are selected, one of the major investments that corrections agencies make in their employees is the time and cost involved in training them for their jobs. Many hours of pre-service training are required in most jurisdictions so that new employees are trained in the specific requirements of security and inmate management and are equipped to handle any situation that may arise once they are assigned to an institution. Once an individual has been working in an institution, in-service training is generally required so that the employee can be kept abreast of the newest developments in health, technology, and other areas. Specialized training for various aspects of corrections work, such as emergency response or crisis counseling, can also be provided on an in-service basis. In some agencies, additional training is provided to newly promoted personnel so that they have some guidance in performing their new supervisory tasks. Some agencies have struck agreements with local colleges for tuition fee reductions or special courses for correctional employees wishing to climb the promotional ladder.

> *Types of Training*
> - *pre-service*
> - *in-service*
> - *specialized*
> - *supervisory*
> - *college*
> - *outside agency*

> *Benefits of Training*
>
> *improved competence*
> ⬇
> *improved confidence*
> ⬇
> *improved performance*
> ⬇
> *satisfaction*
> ⬇
> *loyalty*

Training is not a case of an agency pouring money down the drain. The better trained a workforce is, the more efficiently they can do their jobs. In addition, adequately trained employees feel much more
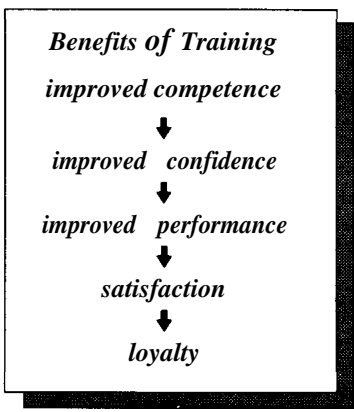
competent when they are called on to perform their duties and are, in turn, more confident. People generally perform better when they feel that they know what they are doing; correctional employees are no different. Sending its employees into assignments with the proper preparation reinforces the fact that the agency cares about them. This increases loyalty.

Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training is generally divided into two phases: the classroom or training academy phase, in which new recruits are taught in groups much like school classes, and on-the-job training, in which the new employees learn their responsibilities under the guidance of an experienced officer. Each of the phases holds equal importance for new employees. During the course of this study, we heard from several employees in different agencies that the period of on-the-job training received was too short, that academy training did not cover the situations that they experienced on assignment, or they did not feel prepared before their assignment to an institution. Each phase of the training program should be given equal weight. Classroom notes cannot substitute for actual experience, but neither can an unprepared person be expected to know how to react when placed in an unfamiliar situation.

> *Classroom training must be balanced with on-the-job training to prepare new staff for their positions.*

In-Service Training

Corrections agencies also invest in training their stable workforce. In-service training provides employees with the latest information on technological advances in corrections, health concerns, and new corrections concepts, among other areas. For example, the presence of new strains of antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis requires corrections agencies to change the way they manage at-risk and ill inmates. In-service training for employees provides information regarding how to make those changes. As with pre-service training, keeping employees informed increases competence and confidence, thereby improving job performance. The continued investment also underscores the agency's commitment to its employees.

> *In-Service Training Topics:*
> - *Health concerns (TB, AIDS)*
> - *Stress reduction*
> - *Tactical Strategies*

Management Training

The training continuum should not end with regular in-service training. Assistance in achieving the balance between holding employees accountable for their actions, a necessary supervisory duty, and earning their trust and respect can be provided in specialized training

for supervisory staff. Managers must know how to manage in order to do so successfully. In some situations, individuals receive promotions to higher ranks and become supervisors of their former peers. Providing newly promoted staff members with training in peer supervision helps to smooth the transition. Mentoring, or the practice of having an individual "shadow" a more experienced staff member, is another strategy for learning how to be a manager. Supervisory personnel who can perform their duties while maintaining a rapport with staff are the glue that holds a workforce together.

Types of Management Training to Consider:

- *Peer supervision*
- *Mentoring*

Training Provided Outside the Agency

Training does not stop with that provided by the agency. In some cases, corrections agencies have reached agreements with local colleges or universities for reduced tuitions or cooperative education for corrections employees. This enables the individuals to further their formal educations, making them more attractive candidates for promotion. The combination of experience gained during correctional employment and formal education in a classroom benefits the employees by assisting their climb up the career ladder, and benefits the agency by improving the quality of its staff.

Additional training outside the agency is provided by national correctional resource agencies such as the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). NIC operates a training academy in Colorado, at which specialized sessions are held for various corrections personnel.

Training Resources to Explore

- *National Institute of Corrections: Jails Division, Academy (1-800-995 6429), and Information Center (I-800-877-1461)*

- *National Institute of Corrections: Prisons and Community Corrections Division (1-800-995-6423)*

- *Local colleges and universities*

- *Cooperative ventures with other corrections or law enforcement agencies*

- *Teleconferencing*

- *Videoconferencing*

The Promotional Ladder and Retirement

Employees who stay with a corrections agency move on a track toward promotion and eventual retirement. Some individuals progress quickly along the promotional track, while others remain at the line officer level throughout their careers. The incentive factor of promotion is a powerful force in attracting and retaining personnel, as is the security of a retirement income after a career of service. In addition to the higher salaries of higher ranks, the prestige of earning the rank of sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, or even higher-level management positions is extremely attractive. Employees seeking promotions do their jobs better and work harder, both beneficial to the agency. Employees intending to retire from the agency make a career within the agency, providing experience and stability.

Pay and Benefits

Nothing was mentioned with more frequency by managers and employees as a factor in employee satisfaction than pay and benefits. Most managers expressed frustration with the state-prescribed system and indicated they would like to have more discretion in granting raises and bonuses to employees. Employees, subscribing to the philosophy that self-worth is measured by pay, felt that low pay represented a lack of respect for their profession. Pay and benefits were also routinely compared with what was available to law enforcement officers and, in some instances, to employees of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. It is interesting to note that, while benefits were mentioned by employees as an enticement to work in the corrections profession and while low pay was often a complaint, low pay was not commonly cited as a primary reason for leaving corrections.

The Promotion Process

The methods by which promotions are granted are an important factor in overall employee perceptions regarding the agency. Time and again, the employees interviewed for this study expressed resentment toward what they perceived to be favoritism in the promotional process. Whether such favoritism truly existed was not investigated. However, the fact that the employees felt that it did exist was extremely important. That perception colored their overall opinion of the agency and the institution in which they worked. They felt, to varying degrees, that if promotions were given mainly to managers' favorites, they should not bother trying to do better because it would be a wasted effort.

As discussed earlier, employees bristled at any policy and/or practice that they perceived as open to abuse by management or favoritism. Awards programs, scheduling of assignments, and promotions were frequently seen as being preferential. In fact, "cronyism" involving job assignments, promotions, and discipline invoked the most complaint from employees. The Kansas Department of Corrections combatted this perception through the use of an objectively based promotion policy involving education, performance evaluations, interviews, and seniority. The Department also implemented "staff rotation" to eliminate the perception of favoritism in job and shift assignment. Employees still managed to find fault, however, with the

heavy emphasis on seniority in job assignments and the hardship involved with shift rotation (e.g., disrupted sleep patterns, difficulty with childcare, etc.).

To a certain extent, correctional managers' hands are tied regarding the promotional ladder because of state Civil Service promotional requirements. Some agencies are held to more restrictive rules than others. However, merit does play a part in all promotions. While it may not be possible to make merit a purely quantifiable aspect of overall consideration in the granting of promotions, an agency approach that addresses the entire issue of employee performance feedback can reassure staff that they are being treated fairly.

> *Employees who are given regular performance feedback will understand why they are or are not being promoted.*

To be sure, any system in which individuals are promoted over their peers will always be subject to a certain amount of "sour grapes." However, this can be minimized if the individuals promoted are truly being rewarded for merit. It is important that employees see that good behavior, hard work, and loyalty to the agency, among other qualities, are the keys to success. If, in fact, employees see that favoritism is being practiced, or that individuals are succeeding due to manipulation of the system, they will become bitter.

> *"Sour grapes" will always exist. But they can be minimized if employees see that the promotional process is fair.*

Retirement

Employee retirement systems are relatively constant in state and federal service; a percentage of the pay of the employee's three highest-paid years or last three years of service is the general arrangement. Many of the employees interviewed indicated that this provided them with a sense of security, and several had plans to put in 20 or 25 years of service and then move on to different careers, using the financial cushion of their state retirements. Being rewarded for a career of service with a relatively generous retirement package is an attractive recruitment and retention tool.

Overall, there was an acknowledgment on the part of employees that their profession afforded them job security. With the exception of employees in one department of corrections-Indiana-most employees were generally pleased with their retirement benefit package. A manager in Indiana summed it up, saying, "In many states you work 20 years and [you're] out [on retirement]. In Indiana, you work until you drop."

> *Make sure that new hires realize the financial security of retiring after the required number of years ofservice to the corrections agency.*

Generally speaking, state Civil Service requirements entail regular reviews of an employee's performance by supervisors. The ways in which these reviews are carried out are very important to an employee's perception of his supervisors and what the agency as a whole expects from him or her. People respond to constructive criticism much more readily than to negative statements. Punitive performance reviews are a negative experience for reviewer and reviewee alike. Moreover, not being given a chance to discuss the findings creates frustration on the part of the individual. Employees must be praised for their good qualities and recommendations for improvement must be given for those qualities or behaviors requiring improvement. A face-to-face discussion with the reviewer ensures a mutual understanding. Ideally, performance reviews should be ongoing; that is, supervisors should be involved enough in daily operations to give praise or correct a wrong immediately. When this occurs, the required performance reviews offer no surprises and become a constructive means of improvement and communication.

Recognizing Individual Employees and Responding to Their Needs

Corrections employees are human beings, subject to the same needs and foibles as anyone. That they are the most valuable resource of a corrections agency necessitates sensitivity to their natures and their problems. Keeping individual workers satisfied and stable is crucial to the overall well-being of the workforce and the agency. By recognizing the human need for praise, as well as protecting the mental and physical health of their employees, agencies can demonstrate their concern to employees, cementing their loyalties, while protecting the agencies' investments in them.

Awards

Short of awarding promotions for merit, agencies and institutions can recognize employees' performance with awards. Selection of Employees of the Month or Year is a relatively common occurrence in many
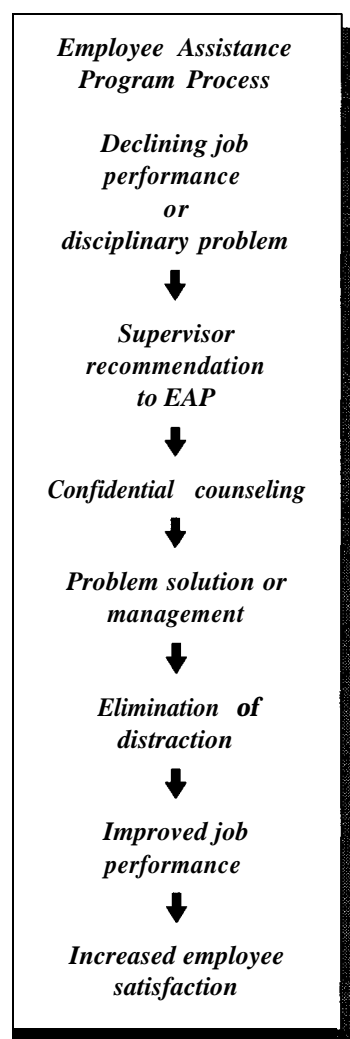
jurisdictions. The awards range from plaques to specially designated parking spaces. However, these programs can also be perceived as unfair and cause "sour grapes" among employees (see Chapter III, Management's Responsibilities for Staff Retention). When true merit is recognized in an agency or institution where communication is good (so that other employees know that the chosen individual is truly a hard worker with good behavior), the prestige of the awards serves to reinforce the notion that good work will be recognized. This, in turn, builds loyalty to the organization and contentment among employees.

> *As with promotions, ensure that awards really mean something, and that they go to truly deserving candidates.*

Employee Assistance Programs

Recognizing the stresses associated with the demands of the corrections profession, all of the departments surveyed made available some sort of Employee Assistance Program (EAP). In many cases, however, employees were either unaware of the existence of such programs or distrustful of department-sponsored counseling. For the most part, it appeared that employees were in favor of their availability for other staff members who may need them. The programs' actual impact was hard to ascertain, because most employees surveyed did not indicate substance abuse or personal problems resulting from job-related stress, despite assurances that acknowledgment of such a problem would be held in confidence.

Increased sensitivity to personal problems that an employee may be having is in the best interest of both the agency and the individual. Corrections, like other law enforcement careers, is stressful. In some cases, employees may become involved in personal problems caused by or compounded by job stress. If they bring the problems to work, performance suffers, hurting both the employee and the agency. Agency responses such as EAPs assist individuals in coping with problems such as substance abuse, financial difficulties, or marital problems. In most EAPs, supervisors formally recommend enrollment in counseling to an employee demonstrating problems on the job. The counseling is confidential and the agency generally pledges that it will not affect the individual's job standing. If, however, an employee refuses to participate in the program and work performance continues to decline, the agency can go through the necessary steps to terminate the employee.

Employee Assistance Program Process

Declining job performance or disciplinary problem

⬇

Supervisor recommendation to EAP

⬇

Confidential counseling

⬇

Problem solution or management

⬇

Elimination of distraction

⬇

Improved job performance

⬇

Increased employee satisfaction

The benefits of EAPs are many for both the individual employee and the agency. The staff member can work through his or her problems, eventually returning to a high level of work performance when the distraction is eliminated. He or she does not lose his/her job, and the counseling is usually paid for by the agency. The price paid by the agency is small in comparison to terminating the employee and refilling the position with a new employee who requires training. The agency also receives the benefits of the employee's improvement in work performance. Less tangibly, the message that the agency cares about the employee and his/her problems and is willing to help is reinforced, resulting in increased loyalty on the part of the individual.

Some employees are suspicious of EAPs, feeling that the information they give during counseling will be used against them personally or professionally. This concern was raised by a few individuals during the interviews conducted for this study. Employees must be assured of confidentiality, and EAP counselors and other involved parties must be held strictly accountable for ensuring it. As in other areas of agency functioning, policy and procedures regarding EAPs are necessary to ensure that the programs are used only to benefit employees and the agencies they work for.

Department-Sponsored Child Care

Management personnel described department-sponsored child care as a desired practice in three of the four jurisdictions studied. However, the pool of employees studied did not cite child care as a major employment issue and, in general, were not supportive of it if it involved having the program on the grounds of the institution. Most employees interviewed who had children were satisfied with their individually arranged form of care (most commonly by a spouse, relatives, or private day care). At the time of the study, the Connecticut Department of Corrections had made the greatest inroads in providing (and winning participation in) a child care program. However, it should be noted that the employee still had to pay for it and it was offered offsite, in close proximity to several major Department facilities. It was operated by a private manufacturer of children's toys. After the study was completed, the National Institute of Corrections

The cost of counseling through an EAP is less than the cost of terminating the employee and training his or her replacement.

Some employees were suspicious of department-sponsored counseling, regardless of assurances of confidentiality.

Most employees do not support department-sponsored child care if it takes place on institutional grounds.

awarded a grant to the South Carolina Department of Corrections to study the need for, develop, and operate a pilot child care center for correctional employees.

Wellness Programs

Another agency or institution-level program requiring a small agency investment in return for large payoffs is a wellness program. These programs can vary from printing low-fat recipes in agency newsletters to sponsoring exercise programs, physical examinations, mammograms for female employees, stress-reduction workshops, eye and blood pressure screenings, healthy foods in the cafeteria, and other initiatives. A healthier workforce takes less sick days, requiring less overtime to fill the posts of sick employees. In addition, exercise and good health tend to improve individuals' moods and attitudes, making them and those around them happier. In many cases, agencies can use existing resources in wellness programs; for example, most institutions have fitness equipment. Creative scheduling can allow staff to use the equipment during times when inmates are not. Many new institutions are being constructed to include staff exercise areas. In addition to the costs associated with sick time, physically fit employees are better suited to performing the physical activity sometimes associated with maintaining security.

> *Ideas for Wellness Initiatives*
> - *Sponsor staff sports teams (bowling, softball).*
> - *Print healthy recipes in newsletters.*
> - *Explore health screenings (blood pressure, mammograms, glaucoma).*
> - *Sponsor stress reduction workshops.*
> - *Schedule staff use of institutional fitness equipment.*

Corrections Agency Policies and Practices

Equal Opportunity Policies

In keeping with government mandates regarding the hiring of minority workers, most corrections agencies have some form of equal opportunity policy in place. Some have staff devoted to ensuring compliance with mandates, while others operate with less focus on mandates. In any case, the corrections workforce is changing. It is evolving from a historically white-male hierarchy to a diverse representation of ethnicities composed of both male and female workers.

This change, like the overall change in American society, has not always been smooth. Controversies surrounding the concept of equal

opportunity hiring include "tokenism" and "reverse discrimination." Again, the agency's focus must remain on fairness and merit as the criteria for hiring and promotion. Equal opportunity policies must be understood by all staff so they do not feel threatened by them.

Efforts to diversify the workforce through the recruitment and advancement of women and minorities were met with skepticism by some employees interviewed. Their comments validated the difficulty experienced by women and minorities in management positions in winning the respect and command of their subordinates, Some female line employees felt that they would not be backed up as quickly as a male in an emergency situation, or that they had to prove themselves to male coworkers. In addition, some employees expressed an opinion that staff members separated themselves along racial or ethnic lines.

> *While development of policies on discrimination issues is important, enforcement of the policies is what will result in a fair system.*

Each agency studied has firm anti-discrimination policies in place, but the overall struggle for equal opportunity is ongoing in corrections, as in all other professions. Perceptions of the success of these policies varied among employees. Each employee interviewed knew the privacy restrictions placed on opposite-gender staff (cross-gender pat searches and shower/toilet supervision are generally barred except in emergency situations). However, having such policies is only the first step. They must be ingrained in each employee during training and strictly enforced within the workplace. Some male employees interviewed during this study indicated that they felt that females could not do the job as effectively as males, highlighting the need for continuing education in pre-service and in-service training. Re-educating those with discriminatory attitudes is necessary to ensure continuing racial and gender diversity in the workplace.

> *Often female employees on any one shift are too few to form a support group.*

Support groups for female and minority employees were available in three of the four departments of corrections that were studied. However, staff indicating a perception of gender- or race-related problems, generally, were not aware of such programs within their own agency. Those who were aware of problems saw better training and management, not support groups, as the preferred solution. Female employees working in correctional institutions, who found their numbers spread even more thinly across different shifts, expressed frustration with achieving the sufficient presence necessary to constitute a meaningful support group.

Overtime Policies

The current trend in corrections reflects that of the larger world—money is tight and cutbacks are a sad fact of life. Often, vacant positions cannot be filled because of budget shortfalls, requiring the use of overtime to fill critical posts. Forced overtime is an issue in corrections due to the fact that shift work requires flexible childcare schedules and other arrangements. Usually, overtime pay is attractive to employees, but a pattern of forced overtime and double shifts tends to wear staff down and generate resentment.

On the flip side of the coin, overtime can be abused. In some systems, especially those in which unions are powerful, employees control the overtime assignments and the amount of allowable overtime, usually based on seniority. This has resulted in some line officers making double or triple their base salaries in overtime. Some of these practices have been eliminated by agency budget reductions, but abuse is an ongoing problem. New agency employees do not have the opportunity to earn overtime money, while longtime employees pad their salaries.

Overtime and the assignment of overtime shifts must be controlled. Critical complement must always be reached on each shift in every institution. The hiring of additional staff to reach critical complement, while representing both an initial and continuing outlay of funds, is usually more cost-efficient in the long run than rampant overtime. In agencies where overtime assignments are staff-controlled, the practice must end (and agreements reached with collective bargaining units, if necessary). Furthermore, overtime, if necessary, must be assigned equitably, not on the basis of seniority. While senior staff are happy, new staff will resent being "locked out" of the opportunity to make extra money. The fair distribution of overtime will eventually result in employees' confidence in the agency's fairness (although experienced employees who count on overtime money as "their right" may initially resist changes).

> *Remedying Overtime Abuse and Problems*
>
> - *Eliminate staff control* of overtime assignments *(supervisory duty only).*
> - *Eliminate seniority basis for overtime assignments.*
> - *Institute rotating lists or other methods of assignment equalization.*
> - *Hire enough staff to reach critical complement on every shift.*

> *Hiring enough staff to reach critical complement is more cost effective than paying overtime.*

Employee Grievance Processes

Many employees questioned the fairness of the grievance process in their agencies, despite efforts by management to eliminate the appearance of

facing a stacked deck. Most employees surveyed were aware that the process existed. Both those who used it and those who did not felt that it was less than satisfactory in achieving resolution. The feelings of managers who were interviewed were summed up in the words of a Kansas correctional administrator, who said, "If an employee has been wronged, make it right. Don't just rubber-stamp the warden's decision."

Sick Leave and Workers' Compensation

A general practice among all employers, whether in the correctional or private sector, is to set aside a number of paid days each year for an employee who is sick. Generally, as with other public-sector jobs, corrections employees can "carry over" a certain number of sick days each year, usually receiving pay for the accrual at retirement. However, what can an agency do for a seriously ill employee who has used up his or her sick days? Some agencies offer leaves without pay for employees who will return to work; in other agencies, employees donate sick days to a sick leave "bank." In some cases, employees abuse sick time and discipline is necessary. However, some flexibility on the part of the agency usually results in the employees' return to work.

As employers, corrections agencies are subject to Worker's Compensation laws. In most cases, injuries suffered on the job are legitimate, as are the reasons for a worker's extended medical leave. However, sometimes Worker's Compensation is abused. Enforcing Worker's Compensation policies is important to an agency's overall perception by its employees, going back to the fact that being visibly fair to all staff plays a large role in their loyalty to the agency.

Agency Mission and Goals

As discussed in Chapter II, "The Importance of a Clear Philosophy and Mission," employees must be familiar with the agency's overall purpose and philosophy in order to internalize it and bring it to bear on their own work. Constant communication of the agency mission statement and goals is important and can be accomplished through such media as the agency newsletter and bulletin board postings. New employees can be made thoroughly familiar with the mission and goals

during pre-service training, and in-service training can be a refresher for employees with longer service records.

Ensuring that staff are familiar with policy and procedure is important to their internalization of it. Holding staff accountable for adherence to policy and procedure, whether accomplished by audit, informal observation, or investigation, is crucial. Within any organization, certain personalities will always resist what they see as "regimentation" or "change." However, policy and procedure, when combined with accountability, can ensure that the agency's overall purpose is not lost by individuals or units.

Never assume that every staff member knows what the agency's mission and goals are. Take every opportunity possible to print it or state it.

The Accreditation Process

The accreditation process, rather than accreditation itself, was cited as being of major value by employees and employers alike. It was seen as a positive program that affected not only increased staff retention but also all other aspects of the institutions. The process of gaining accreditation appeared to be the key to this unified statement. As part of this process, policies and procedures are drafted, reviewed, and promulgated, thus contributing to an increase in employee knowledge and comfort about their operation. In essence, employees participating in the accreditation process felt empowered and connected with the workings of the institution.

The process of accreditation, which includes policy and procedure development, helps employees understand the agency they work for and the work that they do.

Workplace Improvement Practices

A phenomenon in corrections is the fact that employees in systems allowing transfers tend to flock to newly opened institutions within the agency. The environment in a new correctional institution, incorporating the latest space and lighting standards, as well as modern correctional concepts, is attractive to staff. However, many systems have older institutions in which adjustments have been made to accommodate modern concepts.

No one wants to work in a dark, dirty environment. Workplace improvement, even in an old institution, is undertaken by many agencies to improve the outlook of both staff and inmates. Even a coat

of fresh paint can brighten an area considerably. Cosmetic improvements to institutions, as well as renovations, are a strategy undertaken with varying amounts of success. Some institutions are essentially too old to fix, but the agency must make do. Continuing maintenance and attention to problems is necessary.

Other physical improvements within an agency affect staff more directly. Correctional officer uniforms must be extremely versatile; while being easy to clean, they must also look professional and convey an air of authority. They must also be comfortable for the employee. It is important that agencies get staff feedback with regard to uniforms. While it is difficult to please everyone, agreement by most can be accomplished. Uniforms must also reflect the increasing diversity in the workplace; maternity and handicaps must be taken into account. Several of the employees interviewed in this study indicated that their required uniforms were too hot in the summer or did not accommodate pregnancy.

Exit Interviews

If an employee does decide to leave the agency, valuable information can be derived from conducting an exit interview. The employee can indicate sources of dissatisfaction or other reasons for leaving, which the agency can then address. In order for exit interviews to be useful to the agency, however, they must not only be administered, but also analyzed. What the former employee says must be examined; if he or she is another voice in a chorus, managers should look into the issue being raised and determine the extent of the problem.

Managers expressed interest in creating a database through the use of exit interviews to determine why employees left the department. Such a database would be useful in ascertaining whether turnover was related to the inappropriateness of recruits or to policies and practices that pushed good employees out of their careers. It would also help administrators create a profile of the characteristics of a corrections employee who was more likely to become a career employee. Knowing why staff members leave agencies (even when separation is due to natural attrition) is crucial to determining steps to keep the remaining employees.

Management Styles that Contribute to Employee Retention

One of the major findings resulting from interviews with staff in the nine institutions was that their overall satisfaction with their agency employment was as much due to overall satisfaction with what they perceived to be the quality of management as with their salaries or other "incentives." When management was seen as a process in which they could participate and be heard, and when managers were visible and accessible to them, staff generally were much more satisfied with their employment situations. Managers can take these lessons and use them to implement strategies that address staff's desire for visible, accessible, and responsive management.

In contrast with the general findings regarding employee-specific retention initiatives, programs geared toward the department's professional and managerial betterment, which were not specifically aimed toward rank and file workers, were viewed positively by employees. In general terms, managers and employees alike recognized a "gap" of varying sizes between their ranks. In agencies where management staff were visible to line staff inside the institutions, and where they listened and responded to the concerns of line staff, the perceived gap was smaller than in agencies where management staff were seen and communicated with only infrequently.

> *Informal conversations with all levels of staff are a key to building morale.*

Management by Walking Around

Management styles, in and of themselves, can be used as a tool to assess and influence staff satisfaction. "Management by Walking Around" (MBWA) plays several positive roles. In addition to getting a firsthand look at the viability of missions, goals, objectives, policies, and procedures as reflected in everyday practice, managers can talk to staff directly regarding their ideas and opinions. Removing such discussions from the formality of a conference room tends to relax employees and make them more forthcoming with ideas and information.

MBWA has many other benefits in the corrections workplace. During this study, line staff at many of the facilities studied stated that they rarely saw institutional management staff. A "white-shirt vs. blue-

shirt" mentality was reinforced among line staff who felt that management staff had forgotten what it was really like to be among the inmates. MBWA helps to erase that perception among staff; if employees see management staff on a frequent basis and perceive that management listens to their concerns, they tend to feel that they are not faceless cogs on a huge wheel. Agency administration staff can also use this strategy.

Employees surveyed showed no respect for "invisible" wardens, who, according to staff, fostered feelings that they were afraid to venture into the institutions. In those cases, employees' perceptions of the caliber of management reflected on how well top management actually understood the workings of the institution. Their judgment of management's understanding rested on the visibility of administrators inside the facilities. Higher levels of employee satisfaction were found in institutions where staff indicated that top management was often present inside the facility.

It must be noted that MBWA can be perceived by staff as "being checked up on." To an extent, this is true, but if management's presence inside the institutions is an honest method of communication between management and line staff, it is a successful management strategy. During this study, MBWA seemed to be advocated by both top management and the employee workforce. The physical presence of managerial personnel was appreciated by institution workers and generally was well regarded by managers who engaged in the practice.

Open-Door Policies

A corollary of MBWA is the popular notion of having an "open-door policy." This is taken to mean that a staff member can drop in on a manager to talk about issues or concerns. However, in practice, this often becomes a more formal process, including attempting to reach the manager's office and setting up an appointment. In some cases, managers are very difficult to reach, especially when calls are being screened by a secretary. MBWA pre-empts open-door policies to a certain extent, because seeking out employees for informal discussion eliminates the need for them to come to management. However, at the top levels of an agency, administrative demands often drastically

reduce the amount of time that management can spend walking around inside institutions. In this case, open-door policies by which staff can reach managers with a minimum of formality are a valuable addition to an overall management style. Visibility and accessibility, two extremely important elements of staff's perception of management, are aided by the use of both MBWA and open-door policies. Management staff frequently referred having to open-door policies, but staffs expressed distrust of management and their reluctance to criticize because of fear of reprisals from supervisors "skipped over" in the chain of command seemed to undermine the success of such programs.
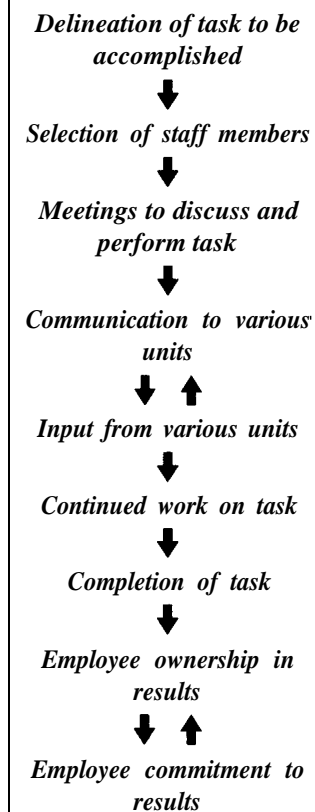
Participatory Management

Participatory management is a management style in which personnel from all areas of the institution or agency are brought in to assist with policy and procedure development and other management activities. Brainstorming, revision, and implementation are carried out by a team of staff members representing all levels and units. The impact of participatory management on staff satisfaction is great, in that staff feel ownership in the activities or implementation. Additionally, the input of staff is ensured, thus increasing their sense of importance within the institution or agency. The staff who participate in the activities go back to their respective units and seek input, as well as disseminate information regarding the activities.

Decentralization and Delegation

In recognition of the perceived distance felt between employees and top management, there have also been attempts to decentralize, delegating responsibility to the institutional level. However, decentralization and empowerment must go hand in hand to be successful in employees' eyes. According to staff, decentralization only works when institutional employees are given responsibility for facility operations through promotions and appointments.

Process of Participatory Management

Delineation of task to be accomplished

⬇

Selection of staff members

⬇

Meetings to discuss and perform task

⬇

Communication to various units

⬇ ⬆

Input from various units

⬇

Continued work on task

⬇

Completion of task

⬇

Employee ownership in results

⬇ ⬆

Employee commitment to results

Conclusions

In the opinion of employees, real recognition and sound institutional management are essential to the creation of a sense of professional worth. That perception of worth was frequently mentioned by management and employees. There was a pervasive feeling at some institutions that "inmates have more rights than staff." Employees at the same institution reported feeling unappreciated. "We do a lot of dangerous work and we're not acknowledged," is how one officer put it.

Employees voiced strong opinions on empowerment-the sharing of responsibility and authority for decisions and activities-and on feeling that they were getting recognition and respect and that their work and job experiences were worth something. Staff responded well to interest from top management and complained in those states where they felt that top management did not care about institutional operations. Nurturing empowerment through soliciting employee input or through mentoring were seen as desirable.

The importance of employees' perception of management cannot be overstated. Pay, availability of other jobs, and benefits were not key factors in high turnover institutions. The quality, skills, and involvement of managers are the keys to staff satisfaction. When asked why turnover at one institution was so low despite low pay, troublesome inmates, and staff shortages, the personnel officer proudly responded, "Cause everyone knows this is the best-run institution in the whole department."

Chapter VII
Self-Assessment for Administrators

Twenty Questions

As we conducted interviews with staff at the nine focus institutions, the questions we asked became less oriented to gathering numerical data and more useful for providing a starting point for a discussion. We asked each employee and former employee the same questions, but each conversation was different. In that vein, following are 20 questions that reflect a lot of the issues we encountered while talking to staff in the focus agencies. They are aimed at both central office and institution managers, and, while there are no formal scoring system or "right" answers, honest answers will prove the most helpful. After you have answered the questions, turn to the following pages, which analyze possible responses in terms of some of the insights gained during the project.

These questions highlight our findings and conclusions. Just thinking about what they might mean as you answer is a good exercise.

1. How are staff grievances processed?

    ☐   By a personnel technician in the institution
    ☐   By a personnel technician in the Central Office
    ☐   By an institution manager

2. How frequently do you walk around an institution on a formal (announced) tour?

    ☐   Weekly or more often
    ☐   Every two weeks
    ☐   Monthly to quarterly
    ☐   Semi-annually to annually

3. When was the last time you walked around inside an institution by yourself?

    ☐   Yesterday
    ☐   Last week
    ☐   Last month
    ☐   More than a month ago

4. Was that an announced or unannounced event?

    ☐   Announced
    ☐   Unannounced

5. While you were there, how many line-level staff members did you have an actual conversation with (consisting of more than "Hello, how are you?")

☐ More than five
☐ Between one and five
☐ None

6. When was the last time you were inside an institution on the evening shift? The night shift?

Eve.   Night
☐   ☐   In the past month
☐   ☐   Two to six months ago
☐   ☐   More than six months ago

7. Does your agency have any department-wide activities (picnics, games, etc.) scheduled for weekend and/or evening hours? If so, do you attend:

☐ Each event held
☐ Most of the events (every other event held)
☐ Some of the-events (every third to fifth event scheduled)

8. When was the last time you attended a roll call for a security shift?

☐ In the past month
☐ Two to six months ago
☐ More than six months ago

9. When was the last time you observed an inmate meal in the dining area or on a housing unit?

☐ In the past month
☐ Two to six months ago
☐ More than six months ago

10. How do you derive most of your information about employee morale? (check as many as apply)

☐ From deputies and department heads
☐ From reading grievances
☐ From conversations with line staff during institutional visits
☐ From staff comment boxes

11. How many times per month do you attend department head meetings with their staff? Hold meetings with your department heads? Meet with your deputies?

Attend Dept. Staff Mtgs.	Meet with Dept. Heads	Meet with Deputies	
☐	☐	☐	Daily
☐	☐	☐	Weekly
☐	☐	☐	Monthly
☐	☐	☐	Less than monthly

12. If your institution/agency has a newsletter, how often do you contribute a message or article?

☐ Every issue
☐ Special issues
☐ Annually

If your answer is not one of the choices fisted, pick the one closest to what you want to answer.

13. Does your agency/institution have a comment box or some other instrument by which staff can voice their concerns anonymously (or openly) to top administrators?

☐ Yes
☐ No

14. If so, who reads and responds to the comments?

☐ Institutional/agency manager
☐ Institutional/agency personnel technician

15. In what ways do you and the agency/institution acknowledge or praise staff? (check all that apply)

☐ Employee of the Year program   ☐ Service pins/badges
☐ Dept./Unit of the Year program   ☐ Personnel file letters
☐ Employee of the Month program   ☐ Cost savings incentive
☐ Awards banquets/ceremonies   awards
☐ Honor guard opportunities   ☐ Newsletter stories
☐ On-the spot praise when inside institutions
☐ Face-to-face performance reviews for Civil Service or other annual reviews

16. When is the last time that a line-level employee stopped in to see you in your office (by appointment or drop-in)?

☐   Within the last two weeks
☐   Two weeks to a month ago
☐   More than a month ago

17. How many of the following elements are involved in the promotion process within the agency/institution? (check all that apply)

☐   Selection by superiors
☐   Seniority
☐   Civil Service/competitive exam
☐   Bid process

18. When employees are promoted to managerial positions, what training (if any) do they receive? (check all that apply)

☐   Peer supervision training
☐   On-the-job training
☐   Mentoring

19. Does your agency/institution screen employees prior to hire (i.e., run background checks, administer psychological tests, conduct interviews)?

☐   Yes
☐   No

20. Does your agency/institution conduct exit interviews with staff who are departing?

☐   Yes
☐   No

There are no right or wrong answers. All you need to do is look objectively at the ways in which you approach staff management.

Look at your answer and read the narrative for each question. If you answered honestly, you may find areas in which you may wish to adjust your personal approach, or that of your agency/institution, to managing corrections staff. On the other hand, you may find that our insights confirm the effectiveness of approaches that you already take. There is no right or wrong answer to any question, but thinking about the questions and your answers is a good opportunity to assess your own staff management practices.

Possible Answers and Analysis

1. There are several ways in which employee grievances might be processed: by a personnel technician at the agency's regional or central office, by a high-level administrator or board at the regional or central office, by collective bargaining units, or by institutional managers. In agencies and institutions whose hiring and personnel practices are entrenched in Civil Service procedures, it might be more likely that personnel office staff handle grievances. We discovered that staff in those situations often perceive that their grievances have been sucked into a black hole, because the offices handling them do not have dealings with the day-to-day realities of the prison workplace.

    Staff are much more receptive to procedures by which institutional or agency managers process and resolve their grievances. To be sure, in cases where the grievances are rejected, a certain amount of "sour grapes" sentiment will exist. However, this can be addressed by combining managerial handling of grievances and dialogues with the grievant during the formal hearing process. In that way, the employee understands the finding and sees that managers follow up with issues that are raised.

    > *While the grievance process must be somewhat formal, relying too much on written statements and not enough on dialogue shuts staff out.*

    During interviews, staff expressed the feeling that their grievances never really went anywhere-that is, the issues were never really resolved-regardless of how they were processed. To an extent, that perception may come from staff not getting the resolution they wanted from the process. If they feel that the grievance process is fair, is taken seriously by managers, and "hears them out," even if it does not always find in their favor, this perception will become less pervasive.

2. Formal tours of institutions are important in that they reinforce the law enforcement aspect of corrections; inspections of institutions and staff remind the employees that their performance, both individually and as a group, is important to the agency. Inspections also provide the opportunity for administrators to see staff and institutions at their best.

There is no "right" frequency for inspections and tours. There are some facts to keep in mind, however-for instance, while institutions and staff get polished up for annual or semi-annual inspections, things may not be so shiny between tours. On the other hand, if staff know that brass will be inspecting monthly or even more often, things may not be allowed to slide quite as much. The fact that inspections and tours happen is the most important element. Staff know that they are responsible for making their institutions the best they can be, and that the institutions will be looked at carefully by top management.

3. One of the complaints heard over and over from staff interviewed during this project was that they rarely saw managerial personnel above the rank of sergeant. It is crucial that all managerial staff get around all areas of the institutions on a frequent basis. There is no better way to communicate to staff several messages essential to their satisfaction with the corrections workplace: (1) that managers are accessible, (2) that they are not afraid to go inside the facilities they manage, (3) that they know what is going on at the line level, and (4) that they care about line-level employees. Therefore, an answer of "more than a month ago" or less frequently (for a central office manager) or "last month" or less frequently (for institutional management staff) may indicate a problem with managerial visibility.

Managers must be seen inside institutions frequently.

4. There is another reason that frequent, unannounced presence inside institutions is beneficial. Catching employees doing something right, and praising them for it immediately, is a powerful management tool. Positive reinforcement is more pleasant for all involved than negative reinforcement. However, it is important for employees to know that since they can never tell when a manager may walk around the corner, it is wise to be on their best behavior.

Take every opportunity to catch staff doing something right, and praise them for it.

5. Being visible to line-level staff at their posts is, as stated above, probably the most important tool for managing corrections staff. However, that must go hand-in-hand with communicating with them. Greeting each staff member you see ("Hello, how are you?") is important, but so is listening to their answers and talking with them about whatever issues are raised. If an employee pulls you aside for a brief conversation and brings up a problem, stop and listen. Respond to that employee. It takes courage, no matter how good the relationship, for an employee to come forward to a supervisor,

especially a high-level manager. We all dislike form letters; don't let your contact with staff fall into that impersonal, mass-produced form of communication.

Staff interviewed indicated that just seeing "white shirts" inside the institutions was not enough, in their opinion, to promote respect and communication. Of course, it isn't possible to personally intervene in every issue that is brought to your attention, whether for security, operational, or time reasons. One of the elements of managing, however, is delegation. If you can't do something immediately, assign the task to someone who can. Even if nothing can be done to remedy a staff member's complaint, that employee should know that someone followed up on it.

6. Because managerial jobs tend to be day jobs, it is easy to fall into the habit of going inside the facilities when it is convenient. Most activity inside a facility happens on the day shift, and day shift complements are the largest. However, evening and night shift staff may not particularly want to work those shifts, and knowing that managers haven't forgotten them will have an appreciable effect on their morale. It is difficult to suggest a frequency for these visits; however, there is clearly something wrong when it has been a long time (i.e., more than six months) between them.

7. Bringing staff together in a social atmosphere develops camaraderie and the feeling of belonging to a team. The better staff know their fellow employees, the more comfortable each will feel working with the others. In a law enforcement environment such as corrections, it is crucial that employees trust each other, and trust is built upon familiarity. There are other benefits to social interaction; people are more likely to share problems and questions with other people they know, and problem-solving raises morale. By attending the activities, you communicate several messages-that the events are worthwhile to you, that you are human and approachable, and that staff are important off-duty as well as on.

8. Again, this question touches on the need for managers to be visible to their employees. Because roll call is the time for information dissemination about particular problems, staff see that managers know what is going on inside the institution every day. Attending

Did you find yourself rationalizing or justifying not getting around inside the institution(s) by saying things like the following?

- *'I don't have time to go inside every week."*

- *"It's too far to drive to X institution to get there every month."*

Time and distance are factors, but staff morale may suffer if you let those factors push visibility in the facility down on your priority list.

Everyone needs to know the people they are asked to trust.

a roll call is also a good way to communicate information to a large number of staff in a personal manner.

9. Making yourself visible to inmates, and staff as they supervise inmates, during a meal communicates that you are not afraid of the inmates and you know what line staff do. You are available for communication with staff and inmates, and see what goes on during one of the times of greatest inmate activity. All of these elements serve to reinforce your commitment to staff, which in turn builds morale.

    Staff need to see that you are not afraid of the inmates that they supervise every day.

    Obviously, it would be difficult to be present for a meal every day. However, if there are staff morale problems or hints of a possible disturbance, the mess hall is one of the best places to learn about it; frequent presence there can help you to identify and address the problem.

10. Learning about staff morale can be accomplished by sending deputies or other subordinates out into the institutions to "take the pulse." You can get a sense of how employees are feeling by reading grievances. Most importantly, though, your presence inside the institution on a frequent basis and your communications with staff, both formal and informal, are the most reliable sources.

    While it seems that we are belaboring this point, not seeing management inside the institutions was far and away the most commonly heard complaint from staff. Being a manager means spending less time in the facilities and more time in the administrative venue, but being a good manager means never losing touch with day-to-day activities and the people who perform them.

11. Attendance at department meetings and meeting with department heads and deputies are other ways in which you can ensure follow-up on staff grievances, complaints, and concerns. It also provides you with extra "insurance" that you are not missing information on an emerging or ongoing problem. You can give input and answer questions.

    In addition to keeping in touch with and visible to line employees, it is imperative for high-level managers to maintain their connection to

middle-level administrators. Ensuring that information goes up and down the chain of command means making sure that the middle links in the chain are never overlooked.

12. Newsletters, as one of the main sources of information for employees, provide a good opportunity to communicate a message of concern or praise to all staff. Providing a message to employees keeps them involved and aware of things happening in the Department or institution that will affect them. By keeping the message true-to-life, you will communicate to employees that you are honest and concerned. The medium of a newsletter also provides a very public opportunity to praise and thank specific employees for jobs well-done, a motivational tool. As with employee social events, taking the time to contribute to a staff newsletter will make the publication seem worthwhile to you.

13. It is extremely important to provide an anonymous medium for staff to voice their real criticisms and complaints without fear of reprisal. During interviews, staff revealed a real fear of reprisal if they dare to go over a supervisor's head. Knowing that there is another way to get their issues heard without personal risk, staff are far more likely to be forthcoming and honest about information that managers really should know, such as unfair scheduling practices, corruption, or favoritism among lower-level supervisory staff.

> *Give employees the opportunity to provide anonymous input--they will feel safe enough to give you truly honest comments.*

Additionally, comment boxes are an easy way for employees to give input or suggestions that they feel will help the agency or institution. They can ask questions in writing that may seem too silly to ask a coworker or supervisor, and feel safe doing so. The guarantee of anonymity is a very powerful incentive to be honest and, if one employee has a question or issue, others generally do also.

14. Staff comments, suggestions, and criticisms are only as good as the action taken to address them. Providing employees with the opportunity to raise issues means that you are responsible for following up on those issues. Depending on the volume of comments, you or an immediate subordinate should take each one seriously, investigating, clarifying, or re-examining procedures as necessary.

> *Taking comments carries the responsibility of addressing them.*

The way in which issues are responded to is critical to the success of a comment box program. Replying to anonymous questions or comments in an institution or agency newsletter is a good way for each employee, including the one who made the comment, to see that you received and acted on it. Of course, allegations of impropriety against a staff member must be investigated much more discreetly, and care must be taken that such investigations do not become "witch hunts" or vehicles for revenge.

Crediting individual employees with beneficial suggestions is motivational. Several agencies have programs by which employees receive a percentage of the financial savings realized through their suggestions. If such suggestions are made anonymously, they should still be attributed to an anonymous staff member. It is never a good idea to take credit for the idea of a subordinate.

15. There are many levels on which staff can be praised, from a quick pat on the back as you walk through a facility to an agency-wide awards banquet. Staff indicated, however, that acknowledgment programs, such as Employee of the Month or Year, were "beauty contests," stating that they were a way for supervisors to reward their favorites. One possible way to combat this perception is for staff to nominate, and vote for, each other for such awards. More obliquely, however, staff must be reassured that fairness permeates the agency, including its awards programs.

The words of appreciation a supervisor can give an employee on an average day for doing something above average, no matter how small, are the mainstay of any acknowledgment or awards program. Those words may never reach the agency's newsletter or awards banquet, but they are crucial to letting employees know what they are doing right. More importantly, they go hand-in-hand with a presence inside the institution.

16. Having an open-door policy and having staff who take advantage of it and come by are two very different things. Even if staff must make an appointment to see you, it is vital that they know they can. If it has been a long time since a line-level employee stopped in (i.e., more than six months), there may be a problem-do staff know about your open-door policy? Have you publicized hours for drop-ins? Can

workers from all shifts make it to your office for drop-in hours if they so desire?

Meetings with staff, whether by drop-in or appointment, should not be rescheduled, unless there is an unavoidable emergency, and should be private. The issues raised must be followed up as soon as possible. Assign a subordinate to the task if you cannot attend to it immediately. Regardless of a high-level administrator's relationship with line staff, it still requires courage on the part of the staff member to ask to meet with "the boss," and that courage should be acknowledged with action.

The phrases "drop-in hours" and "open-doorpolicy"imply that it is easy to get access to you. Make sure that this is really so.

17. Generally speaking, the more elements checked, the more fair the promotion process will appear to staff. In agencies and institutions constrained by collective bargaining agreements and/or Civil Service regulations, there is less freedom for administrators to select the individuals promoted, but in a way those requirements tend to communicate fairness to staff. If they feel that, to an extent, promotions depend on exam scores and practical experience, their perception that only favorites get promoted is reduced.

18. Moving employees up the ladder without proper training risks their being "promoted to the point of incompetency." Line experience is important to decisionmaking by administrators, but it does not help with administrative activities. Helping newly promoted managers learn how to supervise former peers, handle administrative duties like report writing, and become comfortable with their new responsibilities benefits everyone. You can't be everywhere at once, which is why you have managers, but they need to know what is expected of them and how to accomplish it. You, the managers, and the staff they supervise will be happier and work together better.

19. Controlling who the agency hires, at least to some extent, will result in lower turnover among trained staff, reducing the agency's expenditures for hiring and retraining replacements. At a basic level, background checks can screen for individuals with past convictions. While a past mistake need not always rule out a candidate, it does warrant close attention. Interviews allow a perceptive manager to interact with a candidate, getting a feel for his or her personality.

The more types of pre-hire screening performed, the more ideal the candidates hired will be.

Other pre-hire programs, such as presentations on the realities of corrections and psychological testing, can help the candidates and the agency decide whether they are suited to each other. By screening out individuals who may not work well in a corrections setting, the agency saves the expense of hiring and training people who would separate soon after initial assignment.

20. Exit interviews are somewhat like comment boxes in that employees who are leaving tend to feel that they have nothing to lose by being honest. Knowing the real reasons that employees separate (e.g., resigning in lieu of termination) can highlight otherwise hidden problems. For example, if an employee has trouble with attendance policies, there may be substance abuse trouble or the policies themselves may be problematic. There may be a supervisor creating problems, or a specific unit or area whose procedures could be changed to benefit staff working there.

Information from exit interviews can also help with pre-hire programs. Separating employees who are leaving because they are not cut out for corrections can tell you what to tell candidates to expect. Larger problems can also show up in the results of exit interviews; if employees are leaving to go to other employers, it may be beneficial to lobby for higher salaries for staff.

Use the information from exit interviews to:

- *assess policies and procedures for such areas as attendance and sick leave.*

- *gauge the quality of first-levelsupervision.*

- *tell hire candidates what to expect.*

- *determine the attraction of other employment opportunities.*

Just as there is no right answer to any of the preceding questions, there is no formula for success in managing staff. Staff satisfaction is enhanced through a combination of tangible elements (expected salary and benefits, special initiatives on the part of the parent company or agency) and intangible ones (workplace quality, management accessibility, attentiveness, and visibility), and a knowledge of the characteristics of the employees. Using a staff information system (described in Chapter V) to combine the tangibles with the intangibles, such as those presented in Chapter VI, is the task of correctional administrators seeking to manage their most valuable resource.

There are so many elements that must be combined that each manager's approach will vary from institution to institution, and agency to agency. Gauging the success of those approaches on a quantitative basis is difficult to impossible, as we learned during the course of this project. Assessing

a staff management program is best done in terms of employee satisfaction, which can be measured only through open, honest communication.

In the career field of corrections, the unique demands and stresses placed on employees come to bear on institutional and agency morale and, consequently, employee retention. Recognizing and addressing such issues as stress management, the need for state-of-the-art training, AIDS, the success of females in a predominantly male environment, and child care is the task of agencies seeking to attract and keep top-quality employees. Around the nation, corrections agencies have developed strategies aimed at addressing the economic, professional, and emotional needs of their employees. By discovering issues important to employees and developing responses to those issues, agencies promote professionalism and loyalty, both of which are central to the performance of the agency as a whole.

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