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Correcting Corrections: Missouri's Parallel Universe

by Dora Schriro

Prisons are “total institutions”—organizations in which officials decide when, where, and with whom prisoners will live, work, eat, and play. Such comprehensive control serves various management aims but disserves the goal of preparing prisoners to live in the community, where they must be responsible for all the decisions, however important and mundane, that affect their lives. Recognizing the disconnect between life inside and outside prison, the Missouri Department of Corrections overhauled its approach to prison management to improve correctional outcomes. The new strategy, “Parallel Universe,” is premised on the notion that life inside prison should resemble life outside prison and that inmates can acquire values, habits, and skills that will help them become productive, law-abiding citizens.

Of the more than 27,000 inmates in Missouri's prisons, about 600 (less than 3 percent) have been sentenced to life—or death. Only this small group will remain in a correctional institution for the rest of their lives. The vast majority will be released to the community. Since more than 97 percent of all State pris-

oners will return home, confinement should be much more than a time and place for incapacitation. In Missouri, it has become an opportunity for staff to share responsibility for prerelease preparation with the offenders who will be released. The parallel universe transfers a measure of power from prison managers to prisoners in a process that achieves compliance through strategies focused internally, not externally imposed.



Why a parallel universe?

Missouri's parallel universe offers a better way to influence offender behavior than do other models of offender management. Criminal thinking and behavior are largely egocentric: Offenders tend to focus on what they want, rationalizing their misconduct, understating its effects, and often discounting social norms and community values. In conventional prison management, control is the major management tool. The level of control eliminates any opportunity for prisoners to make decisions and be held accountable. Avoiding punishment becomes many prisoners'



DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

It is by now a commonplace that the number of people under criminal justice supervision in this country has reached a record high. As a result, the sentencing policies driving that number, and the field of corrections, where the consequences are felt, have acquired an unprecedented salience. It is a salience defined more by issues of magnitude, complexity, and expense than by any consensus about future directions.

Are sentencing policies, as implemented through correctional programs and practices, achieving their intended purposes? As expressed in the movement to eliminate indeterminate sentencing and limit judicial discretion, on the one hand, and to radically restructure our retributive system of justice, on the other, the purposes seem contradictory, rooted in conflicting values. The lack of consensus on where sentencing and corrections should be headed is thus no surprise.

Because sentencing and corrections policies have such major consequences—for the allocation of government resources and, more fundamentally and profoundly, for the quality of justice in this country and the safety of its citizens—the National Institute of Justice and the Corrections Program Office (CPO) of the Office of Justice Programs felt it opportune to explore them in depth. Through a series of Executive Sessions on Sentencing and Corrections, begun in 1998 and continuing through the year 2000,

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DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

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practitioners and scholars foremost in their field, representing a broad cross-section of points of view, were brought together to find out if there is a better way to think about the purposes, functions, and interdependence of sentencing and corrections policies.

We are fortunate in having secured the assistance of Michael Tonry, Sonosky Professor of Law and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota Law School, and Director, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, as project director.

One product of the sessions is this series of papers, commissioned by NJJ and the CPO as the basis for the discussions. Drawing on the research and experience of the session participants, the papers are intended to distill their judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and about the most promising ideas for future developments.

The sessions were modeled on the executive sessions on policing held in the 1980s and 1990s under the sponsorship of NJJ and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Those sessions played a role in conceptualizing community policing and spreading it. Whether the current sessions and the papers based on them will be instrumental in developing a new paradigm for sentencing and corrections, or even whether they will generate broad-based support for a particular model or strategy for change, remains to be seen. It is our hope that in the current environment of openness to new ideas, the session papers will provoke comment, promote further discussion and, taken together, will constitute a basic resource document on sentencing and corrections policy issues that will prove useful to State and local policymakers.

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primary preoccupation, a pastime scarcely conducive to learning the skills and internalizing the underlying values necessary to function in the world outside.

In Missouri, offenders are engaged full time in activities paralleling those of the outside world. The structure of prison life has been reengineered to require that they make decisions and be accountable for them. Their decisions affect employment in prison as well as other conditions of confinement. They also affect employability after release and, in other ways, their lives in the community. Because prisoners are prepared for release throughout their confinement, they no longer face an abrupt transition that leaves them ill equipped for the real world.



Correctional systems as bureaucratic organizations

Missouri's decision to revamp prison management can be best understood in the context of the structure of conventional correctional systems. Correctional agencies are bureaucratic organizations—hierarchical, with decisionmaking flowing from top to bottom. In each agency, responsibility for each function is demarcated by rank and further divided between uniformed and civilian personnel. Offenders also have a place in the hierarchy: They are at the bottom.

Correctional agencies are a particular type of bureaucratic organization. They have been called "total institutions" by sociologist Erving Goffman,¹ who described them as sharing characteristics modified only slightly to serve different regimented populations—the mentally disabled, the physically infirm, convicted felons, the military, and religious orders. Regardless of the population, the purpose is the same: To maintain as much control as much of the time as possible over all "inmates."

In the community, people choose where and with whom they live, work, and recreate. In

the course of a day, most people have an opportunity for success in one or more aspects of life. In the total institution of the prison, the administration makes those choices. All activities are conducted in one place under one authority, and in each phase of the inmates' day they are in the company of others with whom they do not choose to associate. Unlike those who live in the community, inmates are given little chance to succeed.²

Civilian and uniformed personnel alike are authorized to sanction inmates whenever they fail to conform to the schedule or to any other expectations. Introduction to rules, schedule, and staff occurs at admission, when all conventional means of identification—drivers' licenses, proof of voter registration, credit cards—are exchanged for a number plus one or more classification scores denoting risk to the public and personal needs. Street clothes are replaced with prison-issued uniforms in colors and styles easily distinguishable from those of staff or visitors. Hair is cut and facial hair removed; access to grooming products is limited. The inmates' loss of articles that communicate the sense of self to others does not mean they have lost that sense of self. Their "presenting culture" continues to inform inmates' decisionmaking throughout their incarceration.³ Sublimated but never abandoned, it continues to operate covertly unless modified.⁴

Inmates' status or standing is skewed. During admission, inmates are issued all property they will be permitted to own while confined. Schedules vary little by custody level and quality of conduct. Opportunity for community service is curtailed for all but a few low-risk offenders. In calculating the presumptive release date, good time is credited only at intake. While opportunities to advance standing are rare, inmates can lose status—by property restrictions, temporary punitive segregation, or loss of good time—because prisons tend to reward bad conduct and ignore good conduct.

Bureaucracies promote efficiency

As bureaucratic organizations, correctional systems achieve efficiency in distinctive ways. The staff-to-offender ratio is as great as 1 to 150. Because there are many inmates with special needs and so few staff to address them, inmates are often managed in blocks, not as individuals. They are moved as blocks, housed as blocks, fed as blocks. The chief staff activity is surveillance, not individualized assistance. To enhance control by a small staff over large groups of unwilling inmates, conventional systems prescribe roles for both offenders and employees. The rules typically restrict interactions that resemble ordinary social intercourse between officers and offenders, which reduces the likelihood that they will view one another as individuals, much less sympathetic ones.

In the name of efficiency, employees are also strictly regulated. Correctional system management is paramilitary. The chain of command offers limited opportunities for correctional officers to make decisions that will improve their standing. In the same way as number of years can move up inmates' time of release, for line staff career advancement is based largely on tenure. As with the offender population, for employees the incentive for extra effort is largely extrinsic. Given the large numbers of inmates whom they manage at great social distance, it is difficult for correctional employees to find much intrinsic satisfaction in their work. This tends to affect the public's perception of correctional staff, and correctional officers in particular, unjustly stereotyping them.

Bureaucracies do not promote effectiveness

An organization is effective to the extent it is an open system continuously interacting with its environment. The total institution of the prison almost always inadequately deals with environmental complexities because it is a closed system. Isolating prisoners from the public in facilities far removed from population centers, the prison releases people ill prepared to reenter the community.

In the world outside, people develop a sense of self and establish standing through work, community service, and citizenship. Work is the primary way people support themselves and is a means of self-expression. For prisoners it is different. Their basic needs are met by the facility, and self-expression is prohibited. The usual motive to work is lacking and its ordinary rewards denied. On the outside, volunteering in the community is a way people demonstrate concern for their neighbors and neighborhoods in nonwork hours. In prison, there is no unscheduled leisure time, and any opportunity for community service is available only to small numbers of low-risk felons. On the outside, people have civic responsibilities—most notably, voting. Prisoners experience “civil death” and are not allowed to vote, at least as long as the sentence lasts.

Operating this way means lost opportunities. Because the prison is not adept at distinguishing criminal from noncriminal relationships, it prevents normal social interaction. Prisoners are prevented from cultivating relationships that might reduce the public's fear of crime or increase the possibility of forgiveness. The divide between life inside and outside prison, symbolized by stone walls and razor ribbon fences, separates prisoners from the citizens who authorize these institutions, the taxpayers who fund their operations, and the stakeholders who monitor them. Not only is contact with citizens in general limited, but so too is contact between inmates and their families and between inmates and the community. This is so although ex-offenders' success is based in some significant measure on reconciling felons, their families, and those in the community who fear the offenders' return.

The prison as a total institution impedes public safety

If the total institution of the prison produces ex-offenders whom the public values—people who reside in the community in a civil

and productive manner—it does so infrequently and almost accidentally. The prison uses two correctional models, the restraint/retributive and the rehabilitative, that are remarkably similar to one another. Neither offers offenders realistic opportunities to practice decision-making. The restraint/retributive model uses surveillance by *uniformed* staff who punish prisoners for untoward *actions*. The rehabilitative model relies on surveillance by *treatment* staff who punish prisoners for untoward *intentions*. Neither approach promotes learning skills associated with civility and productivity. The retributive model restricts all skills acquisition, and the rehabilitative model assumes skills acquisition alone suffices. The consequences are significant. Short-term goals—care, custody, control—may be met, but long-term goals—humane confinement and adequate prerelease preparation—may be impeded.

The reason is straightforward. Offenders who acquire literacy, employability, and sobriety skills may not understand *why* these skills are essential. The rules and regulations of corrections and its approach to work and civic involvement discourage critical thinking and personal responsibility. Even inmates who unflinchingly follow prison officials' directives often encounter difficulty as ex-offenders. Many have been “colonized” and continue to heed others' directions, whether good or bad, after release. They have not internalized the values underlying civil, productive conduct.



Components of the parallel universe

The parallel universe attempts to make the correctional system an effective organization—one that interacts with the changing environment outside. It presupposes a system whose requirements and rewards are like those of the “real world.” The goal is to cultivate in offenders the skills that yield civil, productive conduct. Essentially, the parallel universe is a corrections-based reentry program.

Prisoners in Missouri make choices and assume responsibility for decisions that have real-life ramifications. They learn to recognize community expectations and reconcile them with their own attitudes. They practice making decisions that do not contravene security in prison and that will enhance public safety on their release. In short, they make the same choices as other Missouri citizens for prosocial, productive conduct. In so doing, they can acquire what criminologist James Q. Wilson called a “moral sense” to remain crime free all their life.⁵

The parallel universe has four interactive expectations or opportunities. First, every offender is engaged during work and nonwork hours in productive activities that parallel those of free society. In work hours, offenders go to school and work and, as applicable, to treatment for sex offenses, chronic mental health problems, and drug and alcohol dependencies. In nonwork hours they participate in community service, reparative activities, and recreation. Second, every offender must adopt relapse prevention strategies and abstain from unauthorized activities, including drug and alcohol consumption and sexual misconduct. Third, most offenders can earn opportunities to make choices and are held accountable for them. Fourth, offenders are recognized for good conduct and can improve their status by obeying the rules and regulations.

Productive activity—during work hours

“Buns Out of Bed,” the initiative requiring that general population inmates engage full time in school, work, and treatment, was adopted in 1993 and became State law a year later. The word that best conveys this approach is “press”: The institution’s time and talent are organized around inmates’ skill building.

School. The need for prisoner education is great in Missouri prisons. The majority of entering offenders lack basic literacy. Only one-third are high school graduates or had earned

a general equivalency diploma (GED) before sentencing. Of the high school dropouts who constitute the other two-thirds of admissions, half are functionally illiterate. Given the level of need, every adult prisoner who does not have a high school diploma or GED must attend school part time. Certified juvenile offenders must attend school full time. Other inmates younger than age 21 who need educational assistance receive additional, specialized instruction.

Work. Offenders’ work records are as weak as their educational records. The majority are unemployed or underemployed at the time of commitment. Their work histories are sporadic, and most have supplemented their earnings with the proceeds of their criminal activity.

Work is mandatory. Prison employment encompasses a variety of full-time and part-time assignments that amount to a full day’s work, 5 days a week. As in most other prisons, work details in Missouri often involve menial assignments. However, Missouri is different in that prisoners are interviewed for the jobs and they keep the jobs by following directions and learning to accept criticism.

Treatment. Offenders fail far more often at sobriety than in school or at work. Most Missouri prisoners need drug education, and many need long-term treatment. Thirteen percent are convicted sex offenders, all of whom must complete treatment before parole release. Overlapping those two groups are the 15 percent with chronic mental health problems. Treatment is the first step. Relapse prevention is the second. Compliance is checked continuously in a variety of ways, including urinalysis for substance abusers and lie detector tests for sex offenders.

Underlying values. It is not enough that offenders become literate, employable, and drug free. Inmates who earn a GED are better educated criminals. Inmates who work are employable criminals. Inmates who have undergone detoxification are sober criminals. To reduce relapse, revocation, and recidi-

vism, offenders must understand *why* these skills are beneficial and how to use them beneficially. In short, they must internalize the values inherent in school, work, and treatment. The parallel universe promotes such understanding by bringing the outside world inside and operating as much like the community as possible within security constraints. As in the community, education increases earning potential: When offenders earn their GED, their pay increases. Similarly, the GED is now the prerequisite for enrolling in vocational education and for “premium pay” work.

Productive activity—during nonwork hours

On the outside, life consists of more than work. Thus, the core prisoner reentry program of school, work, and treatment is augmented with activities that help inmates acquire other life skills and learn the underlying values. Community service, reparation, and recreation are used to this end.

Community service. In addition to being gainfully employed, many citizens engage in activities that improve their community. In so doing, they better appreciate their own good fortune and better understand the plight of others. In Missouri, offenders participate in community service as an elective activity when they are not working. They select charities to which they donate time and money throughout the year.

Reparation. Offenders commonly displace blame for their crimes onto their victims and hold loved ones accountable for their lot in life. To reverse this thinking, Missouri has instituted three reparative activities—victim-offender mediation, victim impact classes, and institution-specific reparative projects. Inmates participate to better understand the effect of their conduct on others and to make amends.

Recreation and other elective activities. Most criminals do not commit crimes while at work or school. They do so during leisure hours. Public safety therefore dictates that offenders have free time in prison to learn how

to use it constructively. In Missouri, the schedule has been revamped to allow recreation during evenings and weekends. Other elective activities (such as doing laundry, visiting the legal and reading library and the canteen, and receiving visitors) have been rescheduled to avoid conflict with workday activities.

Underlying values. Nonwork activities should not interfere with school, work, and treatment. Community service, reparation, and recreation should take place before or after the workday. In the real world, few people routinely walk out of school or off the job to work out at the gym or to volunteer at the soup kitchen. Offenders have responsibilities to themselves and others; the schedules ensure they do not leave key tasks incomplete and do not walk away from some responsibilities to attend to others.

Achieving sobriety, preventing relapse

Offenders develop cognitive skills and learn other strategies to achieve sobriety and prevent relapse by abstaining from unauthorized activities—alcohol consumption and sexual misconduct, and using illicit substances and engaging in other forms of offending.

Each offender enters prison with a unique sense of self, personal history, and world view. The total institution suppresses inmates' identities and imposes change superficially. It is no wonder that many inmates are sober only in prison: Conventional systems do not provide offenders who are trying to avoid drugs and alcohol with the skills to recognize the signs of relapse or to value sobriety. Not surprisingly, many released sex offenders also reoffend when in close proximity to potential victims because they lack the skill and insight to value abstinence. Many other ex-offenders supplement their income by illegal activity because they genuinely do not believe it is wrong.

Good citizenship. Tolerance as part of prosocial conduct is as important in Missouri prisons as the prohibition against drug trafficking. Many inmates, like many other citizens,

find it difficult to accept people whose race, religion, and ethnicity are different from theirs. Many prison disturbances are race based. Gangs are often organized around religious beliefs and formed within ethnic groups. In conventional correctional practice, cultural diversity training is often provided to staff but rarely to inmates. In Missouri, this training is an integral part of inmates' orientation. It is as important that offenders interact in a civil manner with one another and the staff as it is that the staff do so.

Cognitive restructuring. Criminals differ from other people largely in their thought processes. They tend to focus more on their own desires ("I want your car") than on the community's. They often rationalize their conduct ("He had it coming") and minimize its effects on others ("She was insured"). Such thinking discounts social norms and community values. Cognitive restructuring programs enable inmates to spot the rationalizations they use to violate institutional rules and break the law. In Missouri, the courses are offered electively. For offenders whose conduct is poor, the classes are required in addition to ordinary sanctions. Other programs that instill awareness of the effects of crime include classes on the impact of crime on victims. Verbally abusive or physically aggressive inmates are referred to anger management programs in addition to receiving the ordinary sanctions.

Staying sober. It is important for offenders to learn to adopt a lifestyle that increases the likelihood they will remain sober and crime free. The parallel universe differs from conventional practice in informing prisoners of the results of their substance abuse and sex offender assessments. Because they are aware of their need for treatment as well as their risk of reoffending, they are better able to make related decisions.

Prisoners are encouraged to use the information proactively to avoid drugs and alcohol and reduce the likelihood of other rule viola-

tions. For example, they are encouraged to request assignment to different housing units or changes in parole home plans if those they live with put them at risk of relapse.

Underlying values. In the world outside, the members of one's immediate family participate in treatment teams or other support groups because they are often key to recovery. The same approach is taken in Missouri prisons, where prerelease preparation includes families. It begins at intake. Inmates' families are invited to an orientation and are encouraged to participate throughout their loved one's confinement. Milestones (such as earning the GED) are identified, and offenders' successes in reaching them are celebrated with letters congratulating the family. Sex offenders are encouraged to authorize family members to receive reports of treatment progress.

In some instances, families and friends impede inmates' progress. A family may be unwilling to accept that the prisoner lives with and takes direction from people who are racially or ethnically different. Family members may be unwilling to hold the offender accountable or behave responsibly themselves (by abstaining from drugs and alcohol, for example). When such conduct is likely to affect the offender, parole plans are developed that involve people who will not increase the chance of relapse, revocation, and recidivism.

Making decisions and solving problems

People sentenced to prison have failed at a number of things. Most notably, they have failed to obey the law. They failed to make wise choices. In prison, they need opportunities to make choices commensurate with their social skills and the public safety risk they pose because, on release, they will resume making both important and mundane decisions on a daily basis.⁶

In exercising strong control, traditional prison management does not develop two important skills offenders need—making decisions

and accepting their consequences. The parallel universe, while regimented, recognizes sound decisionmaking as essential to prisoners' success and that of the institution.

Problem solving in prison is often adversarial. Riddled with formalities, inmate grievance mechanisms short-circuit many complaints. The grievance system is also a gatekeeper. Unless inmates exhaust the State's administrative remedies, they cannot seek redress in Federal court. While correctional systems resist prisoner litigation and court-initiated change, most do not make problem solving a priority and fewer have viable strategies for corrections-based remedies.

In the parallel universe, problem solving is fast and informal. The Department of Corrections Office of Constituent Services finds and fixes the root causes of legitimate complaints at the earliest point at which they are recognized. Responsibility for resolution is shared, with participation by inmates and staff essential. Inmates must talk to staff and staff must listen. Remedies usually include better communication between prisoners and prison staff—notably, better explanations by inmates of their problems and better explanations by staff of reasons for the rules, more timely notice when rules change, and opportunities for feedback before changes are made.

Inmates are encouraged to participate in the governance of the institution through the inmate council and other offender organizations concerned with conditions of confinement. Inmate representatives meet regularly with the prison administration to critique institutional activities and develop rehabilitative program proposals, doing so while taking into account the same time, space, and staffing constraints as well as the same security considerations the administration faces.

Underlying values. When personal choice is eliminated, so is personal accountability because the system makes all decisions for

prisoners. Whether the correctional model is retributive or rehabilitative, expectations for prisoner behavior are reduced to the most basic: Avoid punishment.

By contrast, the parallel universe promotes responsibility in a number of ways. For example, the management of offenders' personal affairs has been revised to promote decision-making. Offenders keep track of their account balance at the canteen. They learn to manage their time. They renew their prescriptions before their supply of medication runs out. Making such decisions and accepting the consequences for not making them are no longer the responsibility of prison authorities. Decisions about other routine activities, including doing laundry and cleaning cells, have also been made the prisoners' responsibility.

Only positive conduct counts

In prison, as in the world outside, status counts. However, in prison, unlike the world outside, misconduct is emphasized in determining status. Good behavior rarely matters. Inmates are thus more likely to receive sanctions and lose standing—personal property, general-population housing, and a set parole release date may be taken from them—than to improve standing. In Missouri, offenders are recognized for good conduct and improve their standing by obeying the rules and regulations.

Offenders come to prison with a basic issue of property and limited access to amenities. In the parallel universe, opportunities for better work assignments, additional visits, and more property are earned by mastering basic skills. By performing responsibly at work and in school and treatment, offenders demonstrate prosocial conduct and earn privileges. Some privileges involve acquiring goods; others involve trustee assignments. In the same way, as in the world outside, underachievement reduces status.

Underlying values. Offenders acquire basic literacy, employability, and sobriety skills at the earliest opportunity and use them

throughout their confinement and on parole. Inmates who dropped out of school must earn a GED because a basic education is prerequisite to a productive life. And since education is tied to economic advancement, base pay is greater for graduates and the highest paying work assignments are reserved for offenders who have earned a high school diploma or GED.



Corrections corrected

The 25,339 felons in the Missouri prison system⁷ could be considered failures on a number of counts at admission. The vast majority were high school dropouts—academic failures. Many had been unable to obtain or hold a job, and most abused drugs and alcohol. Because every Missouri correctional facility has adopted most components of the parallel universe, almost all prisoners participate. Their transformation from failure to success can be measured, chiefly by recidivism. The reduction by one-third (from 33 to 20 percent) in the proportion returned to prison on new felony charges between 1994 and 1999 attests to success. At the same time, each of the four component areas shows evidence of effectiveness.

More than 98 percent of the inmates are engaged in some combination of school, work, and treatment full time. Since 1993, when the school requirement was instituted, the schools' capacity increased 172 percent and, at the end of 1999, more than 8,000 inmates were attending school daily and more than 2,400 had earned their GED that year.

Institutional employment increased about 65 percent between 1994 and 1999. When the announcement was made in 1997 that a high school diploma or GED would be required for the highest paying jobs, fully half of all prison workers did not have a GED. A year later, only one-fourth had not yet earned a GED. When the policy went into effect in

1999, only 74 offenders refused to attend school, and because they had not earned a GED in the allotted time, were reassigned to lower paying jobs.

The number of substance treatment slots has more than tripled, from 772 in 1993 to 2,765 in 1999. Previously, offenders whose need for treatment was acute but not chronic did not receive services. Now, substance abuse assessments and drug education are available at every Missouri facility.

Problem solving is showing results, as measured by the work of the Office of Constituent Services. The number of lawsuits brought by prisoners in 1999 was less than one-fourth what it was in 1994.

Toward a more perfect parallel universe

Inmates in Missouri serve an average of 28 months in prison. The Department of Corrections uses these 28 months as a time of prerelease preparation for their reentry as responsible individuals. As a model for offender management and prerelease preparation, the parallel universe yields far better outcomes than conventional correctional systems.

The offenders have enthusiastically embraced the principles of the parallel universe, even making suggestions for expansion. The need to maintain security will, of course, always preclude exact replication of the world outside. Moreover, there are limits to what inmates can earn through good conduct, good grades, and a good work history. They cannot earn early release because their sentences were imposed by the court. Within these confines, however, is ample latitude for managers to rethink any number of community-linked resources that promote reentry. Inmates' families, a notable example, should increasingly be part of prerelease preparation.

Increased organizational effectiveness

The organizational functioning of the Missouri Department of Corrections has benefited from the parallel universe. Shifting from a system focused on punishing misconduct to one that blends remedial responses with rewards for good conduct requires reengineering such internal processes as recordkeeping. Now Missouri tracks the number of GED certificates awarded, inmates employed, and urine tests for drugs, in addition to the number of escapes and homicides. Because each inmate's performance and program participation is important, it is essential to maintain work and training reports and to document academic performance, vocational training, and job skill levels. Such records permit feedback to offenders and can be used by the parole board and inmates' prospective employers.

Management also benefits from the parallel universe. When policies are reviewed or new procedures developed, one simple question is asked: *How would this issue be handled if it were not in the prison setting?* Dealing with medical copayments is an example. Requiring copayments of inmates has become increasingly popular as a way to limit unnecessary clinic visits. In keeping with the principles of the parallel universe, offenders who have the resources to pay could be required to. Missouri is aware that copayments should not be a way to make prison more punitive.

Inmates benefit by becoming better acquainted with the way the world outside operates and why it operates as it does. Management benefits. And when prison policies and practices parallel those in the community, they are more likely to appear reasonable to staff and to win their support. When staff understand the reasons for adopted practices, they are far more likely to enforce them clearly and consistently and with greater confidence. That surely translates as a more effective correctional system.

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This and other NIJ publications can be found at and downloaded from the NIJ Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>).

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Notes

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THE EXECUTIVE SESSIONS ON SENTENCING AND CORRECTIONS

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