
Boot Camp for Prisoners

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In this era of rising crime rates, over-crowded prisons, and increasing recidivism rates, criminal justice administrators confront serious problems that require innovative responses. The search for solutions to these problems has generated some interesting rehabilitation programs.

Among the emerging programs is an approach that administrators in the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) believe may well be an effective method of rehabilitating first-time offenders. The shock incarceration program--also known as boot camp--is a prison-based program modeled after traditional military boot camps. The program, which emerged in the late 1980's in some State correctional systems, exposes inmates to a daily regimen of strict discipline, physical training, military drills, and work details. In addition, some of the programs also incorporate substance abuse counseling and adult basic and secondary education.

The number of shock incarceration programs at both the State and the Federal level has grown over the years. While many of the current programs differ in specific correctional philosophy and program activities, there is some consistency in these different approaches.

A primary goal of shock incarceration programs is to change the offenders' behavior to dissuade their involvement in criminal activity. The highly regimented and disciplined environment provided by this type of program facilitates such behavior changes. Shock incarceration programs also prepare participants for successful reintegration into society.

Currently, the BOP has two shock incarceration programs, one for male inmates and one for female inmates. This article discusses the shock incarceration program for male prisoners--the Intensive Confinement Center (ICC)--located in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. (The female program is located at the Federal Prison Camp in Bryan, Texas.) It describes how the program began, how officials choose inmates for the program, how the program is evaluated, and how participants eventually re-enter society.

THE FEDERAL PROGRAM

The Federal Intensive Confinement Center Program at Lewisburg Prison, which is designed to incarcerate 192 male Federal offenders, began with 42 inmates in January 1991. Since then, there have been 17 training cycles involving 917 inmates.

The ICC provides inmates with a highly structured, spartan environment of physical training, labor-intensive work assignments 6 days per week, education and vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and life-skills programs that promote the inmates' successful reintegration into

mainstream community life.

Furthermore, the program promotes positive change in inmates' behavior. It focuses inmates' efforts on responsible decisionmaking, developing self-direction and a positive self-image, and finding and maintaining employment.

Each training cycle at the ICC lasts 180 days. The incentive for entering the program is the opportunity for inmates to serve the remainder of their sentences, a portion greater than would otherwise be possible, in a community-based program.

Eligibility Criteria

Optimally, candidates for the ICC program are recently sentenced individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria. However, when the program began, there were only a few eligible individuals who had been recently sentenced. As a result, BOP administrators decided to transfer inmates already incarcerated in a minimum-security facility into the ICC, provided they met program criteria. Now that the program is operational, direct court admissions account for over 80 percent of admissions into the ICC. The remaining 20 percent of the inmates are eligible inmates who are transferred from other institutions.

There are six basic requirements that all ICC participants must meet. They must:

- Be serving a sentence of 12 to 30 months
- Be serving their first period of incarceration or have no lengthy periods of prior incarceration
- Volunteer for participation in the program
- Be a minimum security risk
- Be 35 years old or younger when they enter the program
- Lack medical restrictions.

Orientation

Once the inmates arrive at the ICC, they participate in a 2-week admission and orientation (A & O) that familiarizes them with the mission, purpose, and scope of the facility, the benefits of the program, and activities in which they will participate. During this period, officials also discuss the strict daily schedule, which begins at 5 a.m. and ends at 10 p.m.

During A & O, inmates may opt to leave the program. Those who decide that they do not wish to continue in the program transfer to regular institutions. The ICC administrator also has the option of expelling participants who do not abide by ICC rules and regulations. These inmates return to traditional prison programs to serve the remainder of their court-imposed sentences without benefit of the accelerated community corrections program phases.

Daily Schedule

A typical weekday at the ICC begins with a 5 a.m. wake-up call. At 8 a.m., the inmates march to their designated work, education, or counseling assignments. Between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., inmates participate in these assignments, as well as in military drill exercises. At 4:30 p.m., inmates have a 1-hour military-type physical training period. After a dinner break, inmates resume work call and team activities. (During team activities, team leaders work with inmates to improve personal habits, team spirit, and military drill skills.) The official workday ends at 8:40 p.m., and the lights go out at 10 p.m.

Community Reintegration

When inmates successfully complete the ICC portion of the program, they transfer to a Community Corrections Center (CCC). The CCCs are located throughout the country, and inmates are transferred to the facility closest to their home area.

Inmates entering CCCs begin a three-phase approach to integrating back into the community. Inmates gain increased freedom in each phase if they demonstrate responsible, law-abiding behavior.

The amount of time spent in each phase at the CCC depends on the length of the inmate's sentence. For example, an inmate sentenced to 21-24 months will spend 6 months at the ICC and between 3 and 4 months in each of the other community phases.

Inmates are expected to maintain regular employment in the community throughout their stay at the CCC. And, as do all Federal prisoners, they must pay 25 percent of their salaries to the CCC to help offset the cost of their incarceration.

During Phase I, unless inmates are at work, they must remain in the center. They do receive permission leave for religious services or other preapproved purposes, but all family visits or leisure activities take place at the center.

Inmates who satisfactorily complete this phase may then progress to Phase II, the prerelease phase. During Phase II, inmates may visit family and friends outside the center until the evening curfew time. In addition, inmates in this phase may obtain weekend passes and furloughs.

Inmates who successfully complete Phase II move into the final phase--home confinement. During this phase, inmates may live in their own homes under certain restrictions and reporting requirements, such as electronic monitoring, for the remainder of their sentences.

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

As of August 1993, 917 offenders had been sent to the Lewisburg ICC. Of those, 167 inmates still remain in the ICC phase of the program, while 156 inmates have transferred out before completing the 180-day program. Of this number, 45 inmates received disciplinary transfers, 17 were removed for medical reasons, 1 was remanded to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for deportation, and the remaining 93 opted out during the A&O process.

In an effort to evaluate the ICC Program, BOP researchers are examining the development and operation of the program, as well as its cost. They are also examining changes that occur in offenders who participate in the ICC, as opposed to a matched sample of offenders who do not. Finally, they are conducting postrelease followups on ICC graduates to determine job success and whether the inmates have refrained from criminal activity.

CONCLUSION

Three critical components contribute to the success of the prisoner rehabilitation process: The institutional experience, the community's involvement in the offender's life, and the offender's personal actions and choices. Prisons need to provide inmates with access to appropriate programs; communities must provide support in terms of job placement, counseling, and housing; and offenders must choose to better themselves and to become law-abiding citizens. The ICC Program provides inmates with all of these necessary components.

Although the ICC Program is not a program for hardened criminals, it offers younger offenders the chance to "mend their ways." The program promotes the development of self-discipline, respect, and life-coping skills. It helps inmates gain the critical skills they need to begin anew and become productive citizens.

Daily ICC Schedule

- *5 a.m.*
Inmate wake-up call
Guards account for all inmates
30-minute physical training period
- *6:45 a.m.*
Breakfast
Living area inspection
- *8 a.m.*
Inmates march to their designated work, education, or counseling assignments
- *9:15 a.m.*
15-minute military drill exercise and resume work
- *12 p.m.*
Lunch and medication call
- *1 p.m.*
Inmates resume work, education, and counseling session
- *4:30 p.m.*
1-hour military-type physical training period
- *5:30 p.m.*
Dinner
- *6:30 p.m.*
Work call and team activities resume
- *8:40 p.m.*
Official workday ends and guards again count inmates
- *10 p.m.*
Lights out (Officials relax this rigorous schedule on holidays and Sundays to allow inmates time for personal telephone calls, religious services, and personal time. However, televisions and radios are not allowed at any time.)