



POSITION PAPER COOPERATION/COLLABORATION WITHIN CORRECTIONS

Summary of the Issue

For more than sixty years, CPPCA has successfully represented the entire correction spectrum. The organization has diligently sought to balance the professional needs of all parts of the system and to advocate for the common, comprehensive interests of the profession. The Association's mission is to promote professionalism and public understanding of the many and complex issues affecting state and local, field and institutional, adult and juvenile corrections.

Crucial to success in our efforts has been our ability to encourage and debate divergent beliefs and perspectives. Through this open dialogue with policy makers, correctional leaders, members of our Association, practitioners from a range of agencies, individuals from related interests, media representatives and others we have been able to advocate for sensible, reasonable and informed positions on correctional issues. CPPCA seeks to focus attention on the best way(s) to deliver correctional services and provide public safety. Our posture is, and has been, one of support for all of corrections, not any one part-and particularly not any one part at the expense of another. We have sought to assure that the corrections community addresses its common concerns with a single voice, that we not be divided from one another unnecessarily.

The litmus test we apply to proposals about our field is to ask, 'Is this good corrections practice? Is it good public policy? Does it enhance our ability to protect the public?' When the answers are clearly 'yes,' CPPCA supports and works for change; when the answers are not so clear, or when they are a definite 'no,' CPPCA seeks consensus toward other, better directions. While we are a multi-interest organization, we are single minded about our goal of helping to create and maintain a viable, balanced, cost effective correctional continuum which provides public safety and enhances the quality of life for all Californians.

CPPCA contends that offenders who represent significant threats to society must be incarcerated to protect the community from their criminal acts. It is our view that those who are incarcerated must not only be separated from society, but also must be punished and programmed in ways which promote lawful behavior. While the primary goal of incarceration is punishment, jails, prisons and juvenile facilities additionally seek to positively affect the behavior of those who will be released back into our communities. Programs which promote personal responsibility and accountability provide public safety over the long term and are critical elements of institutional corrections.

These outcomes are also the focus of community based punishment. It is our experience that many offenders benefit from community corrections programs in addition to and/or in lieu of commitment to institutions. Community based punishments which allow for moving offenders both up and down the correctional continuum, providing sanctions for those who fail to follow the programs in which they are placed as well as rewards for those accomplishing positive behavior, are both practical and tough. They make significant demands on offenders, hold them accountable, force them to confront the consequences of their conduct and provide realistic incentives for appropriate behavior. Community based punishment, accomplished on either probation or parole, is a framework within which to provide a balanced and cooperative application of the entire range of correctional options.

CPPCA recognizes the unique value of each partner in the field of corrections based on the function each performs for the system. Probation functions to enforce court orders by supervising and programming offenders without incurring the costs of long term incarceration. Parole's function is to protect the public by supervising and monitoring offenders' return to the community following prison terms or Youth Authority commitments. Institutions seek to provide safe environments (for both inmates and staff) in which to incapacitate and punish serious, violent and/or habitual offenders. Each partner is critical to the whole; each is necessary to provide for public safety.

Seldom, if ever, has our mutual cooperation been more important than it is now. Corrections is subject to potentially enormous changes due to increasing public sentiment for long term incarceration, concerns over rising costs, considerations about realigning and/or redesigning government and the host of other economic, social and technological innovations impacting society at the end of the twentieth century. The ability of corrections to continue to provide professional and effective service delivery and thereby concurrently provide the protection the community expects, hinges in large part on our ability to work together to promote the profession as a whole.

If correctional personnel are not here for each other, we cannot anticipate support from those who are not part of the corrections family. If we do not look after the values, the essential elements, the best practices of our field, they will disappear. We are the experts, the advocates and the teachers of good corrections. We must join one another in partnerships which stress our commonality and support our strengths as we seek collaborative innovations to assure that the future of our profession is positive and productive.

Position

CPPCA advocates collaboration and cooperation among all elements of the corrections community. While acknowledging the differing roles and common vision of corrections professionals, CPPCA rededicates itself to the tasks of informing the public, educating decision makers and focusing practitioners' attention on the common goal of those working in probation, parole and correctional institutions – the goal of providing the protection and safety the public both demands and deserves. While we may work toward that goal in differing ways, we support one another's efforts to promote a comprehensive, adequately resourced, balanced and effective correctional system.

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