
JAIL BULLETIN

NUMBER 18

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The Jail Bulletin is a monthly feature of the Crime Commission Update. The Bulletin may be used as a supplement to your jail inservice training program if officers study the material and complete the attached "open book" quiz. The Bulletin and quiz may be reproduced for use by your staff. We welcome any jail training material you would like to contribute to the Bulletin.

SUPERVISION IN SMALL JAILS

INTRODUCTION

The results of a survey recently conducted as part of the National Institute of Corrections' "Model Architectural Plans for Small Jails" indicate that most small jails in this country use a type of inmate surveillance that can be called "intermittent." In 88 percent of the small jails surveyed, the primary surveillance method is for officers to make periodic rounds through each cellblock or past each individual cell. The remaining 12 percent that do not use the intermittent approach use one of the following methods.

Direct Supervision -- Posting an officer around-the-clock within each cellblock or pod in direct, barrier-free contact with inmates. This practice has become known in the past few years as "direct supervision." About one percent of the jails under a 50-inmate design capacity reported that they use this approach to supervision.

Remote Supervision -- Posting an officer around-the-clock in a secure guard station outside of a group of cellblocks or pods, but looking directly into them from either a non-secure post or a secure control post. Five percent indicated that they use this method, which has come to be referred to as "remote supervision."

CCTV/Audio -- Utilizing a dispatcher or other staff person to scan closed circuit television (CCTV) screens and/or monitor audio equipment, but not to actually enter cellblocks on a regular basis. Approximately six percent of survey respondents indicated that they use this method.

Movement

Linear jails inhibit the convenient movement of inmates to programs and services because they usually require escorted movement to decentralized locations such as a rooftop recreation yard. To the degree that services can be arranged around the inmates in close proximity to housing areas, unnecessary and burdensome movement will be reduced.

Information

Intermittent surveillance impedes the flow of information between inmates and staff. Infrequent contact between officers and staff occurs because the environment is not conducive to quality communication. Both inmates and officers need a flow of information in order to remain correctly oriented to their respective roles.

Inconveniences

Traditional jail design does not lend itself to the reduction of "hassles." Instead it contributes to the number of minor and major inconveniences that jail staff face each day. These include providing inmates access to the telephone, escorting them from one place to another, and being required to directly supervise inmate work activities in remote areas.

Cost

Vandalism and other forms of damage to jail property and equipment take a tremendous financial toll. Common targets of attack are lighting fixtures, window frames and glazing, bathroom fixtures, and bedding material. Effective surveillance--much less supervision--is difficult to attain in a linear facility.

None of the so-called "state-of-the-art" security hardware and materials will resist sustained and unrestrained attack. The key is pro-active supervision, which creates the potential for normalizing the environment and for reducing costs through the use of less expensive alternatives in construction and furnishings.

Discipline

Discipline is difficult to maintain in the linear type facility. Because surveillance is intermittent, offenders are difficult to identify and even more difficult to prosecute, either through criminal or administrative procedure. Infractions occur in housing areas, which are primarily the domain of the inmate. Many violations go undetected and seriously undermine the safety and security of the jail.

As one sheriff put it, "Discipline cannot be a sometimes thing. It is a constant, a tone that is set in a jail." Too often, we equate discipline with punishment. Ideally, discipline is the day-to-day correction of undesirable inmate behavior rather than the assessment of a major penalty when behavior deteriorates beyond the point of correction. To be corrected, misbehavior must be readily observable to staff who have full control of the jail.

MAKING PODULAR-REMOTE WORK

At its worst, remote supervision is nothing more than utilizing an officer as a sort of human television camera: the officer observes inmate activity areas but has no interaction with the activity and no effect on inmate behavior. Remote surveillance is primarily a reactive management approach, but it can be successful if the following guidelines and principles are observed.

Adequate Staffing is Crucial to Success.

Consensus opinion among legal experts and experienced correctional practitioners is that a minimum of two staff persons should be on duty in the jail at all times. It is recommended that one officer occupy a secure, podular-remote supervision post located and designed so that its occupant can provide visual supervision of inmate housing. The second officer would function as a rover or floor officer and would carry only those keys necessary for his duties on the floor. From a secure, remote post, the control officer would be able to monitor the welfare of inmates and staff as well as to control the operation of doors and locking mechanisms. Thus, the incentive for attacks against staff as a means of escape is greatly reduced.

Specialized Training in Effective Methods of Supervision is Necessary.

Regardless of the architectural style or the supervision mode used, no jail can be operated successfully without an adequately trained staff. Officers must be trained to seek out contact with inmates rather than to avoid it. To the degree possible, rovers and floor officers should attempt to retain total control of the jail facility by reducing the opportunities of inmates for long periods of unsupervised congregation. In the podular-direct supervision jail, contact between officers and staff is constant, but remote supervision jails provide only relatively constant surveillance by the floor officer or rover. Ideally, both officers would be cross-trained to rotate between positions and would function as a team. The limitations of podular-remote supervision can be mitigated if rovers and pod control officers interact and share information about inmate behavior gained through both visual/audio surveillance and personal interaction.

Design Complements the Ability to Supervise Inmates From a Secure, Remote Post.

The officer operating in a direct supervision mode has maximum flexibility to move, to see, and to be seen by inmates in his/her housing unit. This is not true of the pod control officer, who sits in a "glass bubble." When the rover or floor officer is absent from a particular housing area, it is essential that the pod officer have an unobstructed view of all activity areas in the pod.

The Facility Design and Security/Control Systems Should Respond to a Logical Classification and Custody Plan.

Early in the planning process for a new jail the local jurisdiction should project a total capacity for the jail. That projection must be broken down into anticipated cell space needs for various classifications of inmates requiring separation and differing levels of supervision and security. At a minimum, separate housing areas should be available to allow jail officials to segregate males, females, and juveniles (juveniles are not recommended to be held in adult facilities). Depending on individual statutes, reliance on nationally accepted standards, and management's correctional philosophy, the physical plant may also have to allow for separate housing for the following inmate classifications:

- o Pre-trial inmates
- o Sentenced inmates
- o Misdemeanants
- o Felons
- o Civil holds
- o Trustys or institutional workers
- o Aggressive or violent "predators"
- o Weak or passive "prey"
- o Administrative segregation (protective custody)
- o Disciplinary segregation
- o Work release
- o Weekenders

This is not to suggest that a separate, dedicated housing area must be designed for each distinct classification of inmates. It is important, however, for the jail's housing units to be sufficient in number, size, type of security, furnishings, and hardware to permit the implementation of a logically conceived and legally defensible classification plan that allows staff to manage the population safely and securely.

-Adapted From:
"Small Jail Special Issues"
by KIMME
Planning and Architecture
February, 1986

QUIZ

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of inservice training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement inservice training if an officer studies the bulletin, completes the quiz, and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during annual jail inspections.

SUBJECT: SMALL JAILS

NAME _____

1. According to the NIC Survey, what type of supervision method is used in most small jails? INTERMITTENT :

2. Placing an officer directly in a housing unit who is in constant contact with inmates is called _____
PODULAR DIRECT SUPERVISION

3. What is the minimum number of officers per shift needed to make podular-remote supervision work? 2

4. Podular-remote supervision works best when staff members avoid interaction with inmates.

TRUE XX FALSE

5. What can be done to reduce inmate movement in a jail?
BRING PROGRAMS OR SERVICES TO INMATES
IN THEIR HOUSING UNITS

CREDIT: 1/2 HOUR CREDIT FOR JAIL INSERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENT

ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR OR TRAINING OFFICER