

N E B R A S K A

JAIL BULLETIN

Number 63

April, 1990

INMATE SERVICES, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Inmate Services

Inmate services include the required supportive services necessary to meet the basic needs of your inmate population, similar to those provided for the residents of your community. At a minimum, they include religious services, library services, and commissary services. Medical and mental health care services are services that are not addressed in this Jail Bulletin. (Section R: MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH).

These services should not be regarded as privileges; you can be held personally liable, and face possible court action, for failing to provide services which are required by the courts and local and professional detention standards. These decisions and standards require you to meet the primary needs of their inmates. Therefore, by providing the services, you can protect yourself against personal liability and court action, and probably also run a more contented jail.

Jail staff have the responsibility and opportunity of identifying inmates or situations that show the need for a particular service. Not every inmate will need each service, of course, but by developing a variety of services, you will be able to meet the needs of your inmate population, and you will be able to develop a more professional and helpful inmate-staff relationship.

If you are providing all services in-house with your staff, consider using existing community resources. You can broker or arrange for services, either having someone come to the jail to deliver them, or taking inmates to the provider. This system offers you the advantages of lessening the burden on the jail staff, allows the staff to devote their time to more professional correctional management, gives the inmates access to more specialized services, and develops community awareness and support.

Religious Services

Inmates in your jail have the constitutional right to worship and practice the religion of their choice. You have the responsibility to provide your inmates with the opportunity to worship, if they choose to do so.

The Jail Bulletin is a monthly feature of the Crime Commission Update. The Bulletin may be reproduced and used to supplement your jail staff in-service training program. The contents of the Jail Bulletin represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect official views or policies of the Nebraska Crime Commission or the Nebraska Jail Standards Board.

Regular or weekly worship services are one way in which you can provide religious services to inmates. It would obviously be difficult, if not impossible, to provide facilities for every type of religion represented in your jail population, but at a minimum, provide weekly Catholic Mass and Protestant services, and invite a rabbi to visit your jail and conduct services on Jewish religious holidays (if you have any Jewish inmates who want it.)

Many small jails do not have a separate place in which to conduct religious services. It is satisfactory to use your library, visiting area, classroom, or other similar space, for this purpose. Make sure your inmates and staff know what services are available, and when.

You might also consider allowing inmates who do not pose a threat to the community, who are minimum-security inmates, or who are close to the end of their sentence to attend worship services in local churches.

Contact your local churches and synagogues to identify the resources of the different faiths in the community. You may be able to have a part-time chaplain without charge, and many local clergy are willing to hold weekly services at the jail. Be sure that you and the chaplain or visiting clergy understand each other's needs.

Religious counseling is another important service that should be made available to your inmates who request it, on both a regular and emergency basis. Counseling can provide substantial benefits to both inmates and jail staff.

Clergy can prove to be of significant assistance in helping an inmate deal with crisis in his/her life, particularly in providing family counseling to help keep an inmate and his/her family together, or in notifying the inmate's family or the inmate when a death, serious injury, or illness occurs.

Clergy can help the inmate maintain important ties with the community, for example, assisting you, your jail staff, or the inmate in locating employment and housing in preparation for release.

Clergy can also identify other community resources and help you to use them.

Clergy can provide assistance to you and your jail staff when faced with special religious practices (such as special diets or medical care.)

Clergy provide valuable links between the jail and the community.

You may also be able to get assistance from lay religious groups in the community who are looking for a project. You should contact these groups, explain your program at the jail, and then let them offer ways in which they would be interested in helping you. Do not limit their involvement only to religiously-oriented services.

There are a number of national and local organizations that have experience working in jails, and which are usually willing to assist you in any way. These include:

- Local church councils,
- Catholic Diocese, and
- The Salvation Army

You may need to restrict religious practices of inmates when they pose a threat to the safety and security of the jail, or when they endanger the community. You may also be able to stop them when they could cause a substantial disruption to the operation of the facility, but this is a sensitive area.

Library Services

Library services will provide your inmate population with an important source of self-education and leisure-time activity.

To establish a library in your jail, first ask for assistance from your local public library, the library science department at a local college, or from a public school.

You can set up the jail library in a small, empty or partially used room. Make sure the room is well lighted and that inmates have access to it. If you do have a space for a library, furnish it with a table and chairs and some shelves to display reading materials. If space is very limited, you can use a portable cart to bring materials to inmates.

A good rule of thumb for selecting reading material for your library is to offer the same types of materials used in your public library. This will help you decide which materials are "allowed" without becoming a censor.

Materials should address the varying interests of your inmates and include educational materials, magazines, fiction, non-fiction, reference books, and legal materials.

If you have the funds, purchase sufficient books and periodicals for your library. If money is a problem, as it is in most jails, there are several ways to cope: for example, you can ask your public library to establish a branch library in your jail or provide a weekly bookmobile service. You should also check with your local high school or college, and ask them to donate some books.

Other sources for donated books, magazines and newspapers are local newstands, bookstores, drugstores, newspapers, and the general public. You should be able to ask for donations through public service announcements on radio and television, or stories in the newspapers. You will probably be surprised at how quickly your library collection grows!

Your library can be staffed by community volunteers, whose duties should include selecting and cataloguing reading materials, supervision, assisting inmates with their reading needs, and teaching them to locate and use reading materials.

It is helpful to develop and post a schedule which ensures that all inmates have daily access to the jail library. Coordinate the development of your library schedule with your volunteers who will be staffing the jail library. Develop a check-out system, and make sure it is understood by both inmates and those staffing the library.

One important aspect of library services is legal materials. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that inmates have a fundamental constitutional right to access to the court, which includes access to legal materials. This does not mean that a small jail is required to have a complete law library which could cost from \$6,000 to \$10,000 to establish, and an additional \$1,500 a year to maintain. It does mean that you are required to provide inmates with legal materials upon request.

Providing inmates with access to legal materials can be accomplished satisfactorily by developing and implementing a plan to secure legal material from your county, state, or local law library on an "as-needed" basis. Such a plan would require that your jail library have a minimum number of legal research materials available, such as a recognized law dictionary, a resource listing of legal materials available from an existing law library, and resource material on how to research legal issues.

Permit inmates to make written requests for legal materials. Develop procedures for ordering, pickup, delivery, and returning legal materials.

Commissary Services

Commissary services provide inmates with a means of purchasing certain items not provided by the jail (such as magazines, newspapers, special grooming items, playing cards, candy, cigarettes, and arts and crafts kits.) These items provide inmates with a few simple conveniences and break the monotony of detention.

There are three different methods for providing commissary services, all of which have their advantages and disadvantages. You can operate your own store within the jail, make regular commissary trips to a local store, or contract with a local vendor (wholesaler) or store to bring commissary supplies to the jail and sell them directly.

If you operate a commissary store in the jail yourself, it can be maintained by your existing staff or a volunteer. You will require only the space needed to store commissary items, perhaps only a large locker. You might be able to generate a small profit which can be used to purchase recreational equipment, or support a fund for inmates who would like to purchase commissary items but do not have the funds.

In some small jails, inmates are allowed to fill out and sign a commissary order form once or twice a week. Staff then purchase the items from a local vendor or store in the community. This method is not recommended for a small jail with more than ten inmates because it takes a staff person away from the jail. In addition, the jail loses a small profit which could be used to support recreational programs or an inmate fund. A variation of this option is to use vending machines in the non-secure area of the jail, although this system takes away some of the opportunity for initiative and independent operation, which may be helpful for some inmates in maintaining their feeling of control in their lives.

Contracting with a local vendor or store to provide commissary services at your jail is a third option. It requires a written agreement between the jail and vendor, and there may be a cost involved for services. However, such an arrangement requires little or no staff time. Be sure that you are involved in planning and implementing commissary services provided by a vendor; vendors are usually not very "jail-wise." It is also important to recognize that there may be a mark-up on items, which inmates naturally would resent.

Operating a commissary can be easier if you follow these suggestions.

Prepare a list of items, with prices, that can be sold by the commissary. Be sure it reflects inmate tastes and preferences. Include ideas from your staff, and be sure the items are not potentially hazardous to individual safety or security.

Make sure prices for items in your commissary do not exceed store prices. If you are making commissary trips, developing a price list can be very difficult because of changing prices, and the number of potential items. One solution is to limit the items and include brand names on the list. If you are contracting for commissary services, make sure the vendor's price list is reviewed by your staff and approved by you. Post your commissary price list in each inmate housing area.

It is also important to develop a process or mechanism that allows inmates to place commissary orders. You should design a commissary order form which will serve several purposes. There should be: (1) an ordering section, listing the items ordered by the inmate, to be signed in the presence of the staff person collecting orders; (2) a confirmation section, which the inmate signs to show he received the items; and (3) a bill section, signed by the inmate, approving the amount charged to his/her account.

These sections will establish that inmates are indeed requesting specific items, that they are paying for them, and that they have received them. If you are contracting with a vendor for commissary services, make sure the order form he/she develops is suitable.

Prepare a schedule that informs inmates and staff of the days and times that commissary orders will be picked up by staff, filled, and received by the inmate. You should post the commissary schedule in each living area, along with the commissary price list. Try to schedule commissary services during a time when your staff have few other duties, and at least twice weekly.

You must also design an accounting system that ensures accurate handling of commissary funds. This should include: funds expended to purchase commissary items; amount of funds received through sales; "profits" generated through sales; and the use of profits.

Profits generated from the commissary belong to the inmate population; proper use of profits can include inmate recreational programs, supplements to programs, funds for needy inmates, television sets and repairs, and other related expenditures.

This issue of the "Jail Bulletin" is taken from the Small Jail Resource Manual, Fourth Edition, Rod Miller and Ralph Nichols, authors, sponsored by The National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice.

For a copy of the manual contact: CRS Inc.
P. O. Box 234
Kents Hill, Maine 04349

QUIZ

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

SUBJECT: INMATE SERVICES, ACTIVITIES
AND PROGRAMS

NAME _____

NUMBER: 63

DATE _____

1. Religious, library, and commissary services may be regarded as privileges.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

2. One way to lessen the burden on the jail staff to provide inmate services is to:
 - a. not provide any inmate services.
 - b. not tell inmates what services are available and hope they don't ask for any.
 - c. use existing community resources.

3. Religious counseling for inmates is not necessary as long as religious services are offered.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

4. Inmates should have _____ access to a jail library.
DAILY WEEKLY MONTHLY

5. Commissary item prices should not exceed local store prices.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

6. According to the article, commissary should be offered at least

CREDIT: 1/2 HOUR CREDIT FOR JAIL IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENT.

ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR OR TRAINING OFFICER.

QUIZ

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

SUBJECT: INMATE SERVICES, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS NAME _____

NUMBER: 63 DATE _____

1. Religious, library, and commissary services may be regarded as privileges.
TRUE ____ FALSE XX

2. One way to lessen the burden on the jail staff to provide inmate services is to:
 - a. not provide any inmate services.
 - b. not tell inmates what services are available and hope they don't ask for any.
 - c. use existing community resources.

3. Religious counseling for inmates is not necessary as long as religious services are offered.
TRUE ____ FALSE XX

4. Inmates should have _____ DAILY _____ access to a jail library.
DAILY WEEKLY MONTHLY

5. Commissary item prices should not exceed local store prices.
TRUE XX FALSE ____

6. According to the article, commissary should be offered at least
TWICE WEEKLY

CREDIT: 1/2 HOUR CREDIT FOR JAIL IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENT.

ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR OR TRAINING OFFICER.