

N E B R A S K A

JAIL BULLETIN

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SECURITY & COMMUNICATIONS - PART I

One of the most important functions of a correctional facility is to protect the public by detaining individuals judged to be a threat to society. In the past, the protection interest centered on creating insurmountable barriers to thwart escape, and the concentration was on providing effective perimeter security rather than internal safety. If we are to view inmate rehabilitation and resocialization as important, then the emphasis must center on not only a secure environment but safe as well.

The single most important factor in our security program is the jail staff...staff persons that are firm, fair, consistent, and knowledgeable. Inmates can sense very quickly the staff persons that are lax on searches, low on discipline, and poor on communications. Jail staff must learn and experience a wide variety of procedures that define sometimes complex and interrelated tasks. Therefore, to be fully proficient in this job, jail staff must be trained and coached so that they are capable of functioning effectively in any position. This is necessary because it gives the staff person an overview of all facility operations and an understanding of why each job is done the way it is and the responsibilities that go with that particular job.

There are two basic types of facility security. The first, perimeter security, pertains to the capability of a facility to prevent escapes...to safely confine its population within the limits of a given area. In general, these limits are the outside walls or fence or can relate to inside walls, rooms, or activity areas. The second type is internal security, and it refers to the abilities of the facility staff to control or influence behavior within inside areas in a manner that involves protection of inmates from one another or from themselves, protection of staff from inmates, and control or prevention of riots and/or disturbances. Both perimeter and internal security are important in order to effect total facility security.

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OBJECTIVES OF JAIL SECURITY:

A security program has four primary objectives:

1. Ensure safety of staff, inmates, and the public

Ensure the safety of staff, inmates, and the public is one of the major objectives of a security program. If this objective is not achieved successfully, all other programming activities by the jail staff will have little meaning or impact. When inmates perceive the environment as disciplined and friendly (as opposed to unprofessional and hostile), they will perceive it as safe and secure, and, more times than not, will respond in normal fashion. However, if inmates are in constant fear of assault or harassment, survival, not self-improvement, will be their main concern. These fears, if sufficiently extensive among the inmate population, can become a negative, self-fulfilling prophesy.

A facility security program, which reduces or eliminates tension, benefits both staff and inmates by providing a safe, secure environment. No jail, due to the varied natures of inmates, can be guaranteed trouble-free. However, a high quality security program run by professional staff will reduce the frequency of serious incidents.

2. Maintain order within the facility

A second objective of a jail's security program is to maintain order. As a public facility and as a part of the Criminal Justice System, a jail cannot permit nor condone any kind of activity that would manipulate, control, or exploit other inmates. To have order in a "forced group" living situation, it is necessary to regulate certain activities that can be done in the outside community such as drug/alcohol usage, freedom of movement, unrestricted hours, and so forth. Permitting these activities to occur in a correctional facility could lead to confusion, chaos, and undesirable consequences.

3. Prevent escapes

The third major objective of a jail's security program is to prevent escapes. An inmate's commitment order compels the facility administrator to maintain continuous custody of that inmate from book-in to release. Thus, escape prevention becomes a legal obligation for jail staff. Here again we also have an obligation to protect the public by detaining individuals judged to be a threat to society.

4. Control contraband

The fourth major objective is the control of contraband. Contraband being any item or article inside the facility that was not issued by the facility, purchased from the commissary, purchased through approved channels, or approved for issue by an appropriate staff member. Authorized items may be considered contraband when found in excess quantities or altered (such as a detainee with a large amount of commissary items who is running a "store" for other detainees, altered clothing, etc.)

Effective supervision, that is managing inmates and their time, is the key to controlling contraband. Staff members should always submit written reports on all contraband problems they observe both to ensure that the problem is quickly corrected and to protect themselves. No contraband problem is too minor to be ignored nor are any contraband problems too insignificant to be put in writing.

When a jail fails to function as intended or fails to meet any one of these objectives, the results can be disastrous. Tension will escalate into violence, and serious injury or death may result. An aware staff, practicing interpersonal communication skills, can establish an environment that encourages normal social behavior that will diffuse tension. Significant cues occur during communications, and these cues deal directly with how the situation is perceived. If staff members can address inmates in a tone of voice typical of interactions outside in normal society, then responses are

CORRECTION TO JUNE, 1991 BULLETIN - The last sentence of the Bulletin was omitted in printing. The last two sentences read as follows: If staff members can address inmates in a tone of voice typical of interactions outside in normal society, then responses are more likely to be just as normal. There must be give and take, respect for respect.

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 the annual jail inspection.

SUBJECT: SECURITY AND COMMUNICATIONS, PART 1

JUNE, 1991

NUMBER 76

NAME _____

DATE _____

1. List the two types of facility security given: _____

2. A high quality security program run by professional staff will reduce the frequency of _____

3. No contraband problem is too minor to be ignored.

TRUE FALSE

4. List the four primary objectives of jail security:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

CREDIT: 1/2 hour credit for Jail Inservice Training requirement

