

Making A Difference



April/May/June 2012

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A Word From the Director...

I can say with confidence that our employees can, and do, have a tremendous impact on an inmate in 15 seconds or less. Front line staff and supervisors, in particular, see inmates every day. During these brief moments a professional relationship can develop between staff and inmates. This is the foundation for the '3 Rs' – role model, redirect, and reinforce.

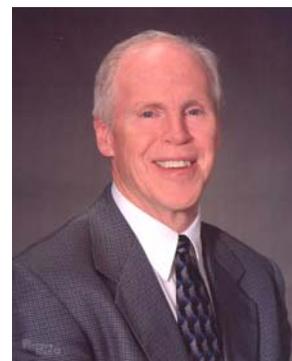
Every day, we role model for the inmate population by the way we dress, act, and speak. These are the things people notice the most. It's important that our inmate population sees positive character traits in our staff. We are paid by the public who rightfully expect that we be role models for the public and the inmates. Our appearance, our interactions, and more critically, our response in intense situations is really the measurement of the quality of service we provide to Nebraska citizens.

As we role model for the inmate population, it is each of our personal responsibility to redirect inmates' focus from irresponsible, negative behavior toward a lifestyle that contributes to the health and well-being of Nebraska. In the same way, when we see inmates become motivated in a more positive direction, we have a responsibility to notice and reinforce those attributes and behaviors so they become part of their character.

I truly believe we can influence a change in inmate behavior. That's why we do this job. It's not for riches and fame, but rather to be the protectors for others. A point of pride, I believe, is when we are the person who has the patience to work with individuals who are sometimes vulgar, assaultive, and predatory.

When I interact with public officials, I continually learn of their appreciation for our humane treatment of inmates. Many say that they could not imagine themselves doing what we do every day. More people appreciate our challenges than we will ever know.

It is a rare person who chooses to do what we do for a living, yet there is an extremely high level of interest and respect we gain when we do it well. It's no wonder I am proud of this Department and the work being done every day.



Rex Richard Appointed to Parole Board

Governor Dave Heineman recently appointed Rex Richard to the Board of Parole after a seat was vacated by the passing of Bob Booser.

The Nebraska Board of Parole is a five-member board that reviews the status of criminal offenders, determines when to grant parole and sets the conditions of parole. The board advises the Governor with regard to parole legislation and informs the Board of Pardons about the merits of applications for remission, reprieve, pardon or commutation.

Richard assumed his new responsibilities on June 18.

The Full-Scale Exercise

Brad Hansen, Organization Development & Training/Emergency Preparedness Administrator

From May 10, 2012 until the early morning hours of May 11, 2012 the Department sponsored a full scale exercise at the Hastings National Guard Training Center in Hastings, Nebraska. The full scale exercise was conducted as part of the final exercise for the SORT Basic Training Academy and the Crisis Negotiation Training Academy. The exercise was supported by our good friends from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The exercise was a hostage situation that started at approximately 6:00 am on May 10 and was not resolved until 1:00 am on May 11. There were two Nebraska staff competing for one SORT opening and seven Wyoming Department of Corrections staff completing the Academy for placement on their Department's SORT Team. There were fourteen Nebraska staff members competing for nine open CNT positions and one individual from the Saunders County Sheriff's office. Those staff selected for CNT were Elisha Stinson-NSP, Jennifer Hoppe-OCC, Brian Geidner-NSP, Adam Goodman-DEC, Kara Simpson-LCC and Jonathon Gomez-WEC. Shawn Freese-NSP was selected for SORT.

This large an exercise takes a lot of coordination and direction. Emergency Specialist Mark Rumery was the Exercise Director and was assisted by Scott Roberts and Keith Broadfoot. The exercise was well-coordinated and these three individuals should be commended. The exercise also called for the opening of a command post which NEMA provided by driving their mobile command post to the site. There were 96 individuals that participated in the exercise. This included the aforementioned individuals as well as CERT members, Public Information Officers and Command Staff.

The Exercise and Training Academies ended with a graduation ceremony that included Director Bob Houston and outside guests. The Department continues to support the need to be prepared to respond to any kind of emergency. Emergency exercises like this one are essential in this preparation.

See NEMA's article on the Full-Scale Exercise in "The Beacon" at http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/beacon/2012_may_beacon.pdf



Above CNT trainees surrounded by representatives of CERT begin negotiations. Below, Left Corrections staff posing as inmates make demands to the negotiation team.



Above, Right CNT trainees monitor communications with inmates who took hostages during the exercise. Below, Left SORT trainees from Nebraska and Wyoming participate in the exercise. Below, Right Representatives of the negotiations team and SORT meet with public information officers and command staff in NEMA's Mobile Operations Center, which served as a command post during the NDCS exercise.



The NDCS-US State Department Partnership

John J. Dahm, Warden (Retired)

Early in 2011 Director Robert Houston and Deputy Director Larry Wayne entered into discussions with U.S. State Department officials to explore the feasibility of having NDCS conduct training for corrections professionals from selected developing countries. A few other states, notably Colorado and Maryland, were already doing such training. A memorandum of understanding was subsequently signed and the first group of corrections executives from Costa Rica visited Nebraska in late May. Wardens Mario Peart and John Dahm escorted that group on a weeklong series of tours involving the Central Office, the Staff Training Academy and several institutions. In July Deputy Warden Brian Gage escorted a similar group from Tunisia through our department.

These two familiarization visits focused primarily on introducing these executives to our department and giving them an overview of our criminal justice system and how our prisons operate. The intent was for them to see what benefits might come from sending members of their staffs here for training.

Our first venture into doing such training came in October when nine middle management and line staff from several of the women's prisons in Afghanistan spent two weeks at STA, CCC-L and NCCW. They received an in-depth look at how we receive, treat and transition females who are committed to our custody.

Based on our successes in 2011, the State Department and NDCS have agreed to continue the partnership in 2012. In February Warden Peart started visiting and assessing prisons in Costa Rica. He has arranged for a group of prison staff from Costa Rica to visit LCC and STA for two weeks in July. They will receive on-the-job training in their specific areas of interest and also take a Leadership course. In October we anticipate hosting another group of female prison workers from



Afghanistan at NCCW and STA. It should be noted that the expenses for these groups and the majority of the staff time we devote to this training are funded or reimbursed by the State Department.

The positive benefits for these visitors involve exposure to the "best practices" of our department to give them a vision of what is possible. The visit also affords them a first-hand look at U.S. life and culture. For most of them it represents their first opportunity to visit somewhere outside their country.

For NDCS staff who work with trainees on the job or in the classroom, the experience expands their cultural horizons and underscores the differences and similarities of correctional practice around the world. The mutual sharing which goes on is an exercise in personal diplomacy and promotes our understanding of diversity. This partnership represents an important step in exerting the positive influence the USA is trying to have in an increasingly interdependent world.

Federal Standards Issued to Implement PREA

Dawn-Renee Smith, PREA Coordinator

In 2003 President Bush signed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) into law. In May 2012, the U.S. Attorney General issued final standards, which become effective August 20, 2012. The executive summary of the rule states, in part: "The goal of the rulemaking is to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse in confinement facilities. For too long, incidents of sexual abuse against incarcerated persons have not been taken as seriously as sexual abuse outside prison walls. In popular culture, prison rape is often the subject of jokes; in public discourse, it has been at times dismissed by some as an inevitable – or even deserved – consequence of criminality. But sexual abuse is never a laughing matter, nor is it punishment for a crime. Rather, it is a crime, and it is no more tolerable when its victims have committed crimes of their own. Prison rape can have severe consequences for victims, for the security of correctional facilities, and for the safety and well-being of the communities to which nearly all incarcerated persons will eventually return.

"The success of the PREA standards in combating sexual abuse in confinement facilities will depend on effective agency and facility leadership, and the development of an agency culture that prioritizes efforts to combat sexual abuse. Effective leadership and culture cannot, of course, be directly mandated by rule. Yet implementation of the standards will help foster a change in culture by institutionalizing policies and practices that bring these concerns to the fore."

The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and its leadership are committed to maintaining and enhancing a culture where ending sexual abuse is a priority. PREA applies to staff sexual misconduct and to inmate on inmate sexual abuse and assault and the NDCS has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of an inmate perpetrated by anyone.

Routine Activities Theory

Abby Vandenberg, Planning Research & Accreditation

What is Routine Activities Theory?

Routine Activities Theory states that crime occurs when three factors are present in a situation:

- a motivated offender:** someone who makes a rational choice that the benefits to be gained from committing a crime outweigh the potential costs of getting caught,
- a suitable target:** individuals or objects that are readily accessible and can easily be taken control of by the offender, and
- the absence of a capable guardian:** the lack of any individuals or objects that would prevent the offender from successfully completing the crime.

Why do these three elements increase the risk of crime?

- Motivated Offender:** Routine Activities Theory assumes that criminal motivations are inherent in human beings, and that all people would commit crime if they knew they could get away with it. Therefore, according to this theory, crime rates are likely to increase when motivated offenders are in close proximity to valuable goods and/or vulnerable victims (i.e., suitable targets), and there are few capable guardians to prevent the offenders from acting.
- Suitable Target:** Suitable targets are objects that can easily be taken, or people who can easily be victimized, by a motivated offender. When valuable targets are left unprotected, they become more appealing to motivated offenders, thus increasing the risk of crime and victimization.



- Absence of a Capable Guardian:** When suitable targets are protected by either formal (e.g., police officers, security systems) or informal (e.g., placing valuables out of public view) methods, an offender must exert more energy to successfully commit a crime. Therefore, the presence of capable guardians helps to decrease the offender's motivation and, in turn, the likelihood of criminal activity. When valuable targets are left unprotected, however, there is little to deter the offender, and the risk of crime increases.

What does this mean for corrections, parole and re-entry?

Increases in supervision and safety precautions will likely reduce the chances of victimization. In addition to simple deterrence strategies, criminal motivation may also be reduced through proactive approaches. For example, crime may decrease if offenders are provided with legitimate means to reach their objectives.

- Someone who has a legitimate job may no longer feel the motivation to steal from others in order to achieve their monetary goals.
- When someone earns money through a lawful occupation and can afford to purchase things they previously stole, they are less likely to see other people's goods as suitable targets.

Greater community involvement and pro-social interaction may also serve to decrease criminal motivation, as these bonds will likely serve to diminish the appeal of criminal lifestyles.

- Someone who lives and works in one town has a lower likelihood of victimizing someone in another city. In these circumstances, distance serves as a capable guardian.
- The attachments that individuals have with significant others in their lives (e.g., spouse, parent, child, friend) can also serve as capable guardians, as these bonds constrain the offender's motivation to commit crime.

See the full version of this article on the Q drive at

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If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit an article
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