

PRISON CULTURE

Incoming inmates are given physicals and various tests: IQ, interest, psychological, reading/math levels. Some tests will be repeated when they complete a GED or have a release date. If there are multiple appropriate facilities, then institution assignments are according to the needs of DOC and the inmate.

Staff use job-related lingo on a daily basis. It varies from state by state, institution by institution. Special education has volumes of terminology. Inmates also have language to describe their relationships and daily life "inside". Gangs also communicate with their own special language. It is likely there are inmates who do not speak English much or at all. They are frequently illiterate in 2 languages and literacy is required in some states for release.

Illegal aliens or recent immigrants can carry diseases not typical in the states such as tuberculosis. Medical care in prison may be the best some individuals have in their lifetime.

Minorities ARE over-represented. Drugs/alcohol and abuse have affected a very high percent of inmates through personal use or family/friends. A great majority of inmates have been identified with special needs, often learning disabilities or mental illness.

A male inmate's family may follow him as he is transferred between prisons. This impacts local welfare, community schools, and neighborhoods.

Juvenile offenders are legally different than adult offenders. They must attend school while incarcerated. Their sentences are shorter and cannot be longer than a similar adult charge. Their records are sealed but are not expunged when they become an adult. Classes may be academic, vocational, GED if over 16, family life, drivers education, Title I, art, pre-employment training, on the job training, even college courses, or treatment such as for substance abuser including AA or sexual offender. Adults may have similar offerings but often have to adjust classes around a work detail. Some courses may not be available to them until the end of their sentence such as job seeking resumes or vocational training paid with certain grants. Counseling for incarcerated adults can be less available due to caseloads. Judges can order certain programs for some inmates.

Inmates without allies can find their time difficult. For survival and self-protection they may gravitate toward a gang affiliation even with zero tolerance by institutional policy. Gangs may have as much influence as they would on the street. Contraband may be as available in prison as out with family or friends smuggling items. Homemade weapons are a danger to both staff and inmates.

Security is the foremost job of corrections with the hope of releasing a person better prepared for society. This improvement is not automatic but the result of dedicated education and treatment people. Without help, too often an inmate will leave more dangerous than before. Education is a proven for reducing recidivism.

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