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Issues Encountered in Correctional Facilities

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Issues Encountered in Correctional Facilities

The term correctional facility is used to refer to prison, an incarceration place or jail where offenders are confined to rehabilitate them. In these facilities, correctional issues have emerged throughout the years as the rise of crime increases. The paper will discuss overcrowding as a correctional issue that is encountered in correctional facilities and how criminal justice administrators can handle this issue.

One of the main correctional issues faced in correctional facilities is prison overcrowding. Overcrowding phenomenon has taken place because of the long duration of imprisonment and because the criminal justice system is sending more people to jail (Lugo & Wooldredge, 2017). The other reason why overcrowding is taking place is because of insufficient spaces in correctional facilities. Most of these prison facilities were constructed years ago when crime was not as rampant as it is today. Hence trying to expand these facilities or building new ones will be impossible because it costs a lot of money that any government is willing to spare hence the overcrowding. In the same light, in some states, maximum prisons are few, so the only option left is to transfer offenders from that state to a different state which can accommodate the already sentenced offenders.

In other circumstances, jails are overcrowded because offenders are awaiting their sentences or trial and cannot afford the bail money to get themselves out of jail. Judges are also quick to give out the verdict of imprisonment as the only form of punishment even when the crime is petty in a bid to scare the gang members the offender was associated with hence the judgment to reduce the level of crime. In some cases, when prisoners are released after serving their sentence, the rate of recidivism is high because shortly after, they commit crimes again and are put back in prison, increasing the rate of overcrowding.

Prison overcrowding has dire consequences. The primary consequence is the spreading of infectious diseases. Because the prisoners are many in a cell, it is easy to spread contagious diseases from one prisoner to another; this is caused by poor sanitation and hygiene among the prisoners due to lack of sufficient resources such as water and soap. The other disease that has been rampant in prisons due to overcrowding is tuberculosis. Tuberculosis spreads faster in such circumstances because there is little to no air circulation caused by inadequate ventilation systems and sometimes light. Overpopulation also causes the infestation of rodents because they tend to thrive in crowded places, causing diseases like scabies. Passive smoking is also rampant in overcrowded prisons due to a lack of sufficient air circulation.

Other consequences caused by overcrowding is, reduced time for recreation, in that, due to limited space, inmates cannot have time to engage in extracurricular activities like exercising to stay fit. Poor nutrition is another consequence because the facility lacks enough nutritious food to cater to the inmates and staff as well. According to Sawyer (2017), the food served in prisons is no longer prepared from scratch instead it is mostly processed foods that are categorized as not recommended since they contain a lot of sugar and starch. Gone are the days when prisons would grow their food and prepare it for the prisoners; this proves to show that inmates do not receive their daily requirements for proteins, vegetables and fruits. However, if they get a chance to include the above food groups on the menu, it is only limited to a few prisoners due to overcrowding. In the process, inmates end up being sick and malnourished.

Prison overcrowding causes little or no access to health care and health issues. As mentioned above, prisoners get sick due to poor nutrition, and it gets worse because they do not have access to health facilities because of negligence. Overcrowding also causes behavioral issues that affect the psychological well-being of their fellow inmates (MacDonald, 2018).

Violent behaviors tend to occur among the inmates, especially during a disagreement and levels of anxiety increase which in turn tends to generate hostile actions among inmates. These behaviors caused by anxiety leads to self-infliction like one cutting themselves on the wrist and sometimes suicide.

To ensure that overcrowding is reduced in correctional facilities, criminal justice administrators should first of all before committing anyone to prison or jail, assess the level of crime committed by the lawbreaker. In the case the offense is petty like breaking into a grocery store, the criminal justice administrators should commit them to probation centers where they get to serve their sentences for six months to one year before being released on good behavior. Because crime is an issue affecting everyone, the criminal justice administrator should appeal to the government for prison expansion or building new prisons with state of the art equipment to ease overcrowding (Jackson, 2008). Although this might take some time to take effect, they should insist on the importance of expansion to get approved. If this is considered, then diseases like tuberculosis and mental illnesses will reduce. Consequently, the criminal justice administrator needs to release prisoners early, especially if they have shown good behavior. It is an incentive that when explored fully, it will create a better environment for the prisoners. In this case, criminal justice administrators should reduce the sentences of prisoners by standardizing the number of years one should serve based on the different categories of crime.

In conclusion, having discussed overcrowding as a correctional issue that is encountered in correctional facilities and how criminal justice administrators can handle this issue, it is essential to note that committing a crime is a choice one makes. Despite the challenges prisoners go through while serving their sentences, when they have been released, they should redeem

themselves first. They can achieve this by relocating to another town to start afresh and to cut ties from negative influences that will cause them to fall back to a life of crime.

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