
ICCA Policy Position on Siting Community Corrections Facilities

I. INTRODUCTION

In order for residential reentry centers and other community correctional programs to provide services to offenders and promote public safety, private and public agencies must have a fair opportunity to site such programs within communities. Recent history suggests, however, that automatic neighborhood opposition, media involvement, political interference, land use regulations, and zoning practices in many communities have made the process to site such facilities protracted, litigious, expensive, and in some jurisdictions, nearly impossible.

II. BACKGROUND

As noted by the American Correctional Association, "Community corrections programs are an integral component of a graduated system of sanctions and services" (ACA, Policy Statement on Community Corrections). Yet, in many communities around the country, it is increasingly difficult for public and private agencies to gain agreement for local governments and community groups to site such programs.

Strong, organized resistance to siting of community corrections programs and facilities within neighborhoods is all too familiar to providers, correctional agencies, local jurisdictions and the public. Despite public opinion surveys that demonstrate public support for the general concept of community corrections, when a specific proposal to site a future halfway house or other community corrections program in a particular area becomes known, almost inevitably community opposition develops. Such opposition is frequently successful in

terminating, or at least delaying, such programs that are needed for the increased numbers of prisoners who are returning to our communities every year.

Two of the most frequently voiced concerns by community members concerning the siting of a community corrections program are the presumed negative impact on property prices and the presumed increase in crime in the neighborhood. Both presumptions are contrary to the facts and the best research in the field. For example, a literature review conducted by the Center for Community Corrections and Doble Research Associates found: “the existing studies involving correctional cost impact indicate that property values nearby do not decline and that they may even increase as a result of location of a facility,” and “the overwhelming majority of studies show that there is no negative effect on public safety in the vicinity of a correctional facility” (*Public Outreach and Halfway Houses*, August 2002).

In 2008 alone, approximately 760,000 adult prisoners were released from state and federal prisons alone. The real question is not whether the inmates are coming back to communities, but rather are they being provided an opportunity to successfully transition through a structured and well supervised program.

III. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- The public needs to be engaged and better educated concerning the need for increased community corrections programs. The research that confirms they do not contribute to higher crime rates or declining property prices, and that in fact the contrary is true; reentry and other community correctional programs enhance public safety by reducing the recidivism rates of those who receive services. Additionally, those programs save taxpayers both by reducing crime and through delivery of correctional supervision less costly than incarceration.

- Public confidence in community correctional programs will be increased when providers of such services ensure they are well-managed, reflect high levels of professionalism, and provide essential services to offenders including alcohol and drug treatment and job placement.
- Community correctional programs need to solicit early input from the community and provide an ongoing opportunity for community involvement, such as a community advisory board that can provide linkages to needed services and improved communication with the neighborhood.
- Local jurisdictions, including cities and counties, should not be able to preclude community correctional programs from being sited or making it so arduous, litigious and expensive to do so that the result is a de facto denial.
- Local jurisdictions should allow the opportunity to site programs serving populations in proportion to the people convicted of crimes in that jurisdiction.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- State laws governing growth management as implemented by local governments should ensure that community corrections and reentry facilities are identified as essential public facilities that cities and counties must afford an opportunity for zoning. State law should provide the procedural due process requirements of consideration of such matters, including a timely appeal process.
- The land use and zoning codes of cities and counties should fairly allow for the opportunity to site community correctional programs in their jurisdictions, should recognize that they provide essential public services, and should never impose moratoria or unrealistic burdens on providers who are trying to site such programs.
- Proposed providers of community correctional programs should carefully assess which neighborhoods are most appropriate for such programs, solicit early input from communities and neighborhood associations, identify ways to provide

ongoing community involvement, and make enhancements to neighborhoods, such as improved lighting, well maintained buildings and landscaping, and community service projects, as well as providing well-managed programs that hold residents accountable at all times for their time and behaviors.

- Providers of community correctional programs and the public correctional agencies that they contract with must be dedicated to providing more than “housing” to residents in those programs. Such programs should provide assistance to residents in obtaining employment, access to substance abuse and mental health services, family reconciliation, and other evidence-based programs and practices.
- Providers and their associations should provide accurate and generic educational materials describing the purposes, methods and benefits of reentry centers and other community correctional programs.
- More research needs to be funded by federal agencies and private foundations on siting community correctional programs, including overcoming the NIMBY syndrome. For example, very little research has been conducted on programs where neighbors have been accommodated and impacts mitigated.

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