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# *ICCA Public Policy on Community Corrections*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

For the past three decades, various nations have aggressively pursued anti-crime policies that have significantly increased the number of offenders incarcerated.

Although violent crime gains the public's attention, the vast majority of crime is non-violent. If community corrections organizations fail to provide a strong and reasoned voice to help reduce fear about crime, the use and expansion of community corrections options will be seriously jeopardized. The International Community Corrections Association takes a leadership role in helping to shape public opinion about crime and community corrections.

ICCA represents over 1,500 community corrections programs. ICCA member agencies operate community-based programs serving all stages of the corrections continuum. ICCA members work in the private sector and at all levels of government and thus their operations are flexible and broad-based in their approach to community corrections.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The mission of community corrections is to protect public safety; supervise offenders in community-based settings that are in close proximity to the homes of the clients and families being served; permit offenders to work and participate in needed treatment services; and provide opportunities for positive behavioral change in themselves and their families.

Community corrections provides a wide range of community supervision and treatment services for referring agencies. Today's community corrections systems offer a graduated system of supervision options for offenders within community settings, and

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for those poised to re-enter society. Additionally, community corrections provides a graduated system of support and treatment services that provide offenders the opportunity for positive behavioral change.

To be effective, community corrections systems and services must be part of a jurisdiction's sentencing structure and system principles, and operate within a policy framework that guides the use and development of individual community programs and services.

### **III. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

- A. A composite community corrections sentence should be no more severe than is necessary to achieve societal goals and meet accountability requirements for the public safety concerns of the community.
- B. Community corrections is usually a more effective and prudent punishment than incarceration for non-violent offenders.
- C. Incarceration should be reserved for violent, predatory and very serious offenders who pose a safety risk to the public.
- D. The least restrictive and least costly means of sanctioning offenders should be implemented consistent with public safety needs.
- E. Offenders in community corrections should be held accountable for their behavior and they should learn the consequences of their actions.
- F. Victim reparation and restoration, community service, education and employment should be an integral part of any community corrections system.
- G. Inmates should be gradually transitioned to society upon release from prison to reduce their likelihood of returning to a life of crime.

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- H. To help reduce family violence and prevent future crime in offenders' families and children, community corrections should include at-risk children and families as an integral part of the offender's treatment.
- I. Community corrections should help reduce the criminogenic factors that contribute to crime (e.g. substance abuse, illiteracy, lack of marketable skills, unemployment) and increase the resiliency factors that help prevent crime (e.g. drug-free lifestyle, education, employment, cognitive restructuring and social skills training, and family support).
- J. Community corrections should collaborate with mental health, public health, substance abuse, family and children services, education and employment systems through public and private partnerships.
- K. To ensure the effectiveness of community corrections, an on-going monitoring and evaluation system must be a part of each program and a variety of performance measures, in addition to recidivism, should be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of community corrections.
- L. Where sentencing guidelines are developed, they should ensure that non-violent offenders are presumptively selected for community corrections sentences.
- M. A comprehensive approach to reducing crime must include the active involvement of the public and private sectors. Crime is a complex community problem that will require an integrated, multi-faceted approach to reduce and prevent it. The public and private sectors will need to develop partnerships to control and prevent crime and to expand the number and type of correctional supervision options. To increase these comprehensive approaches, government agencies at all levels should provide incentives to build creative partnerships.
- N. Effective crime policies and community corrections programs must be based on sound, reliable statistics and research. An examination of current crime policies

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suggest that policy-makers seem to be reacting more to the media's portrayal of crime and public's perception of rising crime than to actual incidents of crime.

- O. To ensure effectiveness of community corrections programs and to promote the future continuance and growth of these options, a monitoring and evaluation system must be established. Management information systems are essential to the future of community corrections because they provide necessary information to administrators and policy-makers to help them modify program operations and ensure the effectiveness of community corrections. Additionally, this information provides policy-makers needed documentation for making future funding decisions.

*Reviewed and approved by the ICCA Board of Directors*

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