

# CORRECTIONS POSITION STATEMENT



## MTC Supports Corrections Reform

Since 1987, MTC has been operating safe and secure correctional facilities and preparing incarcerated men and women for successful reintegration into their communities. MTC believes all correctional institutions must be held accountable for the fair and humane treatment of those in their custody. All prisons must be held to the highest standards in providing clean and well-maintained facilities, quality and timely health care, and programs that are effective in preparing men and women in custody for reintegration into society. MTC is making a social impact by giving thousands of incarcerated men and women an opportunity to change their lives.

### MTC CORRECTIONS OVERVIEW

MTC operates 21 correctional facilities, providing nearly 25,000 men and women with rehabilitation programs and comprehensive services to help them prepare for a successful transition back to society. MTC is also the treatment program provider for 13 additional public facilities in the state of Texas.

#### The MTC Corrections Impact in 2017

- **31,949** vocational, educational, substance abuse, and life-skills certificates earned
- **12,728,916** hours of effective programming and structured activities provided
- **752,405** service hours spent helping improve local communities

MTC advocates for innovation and continual improvement within correctional systems and supports broader reform efforts to responsibly reduce prison populations. MTC supports corrections reforms and initiatives that improve safety and prepare incarcerated men and women to successfully return to their communities, such as:

- Maximizing opportunities for prosocial engagement
- Providing a greater continuity of services from custody to community
- Reforming the use of restrictive housing
- Allocating adequate resources for mental health treatment
- Implementing sentencing reform policies
- Providing greater leadership, training, and professional development

#### Maximizing Opportunities for Prosocial Engagement

MTC believes the rehabilitative role of corrections is to prepare incarcerated men and women to successfully reintegrate into society. Incarcerated men and women must be fully engaged in a prosocial learning environment with an array of programming opportunities to improve their values, habits, and skills and return them to society better equipped to lead productive and satisfying lives. Programs should be based upon the carefully assessed needs and risk factors of each incarcerated man or woman and should include:

- Educational opportunities
- Opportunities to learn and use work skills
- Substance abuse education and treatment
- Programs to build and maintain family and community relationships
- Cognitive and behavioral skills programs
- Gender-responsive programs

Correctional institutions must be held accountable for engaging the men and women in their custody in programs and activities on a consistent basis, ensuring staff spend the optimum amount of time directly engaged with the incarcerated population, and providing effective programs proven to reduce recidivism.

## **Providing a Greater Continuity of Services from Custody to Community**

Nearly all incarcerated men and women will reenter their communities at some point. When they leave prison, these men and women face multiple barriers to accessing housing, education, employment, substance abuse treatment, health care, and mental health treatment. Failure to address any of these barriers greatly increases their chances of reoffending. Programs and services connecting them to the resources needed for successful reintegration must begin in custody and continue after release into the community.

## **Reforming the Use of Restrictive Housing**

While it is sometimes necessary to remove inmates from the general population for the safety of staff and other inmates, MTC supports changes to the use of restrictive housing. Changes should result in:

- Allowing the general population to engage in prosocial programs without fear
- Reducing the number of incarcerated men and women in restrictive housing, reducing time spent, and reducing the types of offenses that lead to restrictive housing
- Providing a pathway back to the general population

## **Allocating Adequate Resources for Mental Health Treatment**

Most correctional institutions lack the resources to adequately address the unique mental health needs of the men and women in their custody. Many incarcerated men and women have both mental health and substance abuse problems that, if left untreated, contribute to behavioral problems in custody and increase the likelihood of reoffending after release. Correctional institutions must have the resources and training to screen for mental health and substance abuse problems upon admission and make referrals for further evaluation and appropriate treatment.

## **Implementing Sentencing Reform Policies**

The United States has the largest prison population in the world. Mass incarceration has strained the resources of corrections departments and has negatively impacted many families and communities. MTC strongly supports finding solutions in the criminal justice system to responsibly reduce incarceration rates, while meeting the public safety needs of communities.

Prisons should be reserved for those who have committed the most serious offenses. There should be adequate resources for alternative sanctions that hold offenders accountable for their actions. MTC encourages policymakers in all federal, state, and local jurisdictions to implement effective sentencing reforms such as:

- Establishing special courts for certain populations such as veterans, drug offenders, and the mentally ill
- Expanding the use of community-based sanctions
- Using alternatives to prison for probation and parole violators, such as electronic monitoring, day reporting centers, and community service
- Scaling back mandatory minimum sentences and allowing greater judicial discretion in sentencing
- Removing unnecessary barriers that prevent men and women released from prison from securing housing, employment, and services needed for successful reintegration

## **Providing Greater Leadership, Training, and Professional Development**

Correctional institutions need strong leaders to enforce the highest standards of prison management and instill in all staff a sense of value and purpose. MTC has established a culture that promotes respect between and among staff and incarcerated men and women. MTC leaders hold staff accountable for safety, security, and positive interaction.

The quality and commitment of staff are vital to the efficient and effective operations of correctional institutions. Corrections is a skilled profession which requires continual education, training, and professional development to ensure staff are using best practices and updating their skills. The expertise of all staff must be aligned to provide for the safety, treatment, and rehabilitation of incarcerated men and women.

## **Transforming Lives and Making Communities Safer**

MTC firmly believes in the capacity of corrections to transform lives and make communities safer. MTC will continue to devote its resources to improving operations at all facilities and providing incarcerated men and women the prosocial learning opportunities they need to change their behavior and successfully return to their families and communities. As policymakers institute new reforms within corrections systems, MTC encourages them to hold all correctional institutions to the highest standards in providing for the safety, security, and lasting rehabilitation of incarcerated men and women