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THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF CORRECTIONS

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A 1976 survey of the California Probation, Parole and Correctional Association identified "the public image of corrections as having the highest importance and priority to its membership. At a subsequent leadership conference, a committee was named to study this issue. This paper provides a basis for a workshop on "The Public Image of Corrections" to be held at the CPPCA's annual training conference May 24-26, 1978, in Palm Springs.

I. Introduction

A 1976 CPPCA survey identified "The Public Image of Corrections" as one of the issues having the highest importance and priority to its membership. That survey resulted, eventually, in the selection of this topic for the CPPCA Leadership Conference, held in Sacramento, on Sept. 15-16, 1977.

At that conference, the committee which prepared this paper was formed and directed to further study this issue.

It is planned that this paper will provide the basis for a workshop, "The Public Image of Corrections," to be held at the CPPCA's annual training conference, May 24-26, 1978, at the Riviera Hotel in Palm Springs.

The public knows very little about corrections and what it does know is mostly negative, according to several decades of correctional literature.

This dismal opinion has been so widely accepted in correctional circles as to become a truism. However, until recently there has been no hard data on which to confirm or refute that allegation.

The conclusion of a "poor public image" has been largely based on personal opinions, on assumptions that were felt to be "common knowledge" and on information obtained without benefit of the rigorously scientific controls used by today's social researchers.

Using the data now available, this paper will attempt to clarify the public image of corrections and thereby dispel some of the myths and mysteries that have surrounded it.

It will be asserted here, based on our research, that there has been a longstanding "information gap" between corrections and the public. It will be asserted, also, that there has been a "gap" between correctional personnel and their own public image.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to discover that correctional personnel have provided little help to the public in filling the information gap between them.

This committee hastens to add that it makes no claim to have all the answers. Instead, it will be stressed that there is a need for much more work to be done in this subject area—especially in interpreting the data and deciding what to do about it.

It is hoped that this paper, and the planned workshop in Palm Springs, will be helpful in informing correctional personnel about the realities of their public image and in continuing the effort to identify suitable strategies and goals that will constructively impact the public image of corrections.

What is the public image of corrections in California?

Probably the best available data at this time is the survey conducted in 1972 by the reputable Field Research Corporation and published in 1974 by the Institute of Governmental Studies at Berkeley.

This survey was administered by the American Justice Institute and sponsored by the California Department of Justice Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. It was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, California Council of Criminal Justice.

This public opinion survey was made by means of interviews with a cross-section sampling of the general public of California. In all, 811 personal, in-home interviews were made with persons 18 and older, and 126 were made with teenagers aged 14-17. The survey was designed to produce results that could be projected to the population of the state at large; to this end, it includes a proportionate number of people representing all socio economic levels, ages, and races.¹

To begin with, we may gain a useful perspective on the public image of corrections by making a comparison with the other components of the criminal justice system. The first table will utilize a seven point scale weighted as follows:

Extremely good job.....	7
Very good job.....	6
Somewhat good job.....	5
Neutral, don't know.....	4
Somewhat poor job.....	3
Very poor job.....	2
Extremely poor job.....	1

1. *Public Opinion of Criminal Justice in California: A Survey Conducted by Field Research Corporation, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1974, p. 117.*

Table 1 measures the public's evaluation of the job being done by the various criminal justice agencies.

TABLE 1

Police	5.26
Public Defenders	4.45
Judges	4.44
District Attorneys.....	4.43
Probation Officers	4.37
Parole Officers	4.28
Correctional Officers	3.98

Although the correctional agencies do not fare very well comparatively, their ratings might not be as low as many interested observers may have been conditioned to expect.

Table 2 provides a more detailed look at how the above ratings were obtained for probation, parole and correctional officers.

TABLE 2
THE PUBLIC'S EVALUATION OF THE JOB BEING DONE BY
PROBATION (a),
PAROLE (b), AND CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS (c),
ADULTS/TEENAGERS STATEWIDE

JOB RATING	PROBATION OFFICERS		PAROLE OFFICERS		CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS	
	ADULTS	TEEN-AGERS	ADULTS	TEEN-AGERS	ADULTS	TEEN-AGERS
Extremely good job (7)	2%	5%	2%	1%	2%	3%
Very good job (6)	17	23	11	18	8	9
Somewhat good job (5)	27	28	25	40	21	24
Neutral, don't know (4)	35	19	43	28	42	31
Somewhat poor job (3)	13	15	13	9	15	20
Very poor job (2)	4	8	4	2	8	8
Extremely poor job (1)	3	3	2	2	5	5
Mean rating.....	4.37	4.50	4.28	4.62	3.98	4.00

It is interesting to note, in Table 3, the relative rankings of the criminal justice agencies, as contrasted with their ratings in Table 1.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF "POOR JOB" RATINGS RECEIVED BY
SEVEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE POSITIONS FROM
THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC

	Percent rating job "poor"	
	Adults	Teenagers
Correctional officers	27%	33%
District attorneys	27%	10%
Judges	21%	12%
Probation officers	20%	26%
Parole officers	19%	13%
Public defenders	17%	15%
Police	10%	9%

Correctional officers receive the lowest job rating of any of the seven criminal justice system positions examined. This is partially due to the large number of people who say they don't have any opinion or are "neutral," but it also is due to a large number of adults and teenagers who simply think correctional officers are doing a "poor job." More people are overtly critical of correctional officers than of any other group.²

The Field Survey has compiled numerous other tables, broken down by socio-demographic characteristics, which are invaluable in clarifying how specific segments of the public feel about probation, parole and correctional officers.

Rather than merely duplicating the extensive tables of statistics included in the source material, we can more concisely provide some sense of their scope and content by listing a few of the generalizations that were gleaned from them.*

For example, parole officers, in common with probation officers, receive their criticism disproportionately from younger, upper class, well-educated people. In contrast, they get more than average support from lower class, less well-educated people.

Black people are more prone to criticize parole officers than probation officers. In fact, Blacks are more likely than any other group to praise the job probation officers are doing; but Blacks are the group most critical of correctional officers—53 percent of the Blacks surveyed rate the job done by correctional officers as "poor."

Mexican and other Latin people neither praise nor criticize correctional officers very much, although Latins are more positive towards them than any other racial group. The Mexican population demonstrates a fairly

2. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

* Persons interested in more complete information are referred to the original study, *Public Opinion of Criminal Justice in California*, which may be obtained from the Institute of Governmental Studies, 109 Moses Hall, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720.

favorable attitude towards parole and probation officers, while other Latins express considerable praise for both of these groups.

The attitudes of Whites towards each of the correctional agencies are characterized by relatively moderate praise and criticism.

Many other such generalizations are possible, although we feel it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore them in exhaustive detail.

However, a few further comments, of particular interest, seem justified.

For instance, we feel it is important for this paper to point out some of the effects on the public image of corrections caused by "familiarity" with correctional personnel and by the experience of being jailed, or knowing someone who was jailed.

Consider the implications of the following:

Knowing someone who has been in jail leads to somewhat more than average criticism of probation officers, *but the severest critics of the job parole officers are doing are found among people who are friends or relatives of a person in this profession. The percentage is striking—55% of the people who know a parole officer well rate the job being done by the group as "poor."* The survey does not offer any direct explanations of why this is the case, but it is possible to conjecture that it may be a result of the fact that parole officers as a group tend to reflect to those around them an attitude of self-criticism and/or frustration about their own performance in what is conceded to be a very difficult and exposed job environment.

Knowing someone who has served time in jail or prison also tends to make people more critical of correctional officers, and, as with parole officers, the people who know a correctional officer best are also most likely to express critical attitudes about the job they believe the officers are doing (39% "poor job" ratings). Perhaps this, too, can be explained in part by the personal experiences which correctional officers might be most likely to talk about to their family members and friends; i.e., stories which tended to emphasize problems and failures in the prison system rather than its successes.³

The comparable statistics about probation and correctional officers are not quite as incriminating as those referred to above. However, they still show that the percentage of "friends and relatives" finding that they do a "poor job" exceeds that of persons who do not know any probation or correctional officers.

There is one other interpretation included in the Field Survey that we feel is too valuable to omit from this report.

Based on the extensive information collected by their trained interviewers, the Field Corporation Staff evaluated the public's expectations about certain attitudes and behaviors.

By a method of comparing the expected desirability and probability of these selected attitudes and behaviors, the Field staff determined if the public felt these items were "overemphasized," "underemphasized" or received emphasis that was "about right."

3. Ibid., p. 98.

The following summary analyses for probation, parole and correctional officers are felt to be of special interest.

PROBATION OFFICERS

. . . Probation officers are seen as somewhat over-concerned about problems of racial discrimination. They also don't put enough emphasis, according to the public's view, on crime prevention. While Californians seem to feel that probation officers should more diligently seek aid from community organizations to assist rehabilitation, they balance it with a feeling that efforts to gain more public acceptance of probationers are somewhat overdone. Nevertheless, despite a general disposition toward more firmness and less favoritism toward probationers, the public still believes that probation officers may be too willing to revoke paroles.

It is quite important to the public that probation officers assist probationers to adjust and that they be able to cope with emotional disorders, and they are believed to be placing about the right amount of emphasis on this. Also important, and being done with proper emphasis, is counseling probationers and setting standards they can fulfill.

PAROLE OFFICERS

. . . Parole officers are seen to be too ready to revoke parole, and that this is an important matter in judging the job that they do. Also important in judging the kind of job being done by parole officers, and being underemphasized in the public's view, is identifying potential employers for parolees. Also not sufficiently emphasized, the public feels, is the efforts exerted by parole officers to prevent crime, and to recognize emotional disorders and to assist parolees to adjust.

Important, and being performed adequately at present, are such things as being aware of racial discrimination problems, setting standards which parolees can understand and fulfill, and giving them counseling and advice and seeking rehabilitation aid from community agencies. The public also credits parole officers with being more concerned with rehabilitation than with punishment. Parole officers should not, and do not according to the public's view, identify too closely with the parolee, or permit racial bias to affect their judgment, and they should take care not to appear to be slanting their testimony in court to justify their actions.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

The public image of correctional officers is not entirely favorable, as earlier sections of this chapter have shown. The factors which appear to be at least partially responsible for this include treating prisoners too severely, using force on prisoners who refuse to obey, and permitting racial origin to impair objectivity. All of these things are importantly associated with shaping basic attitudes. Failing to recognize and handle emotional disorders,

and to treat prisoners with respect and to report their grievances are also matters for strong criticism at present by the public.

Important things which the public feels correctional officers are doing adequately at this time are: being aware of racial discrimination problems, of seeking community help for rehabilitation and jobs and of giving prisoners maximum freedom within the rules. Permission for conjugal visits and tolerance of homosexual practices in prison are not seen as very desirable and are seen as receiving about the right amount of emphasis at this time. Prevention of crime and medical attention are also seen as adequately emphasized at present.⁴

To complete this section, we offer several important summary points—although we do not suggest that they are all-inclusive.

1. The prevailing public view of corrections in California is probably more “neutral” than “negative.”

2. The public does not rate very highly the relative effectiveness of correctional agencies, in comparison with the other components of the criminal justice system.

3. There are discernable likes and dislikes about correctional agencies, among socio-demographically defined groups.

4. By comments to their friends, relatives and associates, correctional personnel may be among their own worst enemies in damaging their public image.

(It should be pointed out that we are well aware of a *possible* discrepancy between the results of the Field Survey, which was taken in 1972, and the situation that may exist today.

Lacking any recent studies whose methodology compared favorably to the Field Survey, this committee faced the choice of regarding the Field results as “current” or relying on the same kinds of poorly documented materials which have been traditionally accepted as facts.

We feel, therefore, that our choice to utilize the findings of the Field Survey is justified and does provide us with the best available information.)

How did we achieve the current public image of corrections?

There is little data available to help us pin down the exact causes or processes by which the current image of corrections has been achieved.

We maintain that many variables have worked together, often in ways that are not fully understood, to create the current public image. The most important of these variables are probably included in the following categories:

The media (television, radio, newspapers and magazines)

Word-of-mouth (from friends, relatives, neighbors, etc.)

Personal experience (as victim, defendant, witness, juror, etc.)

Relationship (with correctional, or other criminal justice personnel)

4. Ibid., pp. 95-97.

We have no scientific basis, however, on which to assess the relative importance of these and other variables to the current public image of corrections

The formation of public opinion is a dynamic process, which continues to elude accurate measurement. Although the social sciences can measure public attitudes with some precision, they have not yet developed sufficiently sensitive instruments to reveal exactly how those attitudes are formed.

Nevertheless, some enlightened speculation is possible regarding some of the factors which may have contributed to the current public image of corrections.

For example, over the past 18 months considerable California media space has been devoted to parole policies, Senate Bill 42 and the alleged infiltration of certain drug rehabilitation programs by the "Mexican Mafia."

Due to these factors, and probably others, a partial reduction of the "information gap" between corrections and the public might be assumed. But, even if this is true, it does not justify minimizing the seriousness of the "information gap" that we believe still exists.

Based on a qualitative analysis of the recent media coverage of correctional topics, there seems to be no reason to assume that the public has become necessarily better informed about corrections.

What is more likely is that this media coverage has enhanced prominence of corrections—probably without a commensurate enhancement of the public's understanding of the correctional establishment, or how it fits into the criminal justice system.

An added dimension to the possible media influence on corrections' current public image is provided by the study of a related subject matter, the public fear of crime. Research on that topic indicated that "vicarious" sources of information may have been of primary importance in the formation of the public's attitudes.

. . . the fear of crime may not be as strongly influenced by the actual incidence of crime as by other experiences with the crime problem generally. For example, the mass media and overly zealous or opportunistic crime fighters may play a role in raising fears of crime by associating the idea of "crime" with a few sensational and terrifying criminal acts. . .

The fact is that most people experience crime vicariously through the daily press, periodicals, novels, radio and television, and often the reported experiences of other persons. Their fear of crime may be more directly related to the quality and amount of this vicarious experience than it is to the actual risks of victimization.⁵

It is ironic, when considering the relatively "neutral" public opinion about corrections, that the public is intensely interested in crime—especially media crime, both of the real and fictional varieties.

5. *The Challenge of Crime In A Free Society*, President's Commission On Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., February 1967, p. 52.

This public interest in crime, however, appears to peak at the time of the trial and then rapidly dissipate.

Television crime dramas typically end at the arrest of the suspect, thereby encouraging young viewers to regard that as the end of the criminal justice process and discouraging them from "finding out more about the other equally important parts of the criminal justice system".⁶

The role of the media, therefore, appears to perpetuate the public's perception of corrections as being relatively insignificant, unless it relates to something of a sensational nature.

For a further perspective of how the current image of corrections was achieved, we may consider a recent graduate research project.⁷ This project attempted to determine whether the media, or some other source of information, was the most important influence in shaping public attitudes toward the Los Angeles County Probation Department. Based on the results of that research—whose methodology admittedly does not compare to that of the Field Survey—it was determined that a considerably larger percentage of people claimed their opinions were most influenced by personal contact with others (i.e. word-of-mouth), as opposed to influence by the media.

That study and others, therefore, affirm the possibility that the media's most important role in influencing the public image of corrections may be as a reinforcer to pre-existing attitudes or dispositions.

This section would not be complete without some mention of the role played by the correctional establishment itself. Historically, most correctional agencies have preferred to keep a low profile.

A veteran of over 30 years in correctional work commented: "When I came into this work the basic feeling was to keep the public out. There is a tradition of many, many years of correctional people not leveling with the public. If there was trouble in institutions, correctional people tried to keep it quiet. The philosophy has been: 'publicity can only hurt you.'"⁸

But times have changed since that statement was made—although not as much as we would like. With only a few notable exceptions, such as the California Youth Authority, most correctional agencies do not incorporate a systematic policy of communicating information to the news media and the public. Nor do they have the capability of responding quickly, coherently and comprehensively when an emergency occurs.

What should be the image of corrections?

The critical issue underlying what our image should be is probably whether or not the public believes corrections is doing an effective job.

6. Joseph R. Dominick, "Children Viewing of Crime Shows and Attitudes on Law Enforcement," *Journalism Quarterly*, Spring 1974, p. 4.

7. Ray Berger, "Assessing the Sources of Information on Which the Public Bases Its Attitudes Towards the Los Angeles County Probation Department," Los Angeles, 1975. (Typewritten.)

8. William L. Dulaney, "The News Media and Corrections," *Youth Authority Quarterly*, Winter 1970, p. 4.

To some extent, this assumes that the public knows what it wants. And there is some evidence to suggest that it does not know. For example, a *New York Times* public-opinion poll showed:

. . . that when you ask Americans whether they favor expensive programs to aid the poor, the blind, dependent children, and so on, the answer, by a margin of something like five to one, is yes. But, if you ask Americans what they think of "welfare" programs, two-thirds of them say that they do not like them.⁹

Clearly, we may infer that the word "welfare" has negative connotations.

We believe that this kind of semantic contamination is something to which corrections must give very careful consideration in formulating what its public image should be.

Certain phrases, or possible "code-words," (such as leniency, probation, rehabilitation, recidivism or deterrence) might somehow communicate unwanted, unrelated or unrealistic public expectations.

We propose the image should be one in which corrections is viewed as effective, within the framework of what is possible.

In other words, we mean to establish that the correctional process has a limited function within the criminal justice system. The public must be made aware that there are only certain things the correctional process can reasonably hope to accomplish. Thus, the public image of corrections should clearly reflect what might be reasonably achieved in terms of rehabilitating and controlling offenders.

It is clear that the correctional process cannot be totally charged with managing crime prevention. However, correctional personnel can and should take stands on and lobby for programs aimed at prevention.

In this light, it follows that we need to visibly and effectively demonstrate those values which convey an image of "corrections" providing meaningful services to both client and public alike.

One strategy for accomplishing this end is to focus on key words and phrases that we want to come to mind when people think of "corrections." The words "responsibility" and "effectiveness" are at the core of the desired image. Below we delineate additional words and phrases, related to these two central objectives, that may be helpful.

A. Responsibility

- 1) Conscientious (in performance of duties, in balancing offender needs against possible risks to public, etc.)
- 2) Responsiveness (e.g. to public needs, to court decisions, to agency directions)
- 3) Responsible (in personal decision making and all other job functions)

9. Paul H. Weaver, "Do the American People Know What They Want?", *Commentary*, December 1977, p. 62.

B. Effectiveness

- 1) Knowledgeable (in casework skills, in awareness of appropriate laws, codes, etc.)
- 2) Resourceful (in obtaining and utilizing community resources and services)
- 3) Understanding (to needs of victim, as well as the offender)
- 4) Insightful (has common sense, as well as academic training)
- 5) Courageous (able to exercise moral initiative and take difficult stands, if necessary)

Based on our limited research, we are not prepared at this time to offer any definitive list of words that should be projected about correctional personnel. Other words that may be valid are: honest, straightforward, dedicated, concerned, reliable, fair, firm, compassionate and self-improving.

A final important consideration, which should constantly be kept in mind, is the need to create credibility for corrections. We believe this will most effectively result from a comprehensive and flexible plan of public information and public education. Such a plan stands in marked contrast to any plan that would focus exclusively on public relations and, thereby, attempt to cover up all, or any, blemishes on the image of corrections.

What good effect is intended by improving the public image of corrections?

At the risk of sounding pretentious, we believe that many good effects may result from improving the public image of corrections.

History has shown us that public attitudes can, and do, have an effect on the policies of our social and governmental agencies. This is not to suggest that public attitudes automatically, or necessarily, determine social policy, but rather that they have some influence on the process.

Therefore, by changing the public's perception and expectations, we may be able to help expedite constructive changes.

More specifically, a good effect intended is an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of corrections. This will serve the public's needs, directly or indirectly, by helping to prevent crime, to reduce recidivism, to facilitate assistance to victims and to otherwise improve the services rendered to the public.

Another intended good effect, and one on which most of the other good effects is dependent, is to provide improved opportunities—vocationally, educationally and socially—for the offenders in the correctional system.

What is the target population?

Now public opinion is usually itself inert and ineffective unless it is transformed into what may roughly be termed political power. To gain support for correctional programs from the

politically active is a great advantage. To win maximum support, an even greater advantage, you must stimulate the politically inert to action.¹⁰

In broadest terms, as described in the quote above, our target population is the general public. But that ambitious goal is one that we believe may best result from pursuing more modest goals.

We are trying very hard to profit from the experience of the North Carolina Department of Correction, which spent an LEAA grant of over \$250,000 on a comprehensive program of public education, public information and public relations. Unfortunately, random surveys of 10,000 North Carolina citizens, taken before and after the program, revealed no measurable improvement in the level of awareness about corrections.

The project manager of that North Carolina grant concedes, in retrospect, that the program was overly ambitious and lacked proper organization.

After evaluating their program and apparent lack of results, we have concluded that it is entirely proper that we use "rifles" instead of "shotguns," in our efforts to influence positively the public image of corrections.

Accordingly, we are advocating the pursuit of more specific target populations, or subgroups, especially those with political or social importance.

Some of these subgroups may be defined socio-demographically. Others may be defined by function, such as community service organizations, political action committees, educational associations, etc.

Students and teachers, at various academic levels, are an important target population which should be given special consideration and priority.

Dr. Albert Morris, in "Extending Public Understanding of Crime and Its Treatment," outlined an interesting schema, in which he classified five target populations, or "publics," towards the goal of impacting them educationally about corrections. He called these target populations: (1) the minimally concerned, (2) the civic-minded activists, (3) the peripherally involved, (4) the private vocationally involved, and (5) the officially responsible.¹¹

We plan to examine carefully the plan of Dr. Morris, along with all other available related data, in an ongoing effort to identify specific and practical target populations.

What actions should be taken to improve the public image of corrections?

We have accumulated a number of recommendations, some of which may be useful, and they are listed below. (However, we must point out that we have not yet evaluated how these recommendations might fit into the "master plan" to improve the public image of corrections, which is currently being developed.)

A. Change the name of the association from California, Probation, Parole and Correctional Association (CPPCA) to California Correctional Association (CCA).

10. David Dressler, "Which Public Do You Read?", *Crime and Delinquency*, April 1963, p. 134.

11. Albert Morris, "Extending Public Understanding of Crime and Its Treatment," *Correctional Research*, Bulletin No. 23, November 1973, pp. 4-5.

- B. Employ a statewide public information officer for the association.
- C. Arrange for the Executive Board to secure funding to implement action programs.
- D. Develop films and/or videotapes which portray correctional work, or selected appropriate topics, in a convincing manner for use by local chapters—or for whatever distribution might be beneficial.
- E. Initiate a special recruitment program, inviting memberships by sheriff deputies, police officers, juvenile institution staff and correctional officers.
- F. Have each chapter designate an individual to be the local media spokesperson and service club speaker. (Coordinate this activity and distribute appropriate materials through the Public Information Committee.)
- G. Volunteer CPPCA services to assist in correctional training and orientation for new deputies in other criminal justice agencies, such as law enforcement, the District Attorney and the Public Defender.
- H. Contact schools to arrange for formalized CPPCA input to appropriate classes. (For example, in Los Angeles CPPCA is a consultant for the "Youth and the Law" classes, which are mandatory in all secondary schools.)
- I. Promote the use of CPPCA representatives as guests on radio and television programs.
- J. Identify interested and capable CPPCA members in local chapters to cooperate on statewide programs of public education, public information, or public relations.
- K. Organize a statewide network to detect and respond to media attacks on corrections.
- L. Designate a subcommittee to come up with recommendations on how corrections can improve its relations (and, therefore, its image) with other criminal justice agencies.
- M. Develop printed materials, as needed, to facilitate accomplishing the other recommendations.
- N. Compile a list of successfully used public relations projects. Distribute this list to designated persons in each chapter, with the understanding that they attempt to replicate appropriate projects. Follow up on this, for progress and feedback.
- O. Prepare a lesson plan, or program, to educate the membership on the realities of our public image. Seek their cooperation in improving the public image.
- P. Contact television producers, the networks and the National Association of Broadcasters to encourage the use of correctional practitioners, in a positive manner, on network shows—not excluding "soap operas."
- Q. Attempt to arrange for a "Public Awareness of Corrections" week to be observed in California.

- R. Investigate the possibility of an in-service, certification course for public school teachers on the correctional system in California.
- S. Investigate the possibility of developing and implementing a mini-course on the California correctional system for teacher use in the public school curriculum.
- T. Investigate the development of several public service announcements on corrections for use on radio and television, and in newspapers and magazines.
- U. Explore the prospect of incorporating a public education component for all community-based correctional programs, to assist with community relations.

What indicators will be used to assess changes in the public image of corrections?

So far, we have identified six areas in which indicators will be developed.

A. Legislative indicators

- (1) Legislation endorsed by CPPCA is supported and passed.
- (2) Legislators voluntarily seek advice from CPPCA.
- (3) Bargaining power in the legislature is increased.

B. Media indicators

- (1) Increased media coverage of corrections and related topics.
- (2) More favorable treatment of corrections in the media.
- (3) Media representatives voluntarily seek information from CPPCA.

C. Membership indicators

- (1) Increased CPPCA membership.
- (2) Increased proportion of judges, attorneys, law enforcement personnel and others, who are not employees in corrections.
- (3) Increased proportion of correctional institutional staff.

D. Community involvement indicators

- (1) Number of CPPCA sponsored speakers, at schools, organizations, etc.
- (2) Number of volunteers referred.
- (3) Number of auxiliary organizations in which there is CPPCA participation.
- (4) Number of contacts by community groups for help in projects or workshops.

E. Other criminal justice agency indicators

- (1) Positive feedback, written or verbal, from other agencies.
- (2) Improved working relationships with other agencies.
- (3) Cooperation by other agencies on specific projects.

F. Correctional agency indicators

- (1) More professionalization of the profession.
- (2) Increased areas of responsibility and decision making for correctional personnel.
- (3) Improved morale of correctional personnel.
- (4) Fewer correctional personnel criticizing their own, or their agency's, effectiveness.

Conclusion

The current public image of corrections seems to be more "neutral" than "negative," therefore probably not quite as bad as is generally believed. However, corrections continues to have a low profile and is not, comparatively, considered to be doing as effective a job as the other components of the criminal justice system.

The media's influence on the current public image is difficult to determine exactly. The media's most important functions may be to reinforce pre-existing attitudes and to provide input when other sources of information are lacking.

Possibly of more importance in the formation of corrections' public image are personal comments from others. Of particular influence in this respect, apparently, are the comments made by persons who (1) know someone who has been incarcerated, and (2) have an acquaintance with someone working in the field of corrections—especially parole.

It is believed that the public can be subdivided into various groups and categories, which will likely provide some assistance in impacting them. The more specifically these target populations can be defined, the better opportunity there is to develop specific educational and informational objectives that may be effective.

Developing credibility for corrections and breaking down the traditional obstacles to communications within the correctional establishment are among the most important long-range goals of this committee. Especially important, also, is the goal of helping the public develop more realistic expectations of corrections.

Numerous recommendations, designed towards meeting the above mentioned objectives, are presently being considered and coordinated into a comprehensive "Master Plan." The CPPCA Executive Board has indicated its approval of this endeavor and has pledged support towards its realization.

The next major step in this process will be the presentation of the previously referred to workshop, "The Public Image of Corrections," at

the CPPCA's annual training conference. At that time, not only will information be disseminated on the current public image of corrections, an attempt will be made to identify interested parties who might be willing to cooperate in the implementation of the "Master Plan."

Prior to that conference, or even afterwards, persons interested in making a contribution of their time, specialized skills or other resources, are invited to contact any member of this committee.

Appendix

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END