

Wall, Edward F - DOC

From: Wall, Edward F - DOC
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2014 2:06 PM
To: Rick Raemisch - DOC (rick.raemisch@state.co.us); Mohr, Gary (Gary.Mohr@odrc.state.oh.us)
Cc: George Camp (GCamp@asca.net)
Subject: Article

Gentlemen,

Just FYI, my most recent article in the "Secretary's Corner" on our Intra-net and I mentioned your efforts and testimony with links to those articles and prepared remarks. Thanks for your leadership on the issue of Segregation!

Ed

Segregation / Cause, Effect and Reforms

When I went to my first meeting of the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) as the new Secretary of the Wisconsin DOC, it was an enlightening experience. I learned many things that week, including that we face very similar issues across corrections agencies nationwide. One of the issues we discussed at length that is now becoming a national focus, was the impact of confinement in segregation and the lasting effects it has on inmate behavior.

One of my mentors at that first ASCA meeting was Tom Clements, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections. Tom was an exceptional man who was very focused on the issues dealing with the impacts of segregation and was himself one of the national leaders in pushing for reforms to positively affect change. Tragically, Tom was killed just a few weeks later at his home in the presence of his family by an inmate who had recently been released from a long stay in segregation, directly into the community.

We need segregation to address problematic, dangerous and violent behaviors in order to assure the immediate safety of staff and other inmates. Yet beyond this purpose, what do we need segregation to accomplish for us? That is the focus that corrections agencies across the country are dealing with now.

This subject will undoubtedly touch nerves with staff for a variety of reasons. The view of segregation's purpose varies for many of us. For some, segregation is seen as a method of punishment where inmates are taught a lesson. Long periods of sensory deprivation, no contact with family and limited time for physical fitness or interaction are just part of that punishment cycle. Obviously, the intent being that if the sanction is unpleasant enough, then people won't want to return.

Although it's easy to understand the human emotion behind that kind of feeling, we need to ask if it serves us well in the long term? Are we placing inmates in segregation because we are mad at them? Are we placing inmates in segregation out of a sense of retribution? And if we are, does this help our inmates or does it make us any safer?

Any of us who are parents know that when we discipline our children, we can choose various strategies. We may *punish* the child by taking away activities or privileges, but we also want to *teach* the behaviors that we see as more appropriate. All of us intuitively know that properly administered discipline involves both control *and* teaching. This same broader view of discipline is an integral part of efforts to improve segregation units so that they are more effective in achieving our mission as corrections professionals

Ultimately, for the safety of our staff and other inmates, what we really need from segregation is for inmates to have a *corrective and rehabilitative experience*. Nearly all of the inmates who are in segregation will eventually be released to general population. And most of these inmates will someday be released into society. The safety and well-being of our family, friends, the DOC workforce and offenders depends on our single-minded focus of providing that corrective and rehabilitative experience for this admittedly difficult population of inmates.

We need to remember that inmates are sent to prison as punishment, not for us to punish them further. Rules and regulations are obviously needed in order to maintain a safe and secure environment for staff and inmates. The challenge is to find the balance of safety and security combined with effective program opportunities that help create an environment which enhances public safety.

The best scientific studies show that the actual outcomes of long-term segregation, at least as currently practiced in this country, may not serve corrective or rehabilitative goals as well as they could. Length of stay, conditions of confinement, behavioral incentives, and the availability of treatment and programming can all impact outcomes in significant ways. In order to be effective we have to have an appropriate balance of physical containment and behavior management. We need to utilize alternatives to restrictive status housing when possible so that we can focus our resources on those who need it most.

Staff have told me that inmates will come to segregation for a variety of reasons, such as to get a single room or avoid the responsibilities and accountabilities of being in general population. That's not what segregation is for. It should be focused on changing behaviors, improving outcomes and ultimately making for a safer environment for everyone. But simply locking inmates up with little consideration for programming, corrective instruction or positive reinforcement may really just be helping to create a worse behavior problem and habitual threat.

The methods in dealing with segregation have been changing and Wisconsin has consistently been at the forefront in those changes. Over the next year, our department will be interacting with other DOC's, scientists, scholars and mental health professionals from across the country in an attempt to define how best to work with this challenging population. Ultimately, this national focus will guide us in the next steps and changes to our segregation practices, which is now being broadly referred to as "Restrictive Status Housing" by most DOC's across the country.

Former Wisconsin DOC Secretary Rick Raemisch is now the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, replacing slain Director Tom Clements. Recently, Rick had himself placed in segregation for a 22 hour period to see for himself what the impact was of just a short time in that environment. His observations are sobering and certainly call attention to the damaging effect that isolation can have on the mind. Below are links to Rick's article and news coverage of the event that I think you will find interesting.

Additionally, Director Gary Mohr of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections was asked to represent ASCA in his testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil and Human Rights of the Judiciary regarding Restrictive Housing. The subject of the hearings was focused on "Reassessing The Use of Solitary Confinement". Follow the link below to read the testimony given by Director Mohr; his thoughts are a concise summary of the national attention this subject is getting.

Through everyone's efforts, we will affect a positive change in how we handle inmates and create better outcomes for all involved. Thanks, take care and stay safe.

Ed

Rick Raemisch Op Ed: [My Night in Solitary](#)

Rick Raemisch news coverage: [After 20 Hours in Solitary, Colorado's Prisons Chief Wins Praise](#)

[Gary Mohr Testimony PDF](#)

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