Introduction:

Correctional agencies administer sanctions and punishment imposed by courts for unlawful behavior. In some jurisdictions the law permits capital punishment, and correctional officials have the final responsibility to carry out these executions. Opinions about capital punishment are strongly held, based upon fundamental values about public safety and human life.

There is no uniformity of position about such a controversial issue as capital punishment, either within the corrections profession or as a matter of public opinion at large. A single position for or against capital punishment would not be a fair or candid representation of the range of strongly held and thoughtfully considered positions that exist within the profession.

Policy Statement:

Corrections professionals have a fundamental responsibility to support participation in the public dialogue concerning capital punishment, and to make available to the public and their policymakers the unique perspectives of persons working in the profession. Toward this end, correctional agencies should:

A. Support conducting research on capital punishment, to inform the public debate with accurate information about all aspects of capital punishment;

B. Support full public discussion of capital punishment, focusing on the morality, purposes and efficacy of this form of punishment;

C. Accept and encourage a diversity of opinion within the field, ensuring that employment, promotion and retention are never affected by the expression of an opinion either in support of or in opposition to capital punishment;

D. Select staff who are involved with carrying out executions on a voluntary basis, and carefully screen them and train them in execution procedures. In addition, post-execution interventions must be available to staff who participate in or are affected by the execution process; and
E. When executions are conducted, ensure that they are carried out with dignity and respect for all parties.

This Public Correctional Policy was unanimously ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Winter Conference in Nashville, TN on January 17, 1990. It was last reviewed and reaffirmed at the 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego, CA on January 11, 2020.