American Correctional Association

PUBLIC CORRECTIONAL POLICY ON OFFENDERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1984-4

Introduction:

The provision of humane and gender-responsive programs and services for the accused and adjudicated requires addressing the special needs of juvenile, youthful and adult offenders. To meet this goal, correctional agencies should develop and adopt procedures for the early identification of offenders with special needs. Agencies should provide the services that respond to these needs and monitor and evaluate the delivery of services in both confined and community settings.

Policy Statement:

Correctional systems must assure provision of specialized services, programs and conditions of confinement to meet the special needs of offenders. To achieve this, correctional systems should:

A. Identify the juvenile, youthful and adult offenders who require special care or programs including:

- Offenders with mental health treatment needs, developmental disabilities, disabiling conditions, neurological impairments and substance use disorders;
- Offenders who have acute or chronic medical conditions, are physically disabled or terminally ill;
- Older offenders;
- Offenders with social and/or educational deficiencies, learning disabilities, or language barriers;
- Offenders with special security or supervision needs;
- Sex offenders;
- Female offenders; and
- Transgender offenders.

B. Provide services and evidence-based programs and treatment consistent with professional standards. Such services and programs may be provided within the correctional agency itself, by referral to another agency that has the necessary specialized resources, or by contracting with private or volunteer agencies or individuals that meet professional standards;

C. Provide appropriately trained, licensed and/or certified, staff, contractors and volunteers for the delivery of care, programs, and services and provide incentives to attend the continuing education and training necessary to maintain credentials and state-of-the-art, knowledge and mastery-level skills;

D. Maintain professionally appropriate records of all delivered services and programs;
E. Conduct evaluations of service delivery adherence to program standards, while also evaluating the effectiveness of the services, with regular feedback to administrators and service providers for continuous quality improvement; and

F. Provide leadership and advocacy for legislative and public support to obtain the resources needed to meet these special needs.

This Public Correctional Policy was ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Congress of Correction in San Antonio, TX, on Aug. 23, 1984. It was last reviewed, amended and reaffirmed at the 2019 ACA 149th Congress of Correction in Boston, MA on Aug. 3, 2019.