

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
CORRECTIONS INFORMATION COUNCIL**



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November 21, 2002

Inspection of Hope Village Halfway House

On July 31, 2002, the District of Columbia Corrections Information Council ("CIC") inspected the Hope Village Half-Way House.

**Background**

Hope Village is a transition facility primarily for inmates who are completing their sentence or going out on parole. As such, it is an important last step in the progress of a prisoner to the outside world.

Prior to 1978, the Department of Mental Health used the facility as a transition facility. It is a privately owned facility operated under contracts with the Federal Bureau of Prisons ("BOP"), the D.C. Department of Corrections ("DOC") and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency ("CSOSA").

The facility has a design capacity of 360 beds for men. On the day of our inspection the inmate population was only 193, all BOP inmates. DOC has not had any inmates at the facility since February. Since the BOP has been complaining about a serious shortfall in halfway house beds in the District, we asked the BOP representative why more beds were not filled. He explained the BOP has a contract for only 180 beds. DOC has a contract for 50 beds and CSOSA for some of the balance. He went on to explain that BOP can and does use DOC beds so that it was unclear why BOP is not using more of the vacant beds.

Most inmates stay at the facility for 60 to 90 days. BOP would like to have all its inmates, including all D.C. inmates, moved out through a transition facility for 180 days.

Hope Village is a complex of three plus buildings; 8 Case Managers are employed there. There is a Vocational Counselor for each building.

Hope Village has an array of programs for inmates including: Life Skills, GED Classes, Wellness, Nutrition, and AIDS Awareness.

**The Inspection**

The CIC walked through several of the dormitory entries; we were shown only uninhabited rooms. Almost the entire senior staff of Hope Village accompanied us and it was clear that everything we saw was carefully prepared in advance. We inspected the Chow Hall during the serving of a meal; the classrooms while classes were underway, the library, the laundry room, and the administrative offices. The CIC talked with several Case Managers, a number of inmates, but no Vocational Counselors were available. We were told that selection of inmates for Hope Village starts as a collaboration between CSOSA and BOP. Only arsonists and sex offenders are not eligible. Intake involves a seven day lock down during which time the inmate

is interviewed by and assigned a Case Manager; a Classification Team designs a program for each inmate based on their listed needs and the Case Manager drafts a Release Plan and is expected to see that the program is implemented prior to release for outside employment. At intake, the inmates are thoroughly briefed on the rules of the institution. After becoming employed, an inmate must donate 25% of gross pay to Hope Village to offset costs of maintenance at the facility. These payments pay for meals and laundry and allow the inmate to go out on leave to approved locations. Drug testing is done at random and, according to Hope Village staff, only around two per month flunk the test. However, the CIC continues to hear from inmates and social service organizations which work with them that drugs are a serious problem at Hope Village.

While Case Managers help inmates complete documentation, a number of inmates leave the facility without a full set of documents.

Vocational Counselors do not assist inmates with finding employment. Their function is to verify that an employer, which an inmate wishes to visit, is a legitimate employer who in fact is hiring. This is done through a telephone call.

Meals are prepared on site and appear to be adequate. The Chow Hall is small and barely adequate. We were told that the menus are made up several weeks in advance and that they are closely watched to see that they are balanced. A morning bag lunch is available to carry to work.

The laundry is collected once a week; items are dropped off in the office in each unit with tags to identify the owners. Two large industrial machines and two staff persons operate the system.

The library is well used but undersupplied with books.

The facility overall appears to meet sanitation standards, but in summertime the bedrooms are insufferably hot (100-120 degrees). While many rooms were not in use, residents were not allowed to have more than one fan per room, usually housing four inmates. Inmates were not allowed to sleep in the living room where conditions were generally cooler.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Hope Village could be a much better place than it is. Except for a few courses, little is done to give inmates the tools they need for release. The Vocational Counselors appear to do very little. The facility itself is adequate, but barely so. Inmates do not appear to be intensely dissatisfied with their surroundings but they have few compliments about the facilities available to them. Some recommendations:

1. The Release Plans for inmates should include plans for future employment, drug counseling if necessary, living quarters and full documentation. Case Managers should be rated on the basis of their ability to supply each of these requirements to their client inmates at the time of their release.
2. The role of the Vocational Counselors needs to be revised. Counselors should be required to help the inmates find employment and they should be annually evaluated on their ability to place inmates.
3. The prohibition on accepting a job from an employer who has not been pre-approved by the Vocational Counselor should be discarded. An inmate should be allowed to fill any position that can be verified. The concern that inmates

will not always spend their time looking for jobs when released will always exist and the current system does little to prevent this.

4. Although bus tokens are supposed to be available to inmates for job searches, a number of inmates complained that they are frequently out and unavailable. Since finding employment is one of the key goals of Hope Village, this should never occur.
5. The problem with the fans needs to be solved; many of the men are sleeping in inhumane conditions during the hot summer months. More fans need to be purchased - a small expenditure.
6. The library is now totally inadequate but could be easily expanded if Hope Village were to request donations from churches or the District Library system.