

Morris County Jail Wins Praise from National Evaluation Team

Three years ago, a national accreditation team gave the Morris County jail top marks and said it was the best-run jail they had ever visited. On May 13, 2009, another review team from the American Correctional Association said the same thing - and were even more effusive in their praise for the 9-year-old county lockup and the administrators and staff who run it.

The jail received a nearly perfect score on its physical plant, safety and programs, according to a three-member team of the American Correctional Association (ACA), which spent three days this week at the jail in Morris Township to assess operations. The Correctional Facility recently received accreditation through the ACA, one of only three jails in the state and only the sixtieth county jail out of 3,200 nationwide to do so.

The Morris County Correctional Facility, a \$32 million, state-of-the-art structure, opened in May of 2000. This six story building, considered to be one of the premier jails in the nation, includes eight housing pods totaling 277 cells with the capacity to house a total of 528 inmates.

The Morris County Correctional Facility utilizes a direct supervision management style, a somewhat unique departure from traditional jails but one which has proven to be a safer method of managing inmate populations. The direct supervision jail, through a combination of architectural design, classification philosophy, inmate ground rules and officer deployment, dispenses with physical boundaries and instead, uses behavioral boundaries to effectively control inmate behavior. The result is significantly lower rates of assaults and lawsuits by inmates and allows for less expensive construction due to the improved behavior of inmates.

The eight housing pods are open, self-contained living units which house between 64 and 72 inmates. This architectural design enhances supervision, increases perimeter security and effectively divides inmates into manageable groups.

Inmates are classified upon intake to determine the level of supervision required. Those who are mentally ill, violent, or for any reason cannot follow the rules are placed in a more structured environment. Each pod then consists of a population that ensures an atmosphere that promotes positive interaction.

A Corrections Officer works within each pod and is in direct control of the inmates housed therein. This allows for more interaction between officer and inmates which is important because it builds trust and works to avoid incidents. Behavior

is managed in a positive way, and each action has certain rewards and consequences associated with it.

Overall, the direct supervision management style provides a self-sufficient community which incorporates minimum, medium and maximum security levels all under one roof. The result is a cleaner facility, virtually no assaults or vandalism, reduced stress on both staff and inmates and an efficient, well-run, safe environment for staff, visitors, inmates and the general community.

The panel said the jail scored nearly 100 percent in meeting 362 eligible standards. Of those, the jail had a 100-percent compliance score in 57 mandatory standards. Of the remaining 305 non-mandatory standards, the jail failed only five of those, mostly in physical plant areas of HVAC noise and airflow, and in occasionally being required to incarcerate juveniles. The five areas of noncompliance also were "self-reported" by the jail to ACA. As for juveniles, they are occasionally waived up by judges for prosecution as adults and ordered to be held in the jail.

The Morris County Correctional Facility offers inmates a range of programs and services, many of which are in place to assist inmates in returning back to the community with the education and tools they need to improve their lives.

Serving a jail sentence or being held awaiting trial need not be wasted time for the inmate who chooses to make that time productive. Our jail programs also decrease incidents of violence and support the effective operation of the jail by constructively engaging otherwise idle inmates. These opportunities for engagement also serve as an incentive because inmate attendance is only approved for those with no disciplinary reports.

Programs offered include educational, vocational, substance abuse, and self-betterment classes. These programs provide inmates with meaningful opportunities for positive behavioral change, skill development and motivation to become self-sufficient, productive members of society upon release.

If you are interested in learning more about the Morris County Correctional Facility, contact Warden Frank Corrente at (973) 631-5410, FCorrente@co.morris.nj.us, or Staci Santucci at (973) 285-6659.