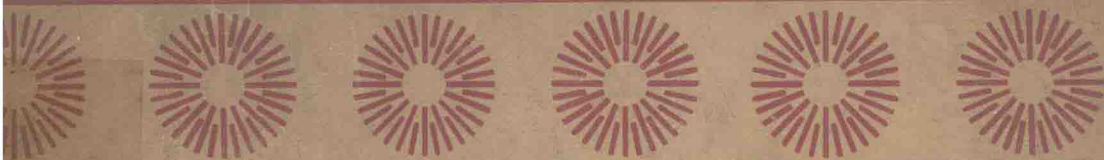


# **Reforming Corrections for Juvenile Offenders**

**Yitzhak Bakal  
Howard W. Polsky**



**Lexington Books**

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**Alternatives and Strategies**

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## **Reforming Corrections for Juvenile Offenders**

## Foreword

Large training schools, like most bureaucratic structures, grow up and often forget why they began. Institutional preservation and growth become their dominant realities. They have failed in their stated goals: rehabilitation and public protection. As mandated by law, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) is charged with the care and custody of troubled youths. Few of these youths come from stable family situations. Almost all have exhibited severe school problems, although most are of normal intelligence. The majority of these children have been involved in the welfare system, either indirectly as children of AFDC parents or directly as CHINS (status offender) cases; most have been on probation. All have some degree of health problems. Few of these youths feel they are successes; almost all harbor a great sense of failure. They are angry; they run away; they have few skills; they are scared. Most have a great deal of energy, and some—against tremendous odds—show remarkable initiative.

Institutionalization of such youths will add insult to injury. Treating them primarily within the community is not only humane but also extremely necessary.

It is well known that the present Massachusetts DYS community-based system was born in tumult. In spite of the great controversy and a recent history of vexing administrative issues, the DYS is the legatee of three important traditions.

First, Massachusetts is operating on a purchase-of-service system. Over half the DYS budget is free from the constraints of civil service and of institutions. DYS has the flexibility to spend money for services or to create programs. The purchase-of-care account, which permits a diversity of placement options, is the lifeblood of a sensible and responsive youth services system. It means, quite simply, that each regional director (Massachusetts has seven regions) can design programs appropriate to the youth and citizenry of his or her area. It means that if the programs are ineffective, they can be cut off without a cataclysmic revolution. It means creativity, responsiveness, flexibility, and growth.

Second, the closing of youth correctional institutions has released new energy. The existence of the purchase-of-care account creates a climate of innovation and experimentation. Interested groups wanting to attempt experimental programs for troubled youths are constantly challenging the bureaucracy with new ideas. The fervent sense of change permeates this system, keeping it from becoming stultified.

Third, there is a controversial and constructive debate over the issue of security for hard-core violent youths. The paucity of secure-care facilities has threatened the very existence of the community-based movement.

When the Massachusetts training schools were closed in 1972, many people both in and out of the corrections field, whether liberal or conservative, felt that the state ought to create more secure facilities. Remarkably, however, most agreed that the majority of delinquents should be treated in the community.

At any one time, Massachusetts treats roughly 85 to 90 percent of the youths committed to it in its community programs. The closest state to us is South Dakota, with 59 percent—the national average is 17 percent. There are six states that treat none of their youths in the community. The point is simply that the debate about security in Massachusetts is on a different plateau. It is agreed that more secure facilities are needed, yet all have accepted the fact that deinstitutionalization is here to stay.

The dust of the deinstitutionalization revolution has not settled. Much remains to be done. But extraordinary gains have been made. The Massachusetts experiment is being carefully watched by people from other states and other countries. It has been said that this state serves both as a beacon and as a threat. If we are successful, many states may be encouraged in their attempts to deinstitutionalize. If we fail, the institutional bias of some other states will be confirmed.

The major task in the future will be to achieve those objectives toward which we have been working for the last several years. Major dramatic gains have been made, but many objectives remain to be completed. These include:

- A comprehensive, reliable and useful data system.
- A pilot family program.
- A system of effective casework management.
- A comprehensive and standard intake system.
- Better trained caseworkers.
- Expanded relationships with Department of Mental Health, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Center, Office of Education, and Manpower Affairs.
- Comprehensive education and personnel policies and programs.
- A statewide restitution program.
- A technical assistance and research unit.
- Expanded evaluation and planning units.
- A contracting system more closely allied with data collection and monitoring.

The new community-based system has survived many challenges and, even though it is not completely out of danger, it is enjoying more and more

credibility and stability. In this volume Bakal and Polsky bring together material that spells out why this is so, and also points toward where we must (and must not) go in the future.

*John A. Calhoun*  
Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of  
Youth Services

## Preface

Much of this volume was written as a follow-up to a previous book, *Closing Correctional Institutions*, published by Lexington Books in 1974. Material for both books originated in the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services' decision to close its large training schools and replace them with community-based alternatives. The changes caused by this action were unprecedented because it was massive and dramatic in nature and especially unusual for a state bureaucracy.

The present authors both participated actively in the closing action, one as assistant commissioner and the other as a training consultant. We were also involved in the design and planning of the Boston College Conference.

These and other similar conferences and meetings on the subject of deinstitutionalization that followed clearly indicated that people in and out of the youth services field are deeply concerned and need more detailed information about the entire Massachusetts experience in its reform of youth corrections. This book is an attempt to provide a more concrete description of this process.

In this work we attempt to deal with the many facets of the Massachusetts experience both in closing institutions and in developing new alternatives. Part I is an overview of juvenile corrections in general, and the rationale for deinstitutionalization in Massachusetts in particular. It includes a detailed account of the events that led to the decision to close the juvenile corrections institutions in Massachusetts, the strategies utilized, and the conclusions to be drawn from the experience. Part II is devoted to the new community-based alternatives. Massachusetts has unquestionably taken the lead in youth corrections by offering a broad range of community-based programs, both residential and nonresidential. It must be emphasized that while many innovative community-based programs have been tried elsewhere, Massachusetts is the only state that has used these community-based programs on a massive scale as an alternative to institutionalization. Part II provides an overview of these programs, as well as detailed descriptions of an educational and a foster-care model as used in Massachusetts.

Part III deals with the problems of hard-core violent youths who require a secure setting. One attempt to develop such a program in Massachusetts is presented in the form of a case study. The descriptions of Andros I and II give a vivid account of an intensive secure program and the many dilemmas involved in managing young offenders in such a setting. Reading these chapters makes it clear why the care for the "new end-of-the-line youth"—so-called hard-core violent youths—is the Achilles' heel of the deinstitutionalization process.



Part IV presents two areas critical to the success and further growth of the community-based movement. The first involves staff training and the development of new skills needed to work with young offenders in the community. An innovative framework for examining the relationship between the worker and the youth is suggested. The second involves program monitoring and evaluation. The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services' approach and procedures for such a monitoring process is presented.

Part V provides the authors' conclusions and lessons derived from the Massachusetts experience in social change and correctional reform. Cultural, political, and leadership considerations are examined here in the light of Massachusetts' experience, and principles in the change process in the corrections field in general are outlined.

Despite an attempt to be comprehensive, no book can deal with all the relevant issues of youth corrections. Services for the female offender, examples of residential and other nonresidential alternatives, and many other issues must be examined in the light of the Massachusetts experience.

It is hoped that this work will lead to a better understanding of how to bring about comprehensive and radical reform in the field of human services. Further fundamental knowledge of this process could stimulate innovation and more humane solutions to the programs of young people in trouble with the law.

## Acknowledgments

The material presented herein could not have been completed in its present form without the help, the support, and the dedication of many people. We would like to mention those who deserve our thanks and gratitude.

First, we are pleased to have Jerry Miller's chapter on the serious juvenile offender become part of this book. His vast experience in the administration of criminal justice makes his observations and insights extremely valuable in the treatment of this subject. Paula Cardeleen deserves thanks for her contributions to chapter 11. Paula served as the director of the monitoring and evaluation unit in DYS from 1974 to 1977, and her observations come from an insider's point of view. Special thanks are also extended to Joseph Nogelo, the director of the nonresidential program at the Northeastern Family Institute. Mr. Nogelo has made tremendous contributions to the development and implementation of the Experiential Learning Program examined in chapter 6. Special thanks also to Ronald Recina for his contributions to chapter 7. John Isaacson, assistant commissioner in the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, is owed special thanks for allowing us to use his notes on "A Needs Assessment for the Department of Youth Services, 1976." We also want to thank Dorothy Swarts for her editorial help, and Gloria Webster for typing the manuscript and for helpful editing. Frieda Miller and other Northeastern Family Institute staff members were always willing to give their time and energy to the completion of the book.

Finally, we dedicate this book to the young people of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, whose experiences have made this book necessary. We hope it will contribute to their care.

## Introduction

The program of deinstitutionalization of juvenile corrections now in progress in Massachusetts provided the impetus for this book. From the inception of this radical reform—closing the state's training schools—we have been concerned with documenting, in both practical and theoretical terms, the sources and dynamics of change as well as the aftermath of this significant movement. This book is an effort to provide a descriptive and theoretical treatment of the underlying issues involved in the transformation from a youth corrections system wholly dominated by institutions to a network of decentralized community-based agencies.

In our attempts to describe and explain this phenomenal organizational change, we have tried to avoid dogmatic theoretical assumptions, to infuse our theory with a practical understanding of what happened, and to guide our perceptions by what we felt was pertinent according to different theoretical models. Thus we do not take a position on whether the radical reform could have taken place without the leadership of the commissioner of the Department of Youth Services, Jerome Miller, who initiated the change, although we do specify in detail his signal contribution to that change. In effect, what we have followed is an open-model theory about a relatively closed total institution and its demolition. Our effort in the following pages is directed at blending selective theoretical concepts within an open-system point of view with our knowledge and understanding of the change process and the network of services that replaced the institutions.

Our approach emphasizes the close circular relationship between the institution and the supporting societal environment. Without continued input, institutions run down, and without significant impact on society and a modification of how it reinforces institutions, the latter would never change.

A critical basis for understanding institutions that are being challenged to the point of their destruction is a close examination of their relationship with outside societal sources for their maintenance and survival irrespective of fulfillment of their mission.

The professed goals of all institutional systems of youth corrections is to rehabilitate those in its care. But while the institution meets the security needs of the outside community and various psychological needs of its citizens, when one takes a closer look at the system—zeroing in on the operation—what one sees is the subversion of rehabilitation by an overemphasis on security. It is in this decisive way that the external system enters the institutional setting and reinforces the custodial orientation in theory and practice. Eventually this attitude prevails in total institutions.

Our approach illuminates a framework for examining a social structure

in the midst of radical change. In the integration of the macro approach of the political scientist and the micro approach of the social psychologist, we have created our own peculiar blend. Radical change in the Department of Youth Services cannot be understood without a detailed analysis of the various forces at work both within and outside the institutions. But we also need specification of the psychological dynamics at work in this process. The macro approach describes the process of the interrelated behaviors of the various interest groups on the scene in Massachusetts. In general, we know how to look for and how to formulate their motivations and positions taken. In order to know in more detail why deinstitutionalization occurred when it did, we have to look at such system aspects as the institution-wide conditions, the utilization of various strategies to expose them, the resulting polarization and dynamics of a number of political, social, and professional groups, and their strategies for serving their own interests as well as those of the community at large.

We want to emphasize not only the necessary dependence of the Department of Youth Services on its environment, but also how key groups in that environment depend on the institutions to further their own self-interest. It is in this interplay that an imaginative and courageous leadership was able eventually to revolutionize a system committed wholly to large institutions, in favor of a decentralized network of community-based services for troubled youths.

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**Part I**  
**Deinstitutionalization and the**  
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