



American Correctional Officer Intelligence Network

Serving America's Corrections Professionals

Prison Privatization: Points to Ponder

1. Contrary to what the private prison industry would have you believe, prison privatization has NOT been shown to save money. The Government Accounting Office (GAO), the Council on State Governments and numerous other studies could not find any significant cost savings. All the studies showing cost savings have been tainted. Many of the studies the industry points to have been paid for by the private prison industry themselves. In many cases it cost the taxpayers more as a result of increased law suits, infrastructure problems, response to emergencies and escapes, need for additional local police to cover the problems, more clerks to handle the inmate law suits etc.
2. Decisions made by prison personnel must be based on the impact they will have on public safety. In the private sector the first concern is profit, the second concern is profit and so is the third.
3. The public is concerned with rehabilitating the inmate population, although the resources are rarely allocated to provide any real opportunity for this to occur. The idea of course is to turn the inmates into productive citizens when they get out so that they don't go back in. In the private sector that runs counter to everything they stand for. They need the beds full and the revolving door to be open at all times. The last thing they want is rehabilitation, it kills repeat business.
4. In the private sector there is the added incentive to keep the inmates as long as possible since the industry is compensated on a per diem basis. There are dozens of documented cases of private facilities holding inmates beyond their release date in order to collect more from the taxpayers in the form of per diems. This has also resulted in lawsuits against the privateers **AND** the states and municipalities for unlawful detention.
5. Is it illegal to escape Walmart? Of course not, then is it illegal to escape from a private prison – again as the residents in Texas and Rhode Island found out – of course not. Unless the state has a law on the books forbidding the escape from a private institution it is NOT illegal to escape from a private facility and they do.
6. Assaults in private prisons occur at a rate **40%** higher than in public facilities, **35/100** to **25/100**.
7. Turn over rate is **52%** in private prisons, **16%** in public facilities. Any Correctional Officer will tell you that the experience level of prison personnel is one of the most critical factors in maintaining control. When a public facility opens it will draw a high percentage of its Officers from existing facilities. When a private facility opens over **90%** of the staff have NO EXPERIENCE. The saying goes, “the only pros in a private prison are the cons.”

8. When a public facility takes in an inmate we work with local law enforcement to find about the inmates street life, gang affiliations, enemy situations, prior institutional histories etc. The privateers have little contact with local law enforcement and scant background intel about the inmates in their custody.
9. Private prisons will import inmates from other jurisdictions, and often other states, but they usually do not return them to their point of origin. **74.3% of all inmates released by private prisons are released directly from the facility into the community.** They are not returned to their convicting jurisdictions for release.
10. When an Officer is assaulted it is imperative that the inmate be prosecuted or it would be open season on staff. The privateers prosecute only **16.7%** of assaults, the public **52.5%**.