

# Direct Supervision Jails: A Management Model for the 21st Century

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## Abstract

*The detention process is not a popular issue with the public. Increased concern about crime has led more people to support the "lock up, throw away the key" perception and to cry out against early release of state prisoners. Incarceration remains, however, a constitutional mandate and direct supervision is the most efficient and effective way to confine someone. Dismissed initially as only a passing fad, the undeniable conclusion is that direct supervision is real and here to stay. This concept alone - more than anything else we find - provides direction for the future. This study reviews the history and principles of direct supervision, explores salient management, issues and goes into some detail sharing practical lessons from the Hillsborough County, Florida experience.*

## Introduction

Direct supervision is no longer an untried concept. Since the mid-1970's the "New Generation" or direct supervision application has been superficially probed and studied, intensively visited and reviewed, and ultimately incorporated in over 100 operating facilities, with an equal number in the planning and design stages. As long as communities, for whatever reason, continue to neglect a real commitment to alternative programs for minor offenders and treatment programs for drug users, more jail space is going to be needed. The thesis of this document is that there is only one reasonable conclusion that can be reached when deciding on the direction to proceed in new jail design and operation: Direct supervision.

## Historical Perspective

### Inmate Management Options

Most local jails do not use direct supervision management. For several decades, the trend in jail management and architecture has been to reduce contact between staff and inmates as much as possible. Architectural barriers isolate inmates by dividing the institution into distinct staff and prisoner areas.

The design of a jail and its operating policies reflect each other. There is a different architectural response for each management option. In this regard, the "new generation" jail represents a style of design intended to facilitate direct contact between officers and inmates.

Most American jails fall into one of three architectural and inmate management categories: (a) intermittent surveillance, (b) remote surveillance, or (c) direct supervision. The most common architectural designs and management categories are intermittent surveillance and remote surveillance.

### Intermittent Surveillance

Like a hospital, jails of linear design and intermittent surveillance management have rows of cells along security corridors. In intermittent surveillance, the staff is unable to observe all inmate housing areas from one location and must patrol inmates' living

areas to provide only periodic observation. Not surprisingly, most prisoner behavior problems occur during the intervals between the intermittent patrols.

### Remote Surveillance

Jails using podular type design and remote surveillance management have divided the inmate living areas into pods or modules. In remote surveillance, usually 48 to 64 cells are clustered around dayrooms that are under continual observation by staff in a central control room; this is generally called a "housing unit". The housing unit is subdivided into three or four units or pods of 12 to 16 beds. Since cell doors are electronically controlled from the officer's control room communication with inmates is by intercom, and officers do not have direct contact with inmates.

The main reason most new jails are designed in this fashion is to enhance inmate surveillance in comparison with traditional linear designs. However, these jails limit staff contact with inmates by isolating the officer in a secure control station. Under today's legal mandates, both designs are almost always staff intensive, especially when compared to direct supervision facilities.

In anticipation of destructive behavior, both intermittent surveillance and remote surveillance include high security fixtures, furnishings, and finishes. Despite these costly items, however, vandalism and graffiti are still prevalent in many of these jail environments.

### Direct Supervision

Jails with direct supervision stand in sharp contrast to traditional facilities. A direct supervision jail differs from the conventional approach because the officer is stationed inside the housing unit. This concept encourages direct interaction between staff and inmates to prevent negative inmate behavior, and it groups inmates into living units of approximately 48 to 64 cells that can be efficiently managed by one officer. The barrier found in the podular inmate surveillance design, as well as the isolated control rooms, are simply removed. So rather than separating staff from inmates by security barriers, as is usual, this contemporary approach places officers in direct contact with prisoners at all times. The new concept combines principles of human behavior and facility design to create detention environments that facilitate the officer's effectiveness.

While some aspects of the two pod designs are similar (cells clustered around a dayroom, for example) the differences are dramatic. The furnishings, fixtures and finishes found in the direct supervision housing pod are usually of normal, commercial grade. Staff assigned to the units work among inmates 24 hours a day. Over 100 detention facilities in the United States currently use this form of inmate management, and in excess of 100 more are under design or construction.

To many people, direct supervision appears to fly in the face of conventional wisdom. They believe that lessons learned in operating traditional linear jails do not provide much support for this new concept. "What can be gained," they ask, "by exposing officers to continuous contact with prisoners and equipping the facilities with furnishings and fixtures that are not designed to resist abusive behavior?" However, managers of direct supervision jails respond that officers are placed in inmate housing units precisely in order to increase staff and inmate safety, and that it is unnecessary and perhaps counterproductive to pay a high price for secure, vandal-proof fixtures,

furnishings, and finishes when officers are in a position to supervise inmate behavior continuously.

This response does not win many immediate converts. However, more and more jail managers are convinced after seeing the direct supervision concept in action. Although direct supervision inmate management concepts and principles will prove workable in almost any detention environment, they can be implemented most feasibly in a facility specifically designed for this purpose.

Following formal recognition by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) in 1983, direct supervision has been endorsed by the American Jail Association, the Committee on Architecture for Justice of the American Institute of Architects, and the American Correctional Association. It has also been incorporated into the Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions and Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities of the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. With such support, it may be considered by many to be state of the art for inmate management and housing unit design.

### The Principles of Direct Supervision

The principles of direct supervision were first drafted in 1982 for the purpose of explaining the content of the concept. The term "direct supervision" was easily misinterpreted to simply mean that officers were to be in direct contact with inmates, and that this contact, by itself, would produce the desired behavioral objectives. While certain benefits are realized from merely placing officers in contact with the inmates they are supervising, the full potential of this practice is not realized until it is integrated into a comprehensive system of inmate management. It was, therefore, necessary to define in detail the universal principles of this new direct supervision concept to distinguish it from its more simplistic predecessors and to enable practitioners to fully optimize the concept.

The draft principles were comprised of user observations about the universal components of successful direct supervision facilities. These principles were further supported by observations of unsuccessful experiences with direct supervision which served to negatively confirm their validity. Since the principles were observations of successful practice rather than theoretical constructs, the issue of validity related to the accuracy of the observer. The principles remained in tentative draft form for the remainder of the eighties where they were put to the repeated test of operational direct supervision facilities that came on line during that period. The final version of the principles of direct supervision reflects the additional observations of the practitioners in the field since the original 1982 draft. This process has crystallized the principles into a coherent, consistent inmate management concept that has proven useful to practitioners in the field.

These principles have been successfully utilized to communicate the content of the direct supervision concept to many jurisdictions around the country. They have also been helpful in identifying problems in direct supervision operations as well as missed opportunities for operational improvement. Rather than reacting to a problem in an ad hoc manner, these principles allow managers a uniform, conceptual framework against which to measure operational performance.

The order in which the principles are presented could arguably be changed to comply with one's order of priority. It is difficult to say that one principle is more

important than another; such a determination may relate more to individual perspectives rather than universal validity. The order of presentation was not intended to imply value or priority.

A thorough conceptual understanding of these principles enables the correctional administrator to maximize the return on the agency's investment in this concept. There are many substantive benefits to be derived from their total application. In these times of scarce resources and escalating demand for services, it is essential that correctional agencies receive the "biggest bang for their buck" (Nelson, 1990).

#### Principle I: Effective Control

A detention facility, by definition, is a controlled environment for those charged with a crime who are awaiting disposition, or serving a short sentence. Therefore, effective control of inmates is one of the primary objectives of any jail or program.

#### Principle II: Effective Supervision

Direct staff supervision of inmates is requisite for the achievement of effective control. Effective supervision involves more than visual surveillance; it includes the use of all the human senses, as well as extensive personal interaction between staff and inmates. The elements of supervision proven effective in other human enterprise also can be productively applied in a detention setting.

#### Principles III: Need for Competent Staff

In order to run an institution where successful operation is dependent upon the effectiveness of staff rather than technological devices, the staff must be competent. A community which places little value on this factor would be best advised not to consider a podular/direct supervision facility.

#### Principle IV: Safety of Staff and Inmates

Probably the greatest concern about being incarcerated or seeking employment in a detention facility is personal safety. Detention facilities have gained a reputation for danger and fear.

#### Principle V: Manageable and Cost-Effective Operations

One very practical and important consideration for any jail is that it be manageable and cost-effective. The jail's mission and goals should be readily obtainable. Taxpayers are not anxious to spend more than they have to on jail operations, and rightly so. While a community's discretionary fiscal priorities generally do not include the jail, however, jail expenses cannot be avoided by neglect. Many communities have tried that strategy, only to find it far more costly in the long run. The podular direct supervision facility is able to fulfill the mission of the jail while, at the same time, reduce costs.

### Principle VI: Effective Communications

Effective communication is a critical element in the operational strategy of all human enterprises. Jails are no exception, and management must be sensitive to the important impact of the various elements of this principle.

### Principle VII: Classification and Orientation

The classification and orientation of inmates must be included in the day-to-day operations of podular direct supervision facilities.

### Principle VIII: Justice and Fairness

To advocate that detention facilities operate in a just and fair manner sounds more like a homily than a principle of jail management. However, the many implications of this issue in a detention facility warrant further examination; and because of its significance to correctional management, it is regarded as an operational principle. (Nelson, 1983)

### Principle IX: Commitment

The final success of the direct supervision concept relies on the belief and support of the people in charge. The only programs where direct supervision was supposedly employed unsuccessfully were instances where commitment was lacking or inconsistent.

1. Executive Support. Support of the chief executive is a must for the concept to even get off the ground. This support must be public and based on a sound understanding of all of the principles of direct supervision.

2. Command Commitment. Equally as important as the support of the chief executive is the visible support of the command staff. *Visible* is the operative word here. Command staff members must be present as staff goes through the training and orientation process; they should, in fact, present some of the training.

3. Line Supervisors. Finally, the line supervisor must be committed and must show it. This is achieved through informal interactions with staff, through training and by example.

4. Staff Commitment. As with all changes, some initial resistance should be anticipated. The involvement of staff in the planning process supported by well devised orientation and training programs should overcome these concerns. And the example set by the chain-of-command should be easy to follow (Saunders, 1988).

## Management Issues

### Personnel Issues

Personnel costs represent the greatest expenditure of funds for local jails; thereby making the management of personnel their most critical concern. Operating costs comprise approximately 90% of a jail's life cycle costs, and personnel expenditures account for approximately 70% of a jail's annual budget. In a 1982 survey of 2,500 local

jails, the National Sheriffs' Association discovered that personnel was the number one management concern (NSA, 1982). When cost savings are being considered, therefore, potential impact on personnel operations must receive the highest priority.

### Effective Management

Administrators of nine operating facilities surveyed in a 1987 NIC study agreed unanimously that direct supervision inmate management is an effective technique for managing their institutions. However, several pointed out that increased management attention and staff training were required (Krauth & Clem, 1983).

One administrator stated that it takes a great deal of management time to encourage teamwork and to remove the feeling of isolation that staff may have when assigned alone to a housing unit. Another manager reported that direct supervision contributed to the effectiveness of his management by reducing conflicts between staff and inmates and by allowing for closer inmate supervision. One went so far as to say, "It is the most positive trend in jail administration that I have encountered in my professional career."

### Improved Staff Morale

While all respondents operating direct supervision jails reported that staff morale was improved, few were able to quantify this observation in terms of cost savings. When the respondents were asked to substantiate their claims that direct supervision had a positive impact on staff morale, they cited the following:

- Improvement in staff attitudes.
- Decrease in staff tension.
- Reduced use of sick leave.
- Improved treatment of inmates by staff.
- Decreased number of staff-inmate conflicts.
- Improved institutional cleanliness and orderliness.
- Reduction in employee misconduct and confrontations with management.

When compared to the conventional approach, direct supervision jails assign an officer much greater responsibility for inmate behavior. Rather than remain inside a locked work station, an officer actively supervises all inmates in the housing unit, rather than merely observing them. This assertion of authority has prompted many officers to note that the new approach takes control away from the inmates and places the officer in charge of activity in the housing unit.

### Reduced Sick Leave

Sick leave is an indicator that offers quantifiable measurement. In reviewing the impact of direct supervision on this issue, jail administrators indicated that use of sick leave had declined since the introduction of direct supervision. The only exception was one jurisdiction (Pima County, AZ) in which staff were obliged to work regularly-scheduled overtime for 18 months with only one day off per week.

A study of the Manhattan House of Detention conducted by the National Institute of Corrections in 1985 revealed that sick leave usage for 1984 was significantly less than

the average for the city's other four houses of detention. This difference amounted to an annual cost avoidance of 1,810 staff-days, equal to eight full-time positions, or approximately \$250,000 in overtime expenditures were used to fill the vacancies.

Is it fair to conclude that the reduced sick leave usage is entirely attributable to direct supervision management techniques? There is no method for absolutely determining why these staff members did not use as much sick leave as staff in traditional detention environments. Nevertheless, improved working conditions and job enrichment are characteristic of "new generation jails" strongly implying that they may result in lower sick leave usage.

### Improved Working Conditions

As the work force continues to diminish, as has been predicted for the remainder of this century, the importance of improved working conditions for staff will increase. The growing demand by the private sector for more qualified employees indicates that jails will face increasing personnel problems before the end of the 20th century. A jail that can offer safe, clean, and orderly working conditions, as well as opportunities for fulfillment and career advancement, will be in a good position to compete for qualified employees.

### Staffing Levels

Perhaps the most important question is, "do new generation jails require more staff than other jails, or can this approach result in staff savings?" The answer of course varies to the degree that jail staffing patterns vary. The direct supervision facility opened in 1989 in Dade County, for example, houses 1,000 inmates and requires approximately half the staff needed to operate the County's older linear jail, which houses approximately 1,300 inmates. On the other hand, several facilities have relatively high staffing ratios, especially where there are fewer than 48 cells in a housing unit.

Housing unit staffing is the best area in which to identify the staffing benefits of direct supervision. A wide variety of settings over the past decade have consistently demonstrated that one officer can effectively supervise approximately 50 inmates, and several institutions have assigned more than 50 inmates to a housing unit with satisfactory results. Today's standard is usually 64 inmates per unit, but the author's experience for county jail applications where upwards of 75% of the population is pre-trial indicates a capacity of 58 as most reasonable and effective.

Texas is an example of a state where specific staffing ratios are contained in jail standards requiring one housing area officer for every 48 inmates. In other jurisdictions, higher ratios are acceptable. Each jurisdiction must determine which housing area staffing ratio is suitable for circumstances in its jurisdiction. In making this important determination, the control issue must be weighed against the very real issue of costs. Managers of direct supervision jails often cite staff efficiency as an example of improvements over traditional designs. Since traditional jails separate staff from inmates, officers are virtually unable to supervise behavior. Addition of more staff positions has little positive impact since officers are simply *observing* inmate behavior. For example, jails with management problems or crowding may elect to add more staff.

All too often, however, this action fails to improve conditions and this cycle causes more and more staff to be added to traditional jails.

In contrast, the direct supervision jail may operate effectively under a variety of adverse conditions with a fixed number of personnel. The efficiency of fewer staff is possible because personnel are in constant contact with the inmate population, thereby allowing staff to *control* the situation at all times.

### Safe Working Environment

Personal safety is an important determinant of the quality of a work environment. All new generation jails report fewer incidents of violence. Pennsylvania's Bucks County, for example, reported that fights have dropped by at least 50% and the use of disciplinary segregation has diminished by 30%. New Jersey's Middlesex County reports that in its first 18 months of operation with direct supervision, it had no incidents of inmate-officer or inmate-inmate violence. Colorado's Larimer County reports, "Much less violence; we are in charge for a change!"

### Construction Costs

Several factors suggest that direct supervision inmate management contributes to reduced construction costs. All the new generation jail administrators reported construction savings. Commercial-grade plumbing fixtures can replace vandal-proof stainless steel fixtures in general population living areas. The degree of cost savings obviously depends on the differences in the costs of fixtures and installation. The average cost of major brands of stainless steel combination toilet fixtures is approximately \$600 per unit. In contrast, a porcelain or Vitrous china watercloset and lavatory, comparable to those used in Federal Prison System facilities, list at approximately \$350. When installation and accessory costs are considered, the difference is approximately \$200 per cell.

Although some believe that the increased durability of steel fixtures will offset the extra cost, "direct supervision" jails have not reported a significant problem with breakage. Moreover, the cost difference would pay for many replacements.

Another new concept is the elimination of lavatory and toilets in every cell. Cells with access to centralized plumbing areas might be considered for some inmate housing units. In a recent analysis of this option, it was determined that "dry" cells cost approximately \$5,000 less per cell than "wet" cells. For this reason, some counties are now reviewing this option as a cost-saving measure.

- *Lighting fixtures* in the general population living areas need not be vandal proof. A good quality commercial fixture designed for frequent use is sufficient. A security surface-mounted fluorescent fixture costs approximately \$435 installed, compared to \$120 for a commercial grade surface-mounted fluorescent fixture.
- The cost of secure *control stations* in each living unit can be eliminated. When concrete, glazing, electronics and equipment are included, the cost of a control station may be \$50,000 or higher for each housing unit, depending on the extent of the electronics.

- The cost of *walls and glazing* to divide 48-cell living units into smaller 12 or 16-cell subunits, as is the custom in remote surveillance detention facilities, can be eliminated. Security glazing is very costly, and as much as \$25,000 to \$50,000 may be spent on each housing unit.
- *Furniture* for use by inmates in general population living areas can be of normal commercial quality rather than the more expensive vandal-proof line. For example, a four-person stainless steel table with attached seating costs \$975 installed, compared to \$320 for a comparable commercial pedestal table with four chairs.
- *Cell doors, frames, and hardware* in the general population living areas can be commercial or institutional grade rather than heavy steel doors and sliding gates. Hollow-core metal doors of the type used in schools and hospitals are proving to be very effective in direct supervision jails. The differences in cost are significant. An electronically-controlled maximum security door with frame costs approximately \$2,300 installed, while a hollow metal door and frame costs approximately \$300.

Cost avoidance is another important consideration. If exterior walls are reinforced with concrete and steel, it may not be necessary to duplicate this expense for interior walls. Facilities now being built for direct supervision management have utilized hollow block for interior partitions, and rely upon exterior walls for the essential security "envelope."

By selecting less costly materials and hardware, officials planning direct supervision jails may save as much as \$200,000 per housing unit when compared to the traditional approach. This is not to say that all direct supervision jails are less expensive to construct than the conventional detention facilities being built today. Variations in costs among new generation jails may result from unique differences in basic architectural characteristics of each of these jails.

The Manhattan House of Detention, for example, was constructed within the shell of an old facility and incorporated all options for operating with either podular-remote surveillance or direct supervision. The Multnomah County Detention Center was built within a high rise multipurpose criminal justice center. The relatively high costs of these facilities are attributable to special circumstances governing their design.

### Maintenance Issues

Reduced maintenance costs were consistently reported by the respondents as benefits of the direct supervision approach. Experience with direct supervision establishes that there may be substantially less vandalism in general population living areas, and perhaps certain interior areas could be built to school or hospital standards. Although the Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Center's interior cell walls were made of concrete block, 20 years of experience suggests that even gypsum board would have been satisfactory in the general population housing units.

### Building Maintenance

Building maintenance is an important area in which facilities reported lower costs. Administrators indicated that there were fewer broken windows and lights, fewer fires,

and plumbing repairs and painting were needed less often. The Contra Costa County Detention Center administrator reported that the county's old facility needed to be painted each year, while the new facility was painted for the first time in 1986, five years after it was built.

The Manhattan House of Detention, New York City's only direct supervision facility, has surprised local officials with an unprecedented absence of graffiti. All respondents reported that they have had less graffiti, and several said they have encountered virtually no graffiti at all. Two respondents pointed out that while they saw much less graffiti on the living unit, they found just as much in the court holding tank, which is designed and supervised in the traditional manner.

Behavioral inconsistencies displayed by inmates exposed to two different kinds of management and design practices within the same institution are convincing evidence of the strong influence that a jail environment can have on inmate behavior.

### Supplies and Equipment

Officials also reported less frequent damage to supplies and equipment. Less need for repair and replacement of clothing, television sets, mattresses, and linen has been experienced. Inmate vandalism rarely occurs in direct supervision facilities.

Although few facilities have kept records, the Pima County Detention Center provided some cost comparisons that graphically illustrate this point. In the old Pima County Detention Center inmates ruined 150 mattresses each year. Every week approximately two television sets had to be repaired and 15 to 25 sets of inmate clothing were lost. During the first 2 years that Pima County has occupied its new detention center, it has lost no mattresses, repaired only 2 television sets, and lost approximately about 15 sets of inmate clothing.

Several jurisdictions reported an increased use of cleaning supplies in their new facilities, indicating, again, a sense of pride in maintaining them. Specific staffing cost savings derived from direct supervision will depend, of course, on local circumstances. When considering this alternative, officials may also review indirect benefits such as reduced sick leave and increased staff safety. Reduced maintenance costs and less expensive construction components have been consistently reported and documented.

Not only can significant cost benefits be derived from the direct supervision approach, but such vital objectives as reduced violence and improved working conditions will also be realized. As Naisbitt and Aburdene observed in their book, *Reinventing the Corporation*, "We are living in one of these rare times in history when the two crucial elements for social change are present - new values and economic necessity." Jurisdictions interested in reducing capital, operating, and human costs may find the direct supervision concept worth further exploration (Nelson, 1988).

### Acceptance of the Direct Supervision Concept

The Federal Prison System's experience with its experimental detention facilities, the Metropolitan Correctional Centers, has been very positive. The original three have now been in operation for twenty years. They have been joined by two more - a new 200-bed, campus-style facility in Tucson and a converted Federal Correctional Institute in Miami.

Although many features of these prototype centers were incorporated in the design of local detention facilities, the overall concept was generally rejected by local jail administrators. True, the podular design was adopted by many, but it was modified to fit the traditional jail practices with which most administrators were comfortable. The customary high-security, vandal-proof fixtures, furnishings, and finishes were added, and the 48-cell units were further divided into subunits of 12 or 16. Supervision was achieved either remotely from secure observation posts, or intermittently by officers patrolling adjoining corridors. There was virtually a universal disbelief among local jail administrators that direct supervision facilities could be safe, secure, cost-effective, free of vandalism, and a desirable place to work. Even if the "Feds" found this to be the case, such an approach would not work with local jail prisoners, nor would it be accepted in the local communities.

It must be remembered that for the past 200 years, jail management has been based on successfully anticipating and responding to negative inmate behavior. Given this reactive management style, it is understandable that the podular concept was seen by jail practitioners as providing opportunities to more adequately respond to the problems that have plagued the traditional linear jail. Ironically, the relative success of the modified podular design, coupled with high-security furnishings and high-security electronics, tended to mask the true potential of the podular concept. The successes in the Federal Metropolitan Correctional Centers were either ignored or attributed to the idea that the federal prisoner was somehow different. Few realized or accepted the point that this new design allowed management practices that would obviate the need for most of the reactive strategies so characteristic of traditional jail management.

A second substantial barrier to general acceptance was that the jail did not look like a jail. Certainly it did not fulfill the public's expectation of a jail as a place of punishment, even though, in most over 60% of the prisoners have not been convicted or sentenced. But many elected community leaders, as well as criminal justice administrators, have been reluctant to tell the public that the imposition of conditions of confinement for the purpose of punishment is in direct violation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Because of this ignorance about the role of jails as holding centers, those jail plans that are based on non-punitive conditions of confinement are unacceptable in many communities.

The result was that the real benefits of the new generation jails were never fully shared with the local communities until January, 1981 when Contra Costa County opened its new detention center in Martinez, California. The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department fully adopted the operational concepts of the Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Center. However, they enhanced the design by incorporating the recommendations from a user's evaluation, and added the open booking concept developed in St. Louis.

During the first three years (for which the most detailed statistics are available) that the Contra Costa facility was in operation, they experienced the same benefits as the Metropolitan Correctional Centers - and then some. They accomplished the objectives of safe, secure, humane, and just custody. In addition, they enjoy a vandal and graffiti-free facility. More importantly, the deputy sheriffs assigned to the jail have found that the new facility provides an opportunity for interesting and challenging employment. The Contra Costa facility not only demonstrates that a new generation jail can be

effectively operated at the local level, but that it can also eliminate many of the personnel problems that plague local correctional operations (Nelson, 1983). This conclusion has been demonstrated time and time again in those facilities that have followed.

### The Hillsborough County (Florida) Experience

In mid-1990, Hillsborough County (Tampa, Florida) opened the largest direct supervision facility ever designed. From that time forward, its Orient Road Jail has been an unqualified success operationally. Over 25,000 people, representing 37 different states, 48 counties in Florida, and 23 foreign countries have toured the "big" jail since it opened.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office decided in 1983, after touring jails around the country, that they would "go Direct Supervision". The facility at Contra Costa, made the decision an easy one: The cleanliness and overall smooth operation were unsurpassed in any other jail they visited. Another significant decision was made as a result of those tours and that was to make a strong commitment to the planning and design process. This commitment was made as stories were shared about how long it took to finally get to the point of opening another jail and how much of an overrun in time and money accompanied the completion of a new facility. Hillsborough's thinking was that the commitment of more time "up front" would pay off in the long run. The end result was a lengthy, detailed planning process that culminated in the desired design completed on schedule with the projected budget.

The commitment to direct supervision coupled with the detailed planning process resulted in real operational benefits. As anticipated, major incidents were dramatically reduced, however, the total number of reported incidents actually increased. An analysis revealed that the direct supervision concept did even more than originally projected: Deputies were finally in almost total control, documenting virtually everything that occurred in the pods.

Every jail system has its own special history. In the case of Hillsborough County, the Detention Department of the Sheriff's Office evolved from the consolidation of several different institutions in 1972 into one of the 20 largest jail systems in America. Prior to opening the new jail in June, 1990, the only building that was actually designed as a detention facility was a 508 bed jail located in downtown Tampa. The other facilities represented a miscellaneous mix of structures. One was a county work farm constructed in 1926, which was administered by the Board of County Commissioners; it housed misdemeanor offenders sentenced by county courts. Another structure was originally built for and run by the City Sanitation Department to house minimum security prisoners who were sentenced by Tampa municipal courts on city ordinance violations.

As the population of the county grew, so did the number of arrests, and consequently, the daily jail census. In view of rulings by courts on the rights of inmates, the patchwork makeup of facilities was considered unsatisfactory; therefore, in 1982, the Sheriff's Office undertook a needs assessment of the jail system. The sheriff made a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners detailing the space shortage and projecting bed space requirements through the year 2000. He requested and obtained approval to hire an architectural team to conduct a building and land use study, prepare

a detention master plan, and design the first of several facilities. After a comprehensive planning effort, a contract to build the new jail was awarded in 1987.

During the same time frame, over 500 beds of temporary housing were opened to deal with the critical issue of overcrowding. The largest of these facilities was a 384 bed dormitory style structure that was created by bolting together 64 "trailer-type" units into eight pods holding 48 inmates each. Recognizing that extraordinary measures were required to maintain security in a jail made of "mobile homes," direct supervision was adopted as the inmate management philosophy.

Historically, jails were operated under the premise that bars or glass separated the inmates from staff. This design standard forced officers to be reactive instead of proactive. Unable to prevent problems from developing, all that they could do was respond to incidents after they occurred. In essence, inmates controlled nine tenths of a typical jail (the housing areas) while officers managed only one tenth (the corridors and control rooms). Consequently, there was an incredible amount of inmate violence including aggravated battery, homosexual rape, extortion, arson and suicide attempts.

By contrast, in a direct supervision jail such as in Hillsborough County, the officers work in the housing area face to face with the inmates with no bars or glass to separate them. The situation can be best likened to a teacher in the classroom or a beat officer on the street. Given total authority and control over 48 to 64 inmates, an officer in a direct supervision pod is a supervisor, not merely a custodian. All pods in such a setting open into a common area where inmates who obey the rules are allowed to move about socializing and participating in group activities. Keeping the housing area clean at all times is mandatory. For those who participate, there are many rewards including limited viewing of television (paid from profits of the inmate canteen fund, not by the taxpayer) throughout the day and evening hours, daily visitation and availability of activities such as cards, board games, and basketball. Most of the recreational activity takes place in a small exercise yard that is an extension of each housing pod. The pod officer influences inmate cooperation by withholding any or all of these privileges until the desired response is obtained.

The benefits of direct supervision were proven in the temporary modular jail where, from 1987 to 1990 during its period of operation, there never was a serious assault on a deputy, a rape, arson fire or suicide attempt. Significant incidents were virtually nonexistent. As a bonus, the modular facility served as a training ground for the new direct supervision jail. As part of the preparatory training, sergeants and corporals gave up their chevrons, while keeping their pay, and were assigned as pod deputies for eight weeks each, so that they would have a full appreciation of what pod deputies would face in the future. In retrospect, this was probably one of the most innovative actions taken in the transition process, and certainly proved to be one of the most effective.

Ground-breaking for the new facility, called the Orient Road Jail, occurred in November, 1987. Originally planned to house 650 inmates, it evolved during the planning process into a 1714 bed facility. As part of that evolution, 16 of the 48 single cells in each direct supervision pod were double-bunked to alleviate overcrowding in the jail system, raising the bed count per pod to 64. Located on a 33-acre site, the building stretches 1,200 feet from end to end. The structure covers 14.6 acres with 636,000 square feet under roof. The total project cost was \$69.3 million including \$1.9 for program development, \$3.8 million for design, \$61 million for construction and \$2.6

million for equipment and furnishings. Included in the cost was a new central booking facility capable of processing over 100,000 arrestees annually as a service to the 20 law enforcement agencies that operate in Hillsborough County. Additionally, administrative offices for the Detention Department, a 21,000 square foot warehouse serving the entire Sheriff's Office, and a Central Breath Testing facility were all a part of the project.

The Orient Road Jail is a staff efficient and cost effective facility. Had it been built to the same specifications as the downtown Tampa jail, it would have required 216 more deputies than the present staffing pattern calls for to supervise 1,714 inmates. Over 90% of the housing areas are provided with traditional, commercial grade fixtures and furnishings in place of expensive, vandal-resistant items. The remainder of the building (approximately 144 single cells) is designated for maximum security lockdown of high risk, recalcitrant or protective custody inmates who require segregated housing. They are equipped with stainless steel toilet and sink combinations and high security steel doors, items which cost \$800 and \$700 respectively. By means of comparison, porcelain toilets and sinks cost \$260 for the pair and solid core wooden doors are only \$200. Far from being plush amenities, use of such fixtures and doors represented a significant cost saving to the taxpayers. In the case of Orient Road Jail, the savings amounted to \$1.5 million.

Direct supervision facilities do not look like the public expectation of a jail. Bright colors, builders hardware, and extensive use of sound deadening materials help create a habitable living space for inmates and staff at far less than the cost of a traditional jail. Because of that, some jail administrators and elected officials have been hesitant to adopt direct supervision as a method of operation. What those individuals fail to recognize is that direct supervision is a practical and economical solution to the day to day operational problems of running a modern jail. Over 30 years, construction costs account for only 10% of a jail's budget, so building a jail that is staff efficient and inexpensive to operate makes sense. Direct supervision also provides a much better working environment for the officers who are literally locked up with the inmates by considerably reducing stress. The average length of stay of inmates in the Hillsborough County jail system is 15 days; while the typical officer spends 10, 20, or even 30 years in jail working five shifts per week. Staff's facetious question, "Who is in jail anyway, them or us?," really takes on a new meaning when put in this context.

Ideally, the opening of a new jail is a turnkey affair where all systems are complete and fully operational at the time of occupancy. Unfortunately, the Orient Road Jail had to be opened in phases because of pressing space needs. On June 3, 1990, inmates at the former county work farm were transferred to the new jail before it was even substantially completed so that the minimum security facility could be razed to make way for a staff parking lot. In late August, 1990, the remaining general population housing units were activated by transferring more than 700 inmates from the former Sanitation Department jail and the modular unit in West Tampa. The final phase took place on April 14, 1991, when Intake Housing and Central Booking were shifted from the downtown Tampa facility. The delay in opening Booking was a function of the need to test general population housing under operating conditions, acquisition of required new equipment, and orientation of law enforcement officers throughout the county on the new procedures to be followed. In addition, the staff to be assigned to the new booking and classification setting had to be given time for transition training.

Since becoming fully operational, procedures have been constantly fine-tuned to the point that daily activities have settled into a smooth routine. The staff is pleased and proud of what has been accomplished and considerably more content with its lot than had previously been the case. This is borne out by the fact that the annual turnover rate for Detention was 22% in 1981, but only 3.6% in 1991.

In addition to a more staff and cost efficient facility, the construction of the Orient Road Jail and the stopgap measures leading up to it were directed at preventing the intervention of the federal courts. Hillsborough County has the only large jail system in the entire state of Florida that is not under some form of direct federal control, either through a consent decree or a federal population cap. In that regard, the county is continuing its efforts to insure that the inmate population remains under control. The Sheriff's Office is culminating work on a master plan for a new direct supervision facility with an eventual 4,096 bed buildout over the next 30 years that will be added to the 2,276 beds now in the system.

In the final analysis, direct supervision has proven to be the most practical, cost effective, and successful method of managing the growing inmate population in Hillsborough County. Total commitment to the principles of direct supervision has been rewarded with proof that economically, operationally and professionally, it is the right way to run a jail (Parrish, 1992).

## Summary

### Literature Review

Since its emergence in the early 1970's, there have been over 100 articles written about direct supervision applications. Most of these articles discussed specific experiences although many - most notably those dealing with direct supervision architecture - were broad in their scope. Ironically, a review of the available literature discloses that not much has improved on two of the original papers presented on the subject.

In 1983, Raymond Nelson compiled the eight "Principles of Direct Supervision" which were subsequently published by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). Although sometimes modified and adapted or even added to, as in Hillsborough County, these basic tenets have stood the test of time, at least in the short run. The following year, Stephen Gettinger's pamphlet "New Generation Jails: An Innovative Approach to an Age-old Problem" was also released by NIC. And again, the material has retained its relevance today.

Among several good articles from architects, those by Robert Miller (1985) and Dale Nederhoff (1984) are both enlightening. Indeed, direct supervision may claim to be at least a part of the catalyst that has gotten the architect more involved with the user in the design planning process.

### Review of Research

While a host of researchers have contributed to the field, the 1989 work of Jay Farbstein with Richard Wener and others stands out. This is undoubtedly due in large part to the early and on-going involvement of the authors with the concepts of direct supervision, coupled with the extensive report itself. Moreover, the data collected lends

itself to further analysis. While their conclusions support direct supervision, they were candid in their recommendation that further study is warranted and needed.

NIC remains the best source and main repository for direct supervision information along with Ray Nelson's new institute. These resources are valuable enough to include in the text:

National Institute of Corrections Information Center

1860 Industrial Circle, Suite A  
Longmont, Colorado, 80501  
Telephone: (303) 682-0213 or 1-800-877-1461

National Institute of Corrections Jails Division

1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A  
Longmont, Colorado, 80501  
Telephone: (303) 682-0639 or 1-800-995-6429

Direct Supervision Institute Incorporated

P.O. Box 101075  
Denver, Colorado, 80250-1075  
Telephone: (303) 692-9296

## Conclusion

While significant benefits have resulted from the direct supervision approach, other concepts may also achieve similar results. However, there are public policy and professional policy issues which transcend operational benefits and are critical to the strategic dimensions of current jail planning.

For example, as a matter of public policy, does a community want a jail that is proactive or reactive in addressing inmate problems and needs? And from a legal point of view, will the jail accommodate the "evolving standards which mark the progress of a maturing society" as prescribed by the Supreme Court? Will the new jail be an appropriate place for confinement of local citizens charged with a crime and requiring detention?

Those of us who profess to be professionals in the field have an obligation to create correctional environments that will improve our society, or at least do it no harm. Given the state-of-the-art in corrections, "doing no harm" is a respectable accomplishment. While corrections has not been particularly effective in reducing criminal behavior of persons committed to our care, it does not necessarily follow that the state-of-the-art will not improve. Certainly the environment in which inmates find themselves determines to a significant extent the probability for change from offending to non-offending behavior.

It is important for today's correctional professionals involved in the design of institutions to develop facilities that will accommodate advanced correctional practices anticipated in the twenty-first century. New institutions should be places where the efforts of our successors will have an opportunity to bear fruit. At the least, new institutions should be compatible with the knowledge we have gained about human behavior in the twentieth century. The role of the correctional officer in our future institutions is a critical issue. The trend toward isolating the officer from the inmate is incompatible with the professionalization of the position. One department that recently

opened a remote surveillance jail recruited personnel at lower qualifications and pay than deputy sheriffs to staff the secure control booths and restricted this new class of employee from having contact with inmates. As long as "guards" sit behind secure cages and fail to relate to inmates, there will be the animal-like reactions of prisoners with resulting property damage, predatory attacks, and injury to staff.

As we gain experience in training jail staffs for the transition from traditional jail operations to new generation jail, we have been particularly impressed with the enthusiastic response of the line officers. Once these officers understand the concept and the benefits, they overcome their initial resistance and become the concept's most ardent advocates. After all, the officers are the group that benefit most from direct supervision.

If we are to be successful in the professionalization of our correctional officer, we must structure duties and responsibilities so that they are truly professional in content. In too many situations the correctional officer remains a great untapped resource for effectively controlling and influencing the behavior of jail and prison populations. The direct supervision approach provides for maximum utilization of one of our most valuable resources, the correctional officer. Is it not better for us to direct our efforts toward developing this important resource than for us to forsake it in favor of technological barriers and devices? We cannot afford the technology that we are becoming dependent upon, particularly if the resultant environment does not alleviate fear or allow for change.

The direct supervision architectural management design provides a safe correctional environment that is compatible both with current knowledge of human behavior and with national correctional standards. It creates an environment in which the evolving standards of correctional practice can flourish. We should advocate the construction and operation of jails through humane, people-oriented architectural and management strategies (Nelson, 1983).

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