

Alternatives to Standard Methods of Incarceration

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The lack of adequate prison space to house criminal offenders is resulting in a failure of the system to provide appropriate punishment and/or deterrence for the criminal element in today's society. Florida's inmate population has exploded, from 20,000 in 1978 to more than 46,500 today. During fiscal year 1990-1991, the Department of Corrections admitted 37,631 new offenders. They are housed in 47 major institutions, 36 community correctional centers, 6 road prisons, and 21 work camps (Florida Sheriffs Association, 1992).

This situation has created a need for alternative methods of incarceration that meet the requirements for judicial sentencing of nonviolent and first-time offenders. With prisons continuing to be overcrowded, alternatives are not an option, they are a necessity. The demand for alternatives is the result of public dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system. Citizens are becoming more and more disillusioned as unmerited gain time is indiscriminately handed out to those who certainly don't deserve it. The revolving door policy for repeat offenders is ineffective as a deterrent and totally unsatisfactory to the taxpaying citizen. The questions we must answer are, what alternatives to the current system exist? and which ones are the best? -- In terms of both cost and programmatic effectiveness.