

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/corrections-facilities-take-on-climate-change>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

[The National Institute of Corrections](#) recently hosted a live broadcast on Greening Corrections: People, Programs, and Practices.

The most exciting takeaway from the three-hour webinar is the fact that it is actually happening: across the country, corrections agencies are carving out their role in the green movement. They are finding creative, synergistic solutions to age-old corrections challenges while simultaneously addressing the relatively newer crisis of climate change.

Why now? Climate change is a reality; the need to secure a clean energy future and protect the environment for future generations is here. In this kind of challenge lies extensive opportunity: the promise of the green economy.

According to Pew Charitable Trusts, venture capital investment in clean technology has grown from \$1 billion in 2005 to \$12.6 billion over the past three years. Between 1998 and 2007, the number of jobs in the clean economy grew by 9.1 percent (total jobs grew just 3.7 percent). The green economy's full potential depends on investments, technologies, behavior change and policies moving forward.

People should be able to look to their government as a leader in this movement. They should expect environmental sustainability strategies from state agencies as a cost containment measure, if nothing else. In correctional institutions, however, cost containment is only one of many benefits to green policies and programs. Dan Pacholke, co-director of the Sustainable Prisons Project at Washington State Department of Corrections, explains, When you can connect offenders with anything alive, you teach them empathy, compassion, responsibility, which I think is more powerful than most cognitive behavioral therapies.

Corrections agencies, nonprofit organizations, and communities across the country recognize the urgency and the opportunity. That's why the topic has been mentioned in *USA Today*, on CNN, and by David Letterman. Why a Google search of Sustainable Prisons returns 4.8 million hits. And why 183 sites nearly 1,600 participants took part in NIC's Green Corrections!

The shift to sustainable corrections is on its way. The National Institute of Corrections through broadcasts like this and similar resources is creating and communicating a vision of what can be. By sharing the success stories of corrections agencies in states like Washington State and Colorado, and of nonprofit organizations in Illinois and New York, NIC is demonstrating the short-term wins that have already taken place across the nation. It is up to other institutions to now build on these successes and create environmentally sustainable prison institutions for the future.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

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