U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections

The Norval Morris Project

At the National Institute of Corrections

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National Institute of Corrections

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Introduction

This report is a review of the first 10 years of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Norval Morris Project, hereafter referred to simply as the project or "Morris Project." First established in 2004, the project, as it developed, has had three phases. The first was a preliminary planning phase in which the global goals of the project emerged through a number of meetings and consultations involving the NIC Advisory Board, agency staff, and leaders in corrections and correctional research. By 2006, the project had been staffed and an extended development phase began. In 2010, the project began an implementation phase, working with the Department of Corrections in the Commonwealth of Virginia. At the time of this writing, that work is ongoing, but preliminary results show the project has had a positive effect on the department. The most important legacy of the Morris Project, however, may be the demonstration of how a "Morris Project" can be developed and executed in a way that preserves the spirit of Norval Morris' life and work.

At the time of his death in 2004, Dr. Norval Morris was the Julius Kreeger Professor Emeritus of Law and Criminology at the University of Chicago Law School. Morris was internationally recognized as a leader in criminal justice and prison reform, and he was among the most influential writers of his time, having authored, co-authored, or edited 15 books and hundreds of articles over a 55-year career. Norval Morris is still well and fondly remembered by those who knew and worked with him through the relationships he built across many disciplines and his influence on a generation of academics and practitioners. One of his students, NYU Law Professor James Jacobs, once summarized Morris' work by saying that his goal was always to create a criminal justice system, "that was more just, effective, and humane."[i] At the beginning of his article on Morris' role in the study of corrections, Jacobs quotes him as saying, "Decency, empathy, the ability to feel at least to a degree the lash on another's back, the removal occasionally of our customary blinkers to human suffering, a respect for each individual springing from religious or humanitarian beliefs—these have been the motive force of penal reform and not any validated knowledge concerning the better prevention of crime or recidivism. It is not 'what works?' that, in the end, fundamentally moves us to be a better people, it is 'what's right?'[ii]".

Norval Morris was also instrumental in founding the National Institute of Corrections in the early 1970s and served as a charter member of the NIC Advisory Board until he passed away. Shortly thereafter, the NIC Advisory Board created the Norval Morris Project as an open-ended commitment to honor his contributions to the field and carry on the spirit of his work. The project sought to promote Morris' legacy by following his model of using collaboration, interdisciplinary insights, and research to bring about innovative change in correctional policy and practice. As it developed over its first few years, the project came to focus on how a Morris Project could be developed and implemented to locate innovative evidence-based approaches from any discipline, evaluate their potential to inform correctional policy and practice, create opportunities to test these innovations in correctional settings, and develop strategies to encourage the dissemination and

application of this knowledge in corrections.

The project's planning and logistical support during its first phase came through a number of cooperative agreements between NIC and Justice Systems and Training (J-SAT) of Boulder, Colorado, under the leadership of Bradford Bouge.[iii] It was during this phase that the project began developing a unique strategy for identifying knowledge relevant to the field of corrections by exploring different research literatures and interacting with researchers and thought leaders across multiple disciplines to identify, distill, and articulate ways these bodies of knowledge could be applied to correctional policy and practice. At its heart, the Norval Morris Project has been about developing and using what we came to call a "knowledge pump" for expediting the transfer of knowledge into the practice of innovative approaches. In the process, the project also sought to demonstrate by example how a Morris Project could be executed from conception through full implementation in correctional settings. A hallmark of this approach has been that the structure of the project itself was designed to be open ended and to allow issues and solutions to emerge through a multistage, iterative process.

This structure began to emerge early in the project. In August 2004, NIC staff met with a select group of experts to begin planning the project.[iv] In analyzing the issues surrounding the application of research knowledge to corrections, the group recognized that simply improving the content and availability of research results would not, in and of itself, be enough to promote its application. The group concluded that explicit and active strategies were required to ensure that emerging knowledge reaches the field in a form that will lead most directly to its use. Based on the recommendations of this original group and the ongoing discussions both within NIC and between NIC and its many partners, five strategic objectives of the Norval Morris Project were defined that guided the project's development.

The five objectives set the tone early in the project. They were:

- Maximize the involvement of the widest possible range of experts in research, policy and practice from multiple fields, both within and beyond criminal justice, corrections, and criminology.
- Develop new approaches to accelerate the uptake of innovations based on research and employ innovative strategies to propagate this knowledge to policymakers and practitioners.
- Enhance collaborative efforts between the policymaking, practitioner, and research communities by encouraging partnerships to facilitate the use of research in applied settings.
- Help train policymakers and practitioners in the use of research and work to sensitize researchers to the needs of the correctional field.
- Ensure that research findings and summaries are made as accessible as possible to policymakers and practitioners by employing innovative strategies to disseminate them to

the field.[v]

First Steps

An important first step in the Morris Project was to find a practical way to identify what we mean when we talk about a "body of knowledge" in referring to an evidence-based policy or practice. This early work proved essential to the later development of the project because it created a structure that could be used to capture the relevant literature on any topic. The project, therefore, started by undertaking a broad, systematic information gathering effort to identify the range of issues and promising areas for possible future development.

By early 2007, J-SAT was conducting a rigorous analysis of various literatures to serve as a foundation for the Morris Project.[vi] There were four tasks in this analysis of the different literatures. The first was to identify and collect the most recent and seminal articles on the topic. Second, all abstracts, articles, and pertinent keywords were entered into a database using bibliographical software to create relational bibliographies. Third, sub-topics were categorized and formulated to produce specific annotated bibliographies for efficient, comprehensive information-sharing. Lastly, a bibliography was created made up of the most important articles that would constitute the essential reading within the topic area designed to bring anyone working on the topic quickly up to speed and create a shared set of resources.[vii] While this process can be time consuming, it is well worth the effort; any effort to identify and use evidence-based policies or practices requires a clear understanding of exactly what the body evidence is. By doing this research, the project was continuing to honor one of Norval Morris' most important lessons.[viii]

At the same time as this information gathering process was underway, the project also sought to reach out to people both inside and outside the corrections field to develop interdisciplinary approaches and draw on professional networks that cut across academic, private sector, and public sector boundaries. In tandem with defining the relevant literature, we conducted semi-structured interviews by telephone with thought leaders in a variety of professional fields. Many of the initial respondents were people who had authored the work identified in the literature search. We identified more respondents through the use of the snowball approach in which each person interviewed was also asked to identify others we might interview (the process also fed back into the literature search as respondents directed the project staff to important work they may have missed). This process generated a list of over 120 people and formed a pool of leading experts in a wide variety of areas of potential relevance to correctional issues. It was from this original pool that a select group of people were recruited to serve as the project's steering committee.

Given the expansive vision of the project, we needed a unique group to able to kick start the search for innovations and guide the project. Because this group was so essential for creating and maintaining the project's overarching vision, it was called the Keystone Group.

The members of the Keystone Group (with their titles at the time of the meeting) were:

- Verna Allee, President, Verna Allee Associates
- Tom Beauclair, Deputy Director, National Institute of Corrections
- Brad Bogue, President, Justice Systems and Training
- Kim Cameron, PhD, Professor, University of Michigan
- Patricia Caruso, Director, Michigan Department of Corrections
- Harold Clarke, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Correction
- Dean Fixsen, PhD, Research Professor, National Implementation Research Network
- Robert Guy, Director, North Carolina Department of Community Corrections
- Chris Innes, PhD, Chief of Research and Evaluation, National Institute of Corrections
- James B. Jacobs, PhD, Professor of Law, New York University School of Law
- Justin Jones, Director, Oklahoma Department of Corrections
- Joe Lehman, Secretary, Washington State Department of Corrections (retired)
- Fleet Maull, Founder/President, Prison Dharma Network
- Lucia Meijer, President, Vipassana Prison Trust
- Chase Riveland, Secretary, Washington State DOC (retired)
- Linda Rosenberg, CEO, National Council for Community Behavior Healthcare
- Kaia Stern, Director, Pathways Home/Prison Studies Project, Yale Law School
- Morris Thigpen, Director, National Institute of Corrections
- Robert Trestman, PhD, Executive Director, Correctional Managed Health Care University of Connecticut Health Center
- Melissa Van Dyke, Investigator, National Implementation Research Network
- Art Wallenstein, Director, Montgomery County (MD), Department of Corrections
- Diane Williams, President, Safer Foundation

The first Keystone Group meeting took place in September 2008. The retreat itself was designed to be emergent, without preset limits on the group's scope of work, design, or strategy. The Keystone Group's function was to identify emerging topics and knowledge that could be imported into the corrections field, advise the project on how best to translate this knowledge to inform correctional policy and practice, and assist the project in disseminating the results to the field in innovative ways.

This first meeting used the Open Space technique, an approach to conducting meetings that is designed to maximize the creativity of a group by allowing them to be self-organizing and essentially create the agenda for the meeting on the spot.[ix] Out of that process, two provocative questions were developed:

1. "*How can we transform correctional leadership and the workforce in ways that empower staff to reduce recidivism and promote prevention?*"

2. *"How can we safely and systematically reduce the correctional population by half?"*

These questions became the two action plans that would drive the project forward: Transforming the Correctional Workforce and Reducing the Corrections Population.

Originally, the project plan called for the Keystone Group to meet yearly to address new topics and nominate new areas for concentrated attention. In the original project plan, we expected to define one or two new topics each year and create topic teams to continue work on each one. In fact, the topics chosen by the Keystone Group in their first meeting were so ambitious that just working on the first of the two questions, workforce development, has consumed the energies and resources of the Morris Project ever since.

The next step of the process began immediately after the Keystone Group meeting with the creation of the first two topic teams made up of selected Keystone Group members and other subject matter experts who had been identified in the original round of interviews.[x] The topic teams were designed to work with each other, NIC, and J-SAT to continue to develop, expand upon, and deepen the topics. Structured similarly to the Keystone Group, the Topic Teams functioned as stand-alone working groups. While the specific areas of concentration for these teams were those identified by the Keystone Group, they were encouraged to do more than simply refine or repackage the topic areas. Instead, they were charged with conceptualizing each topic in terms of their long-range implications for major change and to explore, in the broadest sense, the strategies that could drive innovation in the field. The strategy behind the Morris Project, therefore, continued through the Topic Teams, with the goal of "pumping" knowledge, information, and fresh ideas to the corrections field.

When the project was first conceived, members of the Topic Teams were intended to work virtually, taking advantage of the technical capacity to teleconference or use web-based technologies to do their work. The expectation was that these groups would be able to work more quickly, involve a wider range of participants, and become self-organizing teams. This approach, in practice, encountered some unanticipated difficulties. Not all members of the topic teams were comfortable with virtual approaches or found the "remoteness" of these technologies a hindrance to good discussions. At that time, in 2009, social media technologies had not gained the broad acceptance and familiarity that even a few years later they would enjoy. It also proved to be very difficult to schedule the sessions at times where most of the team could participate. Finding an hour or two in busy schedules for an online meeting proved so impractical that the project eventually organized face-to-face meetings for the Topic Teams. Much work had been already accomplished, however, and a number of innovative ideas had been developed through the process. When the Topic Teams did met face-to-face in September 2009, they used the scenario thinking approach to select the most promising strategies and develop action plans for them. Following that meeting, the project staff refined the action plans and compiled the supporting information the topic teams had

developed.

In November 2009, a second meeting of the Keystone Group took place to continue the work achieved over the previous year. The group followed up on the Topic Team meetings held in the previous month with the goal of reviewing and prioritizing the action plans on Transforming the Correctional Workforce and Reducing the Corrections Population. The meeting was designed as a strategic planning session to elicit dialogue and discussion among participants. The Keystone Group continued conversation on the two areas, discussing possible ways to use these tools to achieve the project goals.

Implementation Phase

By early 2010, some concerns were being raised by the NIC Advisory Board and senior NIC leadership about the project; some frankly wondered when all the talk was going to end and something more concrete was going to be done. At its inception, the Morris Project had received a relatively modest funding level, but the accumulated cost over the life of the project had begun to mount. By the end of 2010, the total cost of the project had reached over $500,000. Hoping to gain funding support for the effort from other partners, especially foundations, who might be interested in the approach, J-SAT conducted an extensive search of potential funding sources. However, the recession which began in 2008, made that aspect of the project plan unrealistic. NIC leadership and project staff, therefore, began a new round of engaging the field to plan next steps.

Based on these consultations, NIC outlined a strategy for the future of the project that would involve an "implementation phase" to build on the work done over the previous 4 years. To develop the strategy for the implementation phase, NIC turned again to J-SAT and found a new partner in the Urban Institute. J-SAT received funding to continue to support the project as it moved forward. The second, new partner was the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C, which was funded to develop and carry out an evaluation of the project. From the beginning, the need to practice what we preached, by evaluating the work we were doing, was an essential part of the planning for the project. The Urban Institute's cooperative agreement with NIC was designed to bring evaluation into the project from the very beginning of the implementation phase, even before the implementation project itself was designed or the site had been identified. The two awards were intended to work in tandem and to draw on the strengths of each organization. The new partners participated in the third meeting of the Keystone Group where the plans for the implementation phase were reviewed and endorsed.

The third meeting of the Keystone Group, held in September 2010, came as the implementation phase was emerging but had not been fully articulated. This resulted in a meeting that was more frustrating, and at times contentious, as the Keystone Group grappled with the challenges the new phase of the project presented. Presentations from Greg Berman from the Center for Court Intervention and Melissa Van Dyke from the National Implementation Research Network, however, helped the group frame some of the issues. Much of the work the Keystone Group did in this last meeting was plan for the implementation phase and prioritize its goals for NIC.

Virginia Implementation Project

As it turned out, late in 2010 an opportunity arose for the NIC to do a project in partnership with the Virginia Department of Corrections. Harold Clarke, who had participated in the Topic Team work on Transforming the Correctional Workforce was named the new director. Clarke had introduced the project to the idea of creating a "Healing Environment" in corrections settings, an

idea he had been developing during his 25-year career in corrections, including as director of three different state systems. His first insight into the potential of creating healing environments had, in fact, come in the early 1990s during a Future Search Conference in Nebraska that was organized with the help of the NIC. The next step in his thinking came shortly after when he was introduced to Dialogue practices at a training session for executive leaders from the Royal Dutch Shell Corporation to which he was invited. Clarke was both impressed with his first experience with Dialogue and surprised to learn from Peter Garrett, one of the facilitators for the training, that it was already being used in prisons in the United Kingdom.

Over the next several years, as he served as director in Nebraska, Washington, and Massachusetts, Clarke continued to develop these ideas together with the leadership and staff in each department. To bring dialogue to Virginia, Clarke turned again to two people with whom he already had worked in each of the states he had previously served. They were Peter Garrett and Jane Ball, both based in the United Kingdom.[xi] In Virginia, Garrett and Ball worked across the whole department of corrections by coaching executive staff, training Virginia's Extended Leadership Team, and advising on implementation and support of dialogue practices. They also worked to build internal capacity through their "Dialogue Practitioner Program," training in the first 2 years of the project over 80 staff who, in turn, trained others and provided local support for the project.

The average daily population of the Virginia Department of Corrections from 2010 to 2012 was almost 90,000, with about 30,600 inmates housed in 45 secure facilities and another 59,000 people under community supervision in one of its 43 probation and parole districts.[xii] The Virginia Department of Corrections employs about 11,500 people systemwide. In 2012, Virginia had an incarceration rate of 451 per 100,000 residents, compared to a national incarceration rate of 480 and estimated its recidivism rate at 23.4 percent, among the lowest in the country and a notable decline from an estimated 28.3 percent for the 2004–2007 period.[xiii]

The joint project between Virginia and NIC formally began in early in 2011. The project was designed to reinforce the work, already under way, as part the Virginia Adult Reentry Initiative. Begun 2 years before Clarke arrived, Virginia's Adult Reentry Initiative was an ambitious effort to transform the way it helps people coming out of prisons to return to their families and communities.[xiv] As part of the initiative, the Virginia Department of Corrections implemented improved practices in such areas as the development of individualized case plans based upon a standard assessment and evidence-based programs to prepare people for their transition to and stabilization in the community. In addition, a major objective of the department's plans was to improve collaboration with all stakeholders and to develop a strategic and unified approach to prevent crime, minimize victimization, and improve public safety in the Commonwealth. The NIC Norval Morris project was designed to serve as a demonstration of how a workforce transformation process could be done and to assist the department in developing and implementing operating practices and behaviors to support a healing environment in its facilities and community

corrections offices.

In a memorandum of understanding between the department and NIC, signed in July 2011, the vision for the Norval Morris project was succinctly described. The memorandum proposed a workforce transformation project in support of a healing environment to:

> *"…focus initially on leadership and senior management and expand over time to involve and affect the entire organization culture, with both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Senior managers will become learning coaches in the development of a culture embracing trust, collaboration, and teamwork. They will also mentor middle managers who will, in turn, mentor line staff so that staff at all levels will learn and practice behaviors and communication skills that support offender change. In this way, offenders living in this healing environment will be exposed to increasing pro-social learning and will practice communications skills that will improve their chances for success."*

The project was, first and foremost, Virginia's project, led by the department's leadership and carried out with their own resources. NIC's direct financial contribution to the project was limited to a few items, including funding a new Search Conference, technical assistance on strategic planning delivered by J-SAT, and support for activates related to the Dialogue training. The basic strategy of embedding Dialogue in the department was to deliver training and coaching to a wider circle of people, starting with leadership and expanding through the organization. In Virginia, this meant first training the Executive Leadership Team of about 30 people, made up of the director, deputy directors, central office department heads, and regional directors, both for institutions and community corrections. On the heels of this training, there came more training for the Extended Leadership Team, which included wardens, superintendents, community corrections district heads, and additional department heads. There were about 120 people in all.

The training began in March 2012 with 2 days of training for the Executive Leadership Team and a day-long event for the Extended Leadership Team to introduce them to the basic concepts of dialogue. This was the beginning of a series of quarterly, week-long visits in which Garrett and Ball would work with the Executive Leadership Team, the Extended Leadership Team, and the Healing Environment Council. Training for yet another group was later squeezed into the schedule. These were 24 department staff (chosen from over 300 volunteers) to be trained as dialogue specialists to assist in the initiative and train staff in the field.

In a letter to all DOC employees in the spring of 2012, as the training was beginning to take off, Clarke summarized the initiative as he saw it[xv]. He wrote that since he had first introduced the concept of creating a healing environment the previous year:

> *"…there have been many discussions regarding a 'healing environment' and what it actually means for DOC. While our Executive Team developed the overarching description, 'a healing environment is one that fosters positive change and growth and increased public safety in our*

communities'. I believe the healing environment is best described at the local unit level...

"There are several key components of a healing environment. The first is an energetic and positive environment for staff and offenders which results from attitudes and behaviors we bring to and exhibit at work. The second part includes promoting practices that ultimately result in better public safety, less recidivism, fewer victims, and a safer, more productive work environment. The third critical factor involves each of us playing a crucial role in fostering understanding and communicating the elements of a healing environment with emphasis on the unique characteristics of that environment in our units."

During 2012, the entire Extended Leadership Team, made up of wardens, superintendents, community corrections district heads, and selected department heads, received the 2-day dialogue training. To keep the number of participants in the training sessions manageable, a third of the extended leadership was trained during each of the quarterly sessions. In 2013, the same group was brought back, but this time with their deputies. Again one third were trained during each of the quarterly trainings for 2 days. All of these sessions were also attended by the executive leadership from each of the three regions and central office.

The first set of dialogue specialists was recruited late in 2012. They received quarterly training onsite at the Virginia Academy for Staff Development near Richmond and intensive coaching from Garrett and Ball between the face-to-face training sessions. In late 2013, these dialogue specialists were "graduated" to become dialogue coaches and took up the role of helping to train the next wave of over 60 new specialists. This work has continued into 2014 and plans call for the department to continue its efforts after the Morris Project concludes in 2015.

Healing Environment Initiatives

In early 2014, NIC conducted a confidential survey of all wardens, superintendents, and community corrections district chiefs. An important feature of dialogue training had been that it included the development of a proposal by each unit head—for example, the warden, superintendent, or community corrections district chief—of a local healing environment initiative (HEI). The initiatives were presented and discussed during the training and then taken back to the individual facilities or district offices to be further developed by the local leadership and staff working together. The dialogue specialists were also tasked with training other staff in dialogue and serving as resources to staff in working dialogically on their healing initiatives. The result is that the department-wide Healing Environment Initiative was "scaled down" to the local level where hundreds of staff were introduced to dialogue and how it can be used to address a local issue or concern.

The local healing environment initiatives varied from one site to the next. In the survey of the extended leadership, the respondents described a wide range of activities. About 40 percent of the

initiatives they described in the survey were various kinds of staff recognition, programs to motivate or improve morale of staff, or program improvements. In over 60 percent of the initiatives described in the survey, however, there was a predominant focus on improving communications and creating a healing environment.

In most cases the use of dialogue, either as training or in working dialogically, was a central theme. One unit head reported that efforts to use dialogue created, "a more supportive and caring work environment. [The] Healing Environment is stressed daily." Another said they were:

> *"…creating an environment that promotes healthy conflict and achieves accountability…we need to engage in open, honest and passionate communication. Through productive, unfiltered dialogue we can cultivate ideas, sharpen one another, and achieve staff engagement, commitment and accountability."*

Still another said that, "The Healing Environment initiative is very positive and has grown into the general culture at our Unit. The concept of the Healing Environment is centered on positive communication, respect and professionalism."

One healing environment initiative was called "Communication Rocks!" The unit head said, "We have been using our new dialogue skills to change the way we talk to each other. We have dialogue groups that meet to discuss any issues that arise and we try to involve as many staff as we can."

Another said that, "We are actively teaching, monitoring, encouraging, and modeling the HE initiative at meetings and during administrative rounds. We are using dialogue as one skill to reach understanding with staff and offenders."

A district chief said that, "The Healing Environment Initiative in our district has been embraced by the staff. They continue to be supportive of each other and the ideas presented by one another."

Another said, "Our HE initiative is basically to recognize that this is something to embrace as it's just the right thing to do and to recognize the reward you feel when you can help someone by providing them with an environment that is supportive of them."

According to the survey, the initiatives enjoyed strong support from the wardens, superintendents, and community corrections district chiefs. Among this group, 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have seen specific benefits at our facility/office as a result of our Healing Environment Initiative." In response to the question, "I have seen changes in attitude, positive or negative, among the leadership at our facility/office that I believe are the result of the Healing Environment Initiative," 93 percent of wardens and superintendents and 88 percent of district chiefs agreed or strongly agreed, with all saying the changes had been positive. In response to similar questions about changes in attitude and behavior among staff, 88 percent said they had seen changes in attitudes, and 78 percent said they had seen changes in behavior. A majority of the

wardens/superintendents also said they had seen changes in inmate attitudes (57 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and even in inmate behavior at their institutions (68 percent agreed or strongly agreed). The district chiefs also said they had seen shifts in the attitudes among people under community supervision (75 agreed or strongly agreed) and in their behavior (53 percent of district chiefs agreed or strongly agreed).

The extended leadership of the department also reported substantial support and a high level of participation in the healing environment initiatives by their staff. When asked, how many of their staff they felt were "completely supportive" and "actively engaged" in the healing environment initiative at their facility or office, 64 percent of wardens/superintendents and 84 percent of district chiefs said "most" or "all" were supportive and engaged. When asked how many person-hours they estimated in total were being dedicated to their healing environment initiative, 53 percent said 20 hours or less, while 28 percent said 51 to 100 hours were being used, and 18 percent said more than 100 person-hours per month were being spent on the initiatives. Among the department's extended leadership there was strong support for the use of the initiatives and recognition that they were having a positive effect, had wide staff support, and that the burden on staff time was manageable.

The Urban Institute Evaluation of the Virginia initiative

In addition to other activities related to the project, NIC also funded the evaluation by the Urban Institute of the project in Virginia. Led by Drs. Shelli Rossman and Janeen Buck Wilson, the evaluation plan surveyed Virginia Department of Corrections staff to assess the effect of the Healing Environment Initiative on staff perceptions and attitudes. At the time of this writing, two of a planned three surveys have been completed, with the last of the three scheduled for mid-2014 and a final report on the project expected in 2015.

By the end of 2013, they had the evaluation team conduct two surveys of Virginia Department of Corrections full-time employees. The first survey was conducted during March to May 2012. All 11,135 full-time employees in the department were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate in the online survey. A total of 4,724 staff (42 percent of the total) responded. Survey 2 was conducted over a 7-week period between July and September 2013. As with the first administration, the survey invited all full-time staff (N=11,583) to participate and 4,520 (37 percent) did so. There were a total of 2,608 respondents who participated in both of the first two waves of the survey.[xvi]

In the staff surveys, both knowledge of and support for the Healing Environment Initiative was strong and in many cases grew from the first survey to the second one.[xvii] In the first survey, 63 percent of staff said they had heard about the initiative, while in the second survey more than a year later 97 percent said they had heard about it. Overall, 88 percent of survey 2 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I believe in the value of the Healing Environment

initiative," compared to 77 percent in survey 1. The pattern of strong and increasing support for the Initiative was reflected in other questions about it. In 2013, 86 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, "The HEI is a good strategy for this organization," and, "The Healing Environment Initiative serves an important purpose" (compared to 74 percent and 76 percent, respectively, who agreed or strongly agreed the year before).

One subject that, not surprisingly, came up among staff at all levels when the Healing Environment Initiative was discussed was how it would affect safety within the prisons. In the surveys, anywhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of staff said their job was a dangerous one. In 2012, 65 percent agreed that, "My job is a lot more dangerous than other kinds of jobs," 74 percent agreed that "I work in a dangerous job," and 65 percent said "In my job, a person stands a good chance of getting hurt." What is interesting is that these perceptions remained virtually unchanged from survey 1 to survey 2 just 14 months later. What did change was the perception that the changes taking place in the department were making their jobs less safe. In early 2012, a total of 67 percent of staff agreed that "All the changes going on around here have made my job much more dangerous." By mid-2013, only 23 percent of staff agreed that the changes were making their job more dangerous.

In fact, it appears that the job was becoming safer during this period. The total number of institutional charges for infractions of facility rules by inmates fell from 36,348 in 2010 (a rate of 11.8 per 1,000 inmates) to 29,803 (a rate of 10.0 per 1,000) by 2012. In 2013, there were 29,676 infractions, reflecting an increase in more serious infractions (almost 400 more) while less serious ones continued to decline (about 500 less). There had been four serious assaults on staff in 2010 and six in 2011, but only three in 2012 and none in 2013. There also had been one or two escapes each year in 2008–2011, but there were none in 2012 or 2013.[xviii]

Inmates were not the only ones who were behaving better.[xix] The total number and rate of disciplinary action against staff declined steadily over the 2010-2013 period. There were 400 disciplinary actions taken against staff in 2010, a rate of 34 per 1,000 staff. In 2011, there were 269 and by 2013 the number had fallen to 226 (a rate of 19.5 per 1,000). The decline was consistent across all levels of disciplinary actions, with serious, medium, and low levels all down. There were even less on-the-job injuries among staff, with 1,238 reported in 2010; 1,139 in 2011; and 1,013 in 2012.[xx] What were they doing to produce these shifts? It appears that one thing they were doing was talking a lot about creating a healing environment, and that message was cascading through the organization. When asked in the survey what activities they had participated in that discussed the Healing Environment Initiative, 62 percent of staff who took survey 2 said they had participated in dialogue circles, compared to just 8 percent only a little more than a year before, when survey 1 data was collected.

Harold Clarke, reflecting on the project in Virginia, summed up his views by saying:

"…we're in the business of creating public safety, and we know quite well how to build secure institutions. We know how to operate secure institutions…We have to do better than to simply incapacitate. And so, how do you do better than that? You do better than that by addressing the deficits, the needs of offenders and staff. And to address the deficits and needs of offenders and staff, you have to create the conditions for that to occur. And the conditions that need to be created are those, in my vision, that are readily in existence in a healing environment where the needs of staff and offenders are being addressed. So I am sold on the concept. I think it's a human thing…We have to evolve in our industry. If we don't evolve in our industry, it's going to be because of our lack of initiative and because of our lack of courage to do the right thing and our desire to embrace the past."

Next Steps

In May 2014, NIC made an award to the Urban Institute to complete its work on the Norval Morris Project in the Virginia DOC and the transfer to them the capacity to continue to do staff surveys. Under the award, Urban will:

1. Close out the three-wave Virginia DOC staff survey series and prepare a written report documenting the history and methodological details of the survey.
2. Develop a detailed report on the results of the three waves of the staff surveys.
3. Prepare for dissemination a public use data file of the three waves of the surveys which makes the data available for secondary analysis, while preserving the confidentiality of respondents.
4. Provide advice and technical assistance to the Virginia DOC research staff to help them use the public data file for their own planning, the transfer the staff survey to a suitable platform to allow them to continue to administer surveys to their staff in the future, and support to research staff in the analysis and use of quantitative data.

Also in May 2014, NIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Virginia DOC to assist them in transitioning to next stages in their work. The agreement provided funds to support the DOC in continued training in dialogue and developing a training and support infrastructure at the unit level. The Virginia DOC also agreed to aid the Urban Institute in finishing the evaluation, including providing performance and other data for analysis by Urban. The MOU, together with the award to the Urban Institute, will leave the department with a significantly expanded capacity and allow them to continue to build on the accomplishments of the past 3 years.

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[i] Jacobs made the remark at the first planning meeting for the Norval Morris Project on August 23, 2004 in Denver, Colorado.

[ii] See Jacobs, J. (2009), "Norval Morris as Penologist: An Exception Who Proved the Rule," in *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, 21:26-264; Morris, N., (1966), "Impediments to Penal Reform", *University of Chicago Law Review* 33:627-628.

[iii] See the J-SAT website at *http://www.j-sat.com/* for more information.

[iv] The meeting was held in Denver, Colorado on August 23, 2004. The participants were; Jeffery Beard, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, William Burrell, Temple University; Chis Innes, National Institute of Justice; Jim Jacobs, NYU Law School; Zack Del Pra, Adult Probation, Maricopa County (AZ); Joan Petersilia, University of California, Irvine; Larry Solomon, National Institute of Corrections; Reginald Wilkinson, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections.

[v] NIC's goals in the Norval Morris Project also quickly became linked to a broader organizational interest in integrating evidence based approaches into its own business practices. One result of this determination was the creation of a new Research and Evaluation Division within NIC and the recruitment of the author as its Chief. Due to the delays in creating both a division and a new Chief position, I did not arrive at NIC until 2006. The division was later renamed the Research and Information Services Division. It and the Chief's position was eliminated in 2014.

[vi] The purpose of this first step was to locate and organize the existing knowledge from a variety of disciplines in several topic areas. The first two topics were *transfer of innovation* and *organizational culture*, since these seemed the most relevant to the Project's design. J-SAT began culling through key categories of research on these two broad topics by contacting subject matter experts and thought leaders in several fields, utilizing search engines, and combing databases to establish bibliographies that were designed to be current, comprehensive, and sufficiently detailed to provide a meaningful framework for collaboration. On this basis, they identified initial subcategories and key words, which were used to identify research to enhance the developing framework, to provide topic depth, and to ensure efficient retrieval of information. Under the Organizational Culture area, the six subcategories were; Organizational Behavior; Performance; Change; Assessment; Leadership; and Evolution/History. Transfer of innovation subtopics included; Time Elements/Methods of Evaluation and Research, Communication Channels, Innovation Technologies, Strategies, and Social Systems.

[vii] One interesting problem in doing an expansive search of any literature is when to stop. Any literature has a tendency to begin to fold back upon itself. For example, the originators of a particular line of research or theoretical approach will continue to publish additional analysis, replications, and other refinements of their work. Other authors will test the originators work, analyze and discuss it, or simply recapitulate or recast the original results and insights. In the Norval Morris Project, we tried to identify the point at which any body of work could be considered a "mature literature". Once we had reached this point, it became less necessary to continue to spend project resources scanning all the possible literatures and, instead, focus on new and innovative sources.

While the decision will always be inexact, there are some signs that a literature has matured. These include; that there is a large volume research articles have already been identified, reviewed and catalogued; there are repetitions in the names and sources in the reference sections of many articles; many different studies are identified are on virtually the same subjects/topic, have similar hypotheses/problems, and report similar findings; that different on-line databases and other reference sites yield very few new articles when using the search terms; that there are a number of well-done studies and replications using experimental or strong quasi-experimental designs; and there are a significant number of secondary reviews of the literature or meta-analyses in a topic area. In research terms, this became the operational definition of a body of evidence.

[viii] Morris began, and edited the first two volumes of, the influential *Crime and Justice: A Review of the Research* series, which has been published by the University of Chicago Press since 1980. Volume 43 in the series, edited by Michael Tonry and titled, *Why Crime Rates Fall, and Why They Don't*, is scheduled for publication in October, 2014.

[ix] See Holman, P. (2010), *Engaging Emergence*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco (Holman mentions her experience with the Norval Morris Project in her book). See Holman's website, *http://peggyholman.com/papers/engaging-emergence/*

[x] The Workforce Development Topic Team members were; A.T. Wall, Rhode Island Corrections; Robert Guy, North Carolina Corrections (Retired); Chris Innes, National Institute of Corrections; Kaia Stern, Harvard Law School; Brad Bogue, J-SAT; Harold Clark, Massachusetts Department of Corrections; Tom O'Conner, Oregon Department of Corrections; Dana Wilks, Colorado Probation Department; Mike Masternak, CPS Human Resources; Nancy Cebula, People in Change, and; Tom Devane, Product Development.

The Population Reduction Team members were; Allen Beck, Bureau of Justice Statistics; Ed Rhine, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections; Jim Austin; JFA; Kaia Stern, Harvard Law School; Mike Haddon, Utah Department of Corrections; Patricia Caruso, Michigan Department of Corrections; Roger Werholtz, Kansas Department of Corrections; Tom Devane, Product Development; Chris Innes, National Institute of Corrections; Josh Stengel, J-SAT; Nancy Cebula People in Change; Dana Wilks, Colorado Probation Department, and; Brad Bogue, J-SAT.

[xi] See *http://dialogue-associates.com/* for information on Garrett and Ball's private sector work and *http://www.prisondialogue.org/* for information on the non-profit Prison Dialogue organization, founded by Garrett, they also actively support.

[xii] Virginia Department of Corrections, (2013) *State Responsible Offender Population Trends, FY2008 - FY2012*, Virginia Department of Corrections, Richmond. See, *http://vadoc.virginia.gov/about/facts/research/new-statsum/offenderpopulationtrends_fy08-fy12.pdf*

[xiii] The recidivism estimate was supplied by W.D. Jennings, Ph.D., Administrator, Research and Management Services Unit at the Virginia Department of Corrections. The 2004-2007 estimate is from; Public Safety Performance Project, (2011), *State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons*, Pew Center on the States, Washington, D.C.

[xiv] See Virginia Department of Corrections, (2010), *Virginia Adult Re-entry Initiative: The Four Year Strategic Plan, Executive Summary, July 2010 – June 2014*, Virginia Department of Corrections, Richmond. See, *http://vadoc.virginia.gov/documents/reentryInitiativeExecSummary.pdf*

[xv] Clarke, H. (2012), "Moving towards the Healing Environment", letter to all DOC Employees, April 16, 2012.

[xvi] Original plans called for the surveys to be conducted at 12-month intervals over a three-year period. As it happened the disruptions caused first by the March 2013 "sequester" of the Federal budget and the 16-day partial shutdown of the Federal government in October, 2013 interrupted the work on the surveys and delayed funding.

[xvii] Buck Wilson, J. and Rossman, S. (2013), "Measuring Support for and Influence of the Healing Environment Initiative: Wave 2 Analysis Update", briefing for the Virginia Department of Corrections Executive Team, Richmond, Virginia, December 3, 2013.

[xviii] These figures were supplied by W.D. Jennings, Ph.D., Administrator, Research and Management Services Unit at the Virginia Department of Corrections and are drawn for his research (personal communication on March 27, 2014) and from Virginia Department of Corrections, (2013) *State Responsible Offender Population Trends, FY2008 - FY2012*, Virginia Department of Corrections, Richmond. See, *http://vadoc.virginia.gov/about/facts/research/new-statsum/offenderpopulationtrends_fy08-fy12.pdf* .

[xix] These figures were supplied by W.D. Jennings, Ph.D., Administrator, Research and Management Services Unit at the Virginia Department of Corrections and are drawn for his research in a personal communication on March 27, 2014.

[xx] Virginia Department of Corrections, (2013) *State Responsible Offender Population Trends, FY2008 - FY2012*, p.15.