

## The National Institute of Corrections:

# Serving Jails for More Than 30 Years

By Virginia Hutchinson

Since 1976, the National Institute of Corrections has been the primary federal source of technical assistance, training and information services to jails. NIC provides services at no cost to the requesting agency.

Although jails may request services from various NIC divisions — such as the Community Corrections, Academy, and Transition and Offender Workforce Development divisions — most jail-specific services are housed within the Jails Division. The Jails Division works closely with other divisions on jail-related services, such as the Transition from Jail to the Community Initiative, which focuses on helping inmates successfully reintegrate into their communities after release.

Throughout its history, the NIC Jails Division has based its services on several key principles:

- Services must be of practical use to jails;
- Services must be based on a thorough understanding of the issues facing jails;
- Services are developed with recognition of the diversity among jails, in terms of, for example, size, age, resource levels and operational philosophy;
- Staff have a working knowledge of jail management and operations and are colleagues of the jail practitioners NIC serves;
- Staff work in partnership with jail practitioners to identify effective practices and share these with the field; and
- The Jails Division uses its limited resources as effectively as possible by addressing issues that are pervasive throughout jails, are critical to operations, and can be effectively addressed within its mission and resource constraints.

Based on these principles, the Jails Division currently provides training, technical assistance and information services under four initiatives: Jail Administration, Inmate Behavior Management, New Jail Planning, and Jail Standards and Inspections.

### Jail Administration

The Jail Administration Initiative includes training, technical assistance and materials on a wide variety of topics related to jail management and operations.

**Training programs and networks.** The Jails Division offers training on critical elements in jail administration for small and medium-size jails. It has recently revised both these programs — Administering the Small Jail and Jail Administration — to ensure their continued relevance and usefulness. This year, the division is developing a new program on administering jails with 1,000 or more beds. This course will take into account the administrative challenges unique to large jail systems. The division is working closely with a group of large jail administrators to shape its approach to the program and review the work as it progresses. NIC will begin conducting this program in its 2011 fiscal year.

In addition, the Jails Division continues to conduct Jail Resource Management and Jail as Part of County Government programs as part of this initiative. It created Jail Resource Management in response to many requests from jail administrators for help with developing and managing their budgets. The program focuses on how to identify and track resource needs, present and justify those needs, and manage the resources allocated to the jail.

Jail as Part of County Government addresses the often adversarial relationship between jail officials and their funding authorities. Its primary goal is to foster a more informed and productive relationship between the two entities. Jail officials attend with representatives of their funding authorities to discuss the role and functions of the jail, liability issues, jail resource needs, and the funding authorities' challenges in meeting competing demands for limited funds.

One of NIC's largest and most active networks is the Large Jail Network, designed for the top administrator of jails with 1,000 or more beds. The Jails Division sponsors two network meetings each year and hosts an electronic community forum for members. The division encourages administrators of all large jails to join the network and

benefit from the extensive information-sharing and peer training.

**Documents and DVDs.** The Jails Division has developed materials on various issues in jail administration, such as staffing analysis, budgeting, jail crowding, data collection and analysis, and criminal justice coordinating councils. These are available upon request and many can be downloaded from NIC's Web site at [www.nicic.gov](http://www.nicic.gov). The division recommends, at a minimum, that jail administrators have the following materials.

- *Beyond the Myths: The Jail in Your Community* — The Jails Division developed this 23-minute DVD primarily as a community education tool. Public misconceptions about jails are widespread, and they often result in a lack of support for professional, effective jail operations. Many jail officials have used the DVD in their presentations to community groups; some have aired it on local television stations; and some have placed it on their organizations' Web sites. Officials have also found the DVD effective in educating members of their funding authority and in introducing new staff members to the role and functions of local jails.
- *Jail Resource Issues: What Every Funding Authority Needs to Know* — This publication was written for members of the local funding authority who know little about jails. It is a concise document that zeros in on the critical characteristics of a well-run jail and the role of the funding authority in ensuring its jail has those characteristics. Many jail administrators have shared this with their funding authorities as a basis for better-informed discussions about jail issues and resource needs.
- *Sheriff's Guide to Effective Jail Operations* — This guide focuses on the sheriff's role in ensuring the jail is operating effectively. It is useful not only to sheriffs but also to chief executive officers who oversee jails not run by sheriffs.
- *Resource Guide for Jail Administrators* — This basic desk reference includes sound practices in jail administration and operations. It also provides information on the role of the jail administrator, an operational assessment checklist, and references for further information on specific topics. This document is helpful to both new and veteran jail administrators.

The most recently published document under the Jail Administration Initiative is *A Guide to Preparing for and Responding to Emergencies*. This covers information on leadership during crises, prevention of jail emergencies and emergency teams. It also includes self-audit checklists to help jails determine their level of emergency preparedness.

**Technical assistance.** The Jails Division conducts technical assistance under this initiative on a broad range of

topics identified by individual jails requesting the assistance. These have included general operational assessments, assessments of medical operations, assistance with developing criminal justice coordinating committees, reviews of security practices, and more.

## Inmate Behavior Management

The Inmate Behavior Management Initiative includes services on direct supervision jails and assistance related to effectively managing inmates in any jail, regardless of the physical plant design.

**Training.** This year, the Jails Division is extensively revising its training programs on direct supervision. It is developing a new program on the administrator's role in ensuring that direct supervision principles are fully integrated into the design and operation of the jail. Additionally, the division is revising *How to Run a Direct Supervision Housing Unit: Training for Trainers* so that it addresses not only the role of the housing officer but also that of the first-line supervisor in supporting the officer. In fiscal year 2011, the Jails Division will begin conducting both these programs.

Several years ago, the Jails Division began to offer training on the key elements in effectively managing inmate behavior in any type of jail, regardless of design. The division's efforts in this area were substantially informed by its ongoing work with direct supervision, objective classifica-

tion and inmate supervision. The Jails Division recognized that, although direct supervision jails were highly successful in reducing negative inmate behavior, not all local jurisdictions had the opportunity to build a new direct supervision facility. Regardless of their jail's design, however, all local jurisdictions remained responsible for operating safe and secure facilities. To help all jails reduce negative inmate behavior and improve safety and security, the Jails Division identified six key elements in managing inmate behavior, then developed related training services. The elements are:

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- Assessing the risks and needs of inmates at various points during their stay for accurate inmate classification;
- Assigning inmates to housing so they are placed where they can be managed most effectively;
- Meeting inmates' basic needs;
- Defining and conveying expectations for inmate behavior;
- Supervising inmates; and
- Keeping inmates productively occupied.

The Inmate Behavior Management training program focuses on these elements, explaining how and why they work to improve inmate behavior, enhance safety and security, and help create an overall better working environment for staff and living environment for inmates.

**Documents and DVDs.** Jail administrators who would like to assess their implementation of the direct supervision principles may request the *Self-Audit Instrument for Administrators of Direct Supervision Jails* from the NIC Information Center. *Jails in America: A Report on Podular Direct Supervision* is a DVD that gives an overview of direct supervision and can be used to educate citizens and local officials. Many jails also use this as part of their staff training on direct supervision. This year, the Jails Division will publish a new document titled *Direct Supervision Jails: The Role of the Administrator*.

The Jails Division recently published *Inmate Behavior Management: The Key to a Safe and Secure Jail*, which concisely explains the six elements to effectively manage inmate behavior. The division is also developing a set of documents that will help guide jail practitioners in implementing each of the elements. The first, *Programs and Activities: Tools for Managing Inmate Behavior*, will be published this fiscal year.

**Technical assistance.** The Jails Division provides on-site technical assistance to individual jurisdictions on direct supervision and on each of the six elements of inmate behavior management.

## New Jail Planning

The NIC Jails Division has provided information, training and technical assistance on the new jail planning process since the 1970s. The division has a continuum of services that coincide with the major components of the process. Through the years, many local jurisdictions have cited the benefits of this process in terms of cost-savings and in building a jail that meets the needs of their communities.

**Technical assistance and training.** Through on-site technical assistance, the Jails Division conducts jail and justice-system assessments for jurisdictions that are con-

sidering new jail construction. The jail is reviewed, and the policies and practices of the local criminal justice system are assessed for their effect on the inmate population (size, makeup and length of stay). This gives local officials a foundation for further assessing system policies and practices and for more accurately determining their detention needs.

For jurisdictions that have made the commitment to build a new jail, the Jails Division offers a training program called Planning of New Institutions: Taking Control of the Process. This focuses on predesign planning activities and the need for local officials to maintain control of the early planning process to ensure that the jail meets their communities' needs.

Managing Jail Design and Construction is a training program for jurisdictions that are beginning to design a new jail. It covers the knowledge and skills participants need to ensure that the facility's design reflects their operational philosophy and will facilitate their desired operational practices.

For jurisdictions within 12 to 18 months of opening their new jail, the Jails Division conducts on-site technical assistance to train selected staff members on activities required for a successful transition to the new jail. These include, for example, testing operating scenarios, writing policies and procedures, ordering equipment and supplies, determining the final staffing plan, developing and implementing a staff training plan, and planning the logistics of moving inmates and staff into the new jail.

**Documents and DVDs.** Local officials can get an introduction to the new jail planning process by reading NIC's *Jail Planning and Expansion: Local Officials and Their Roles*. The division has also published documents on getting community support for a new jail, new jail site selection, jail design review, and how to make the transition to a new jail. The most recent document, published this year, is *Jail Capacity Planning Guide: A Systems Approach*, which

The Jails Division welcomes phone calls and e-mail questions about its services. Contact information for Jails Division staff members, along with their program areas, is listed below:

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- Jail standards and inspections, inmate transition from jail to the community

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- Direct supervision jails, Jail as Part of County Government program, Jail Resource Management program

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- Jail Administration program, Planning of New Institutions program, jail and justice system assessments, jail crowding, Large Jail Network

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- Administering the Small Jail program, Managing Jail Design and Construction program, transition to a new jail

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- Inmate Behavior Management program, inmate classification, mentally ill inmates in jails, general technical assistance

discusses jail population forecasting and management within the larger framework of the policies and practices of the local criminal justice system. It describes a comprehensive strategy to identify, address and manage the factors that drive the demand for jail beds.

This year, the division has added a DVD on the new jail planning process to its array of materials. The DVD is a 20-minute informational tool that gives an overview of the process and stresses its underlying concepts: 1) effective planning; 2) control of the project by the jail's owners and operators; and 3) inclusion of a wide variety of citizens, local officials, and jail staff at various stages in the process. The DVD is useful in educating citizens, local officials, jail staff and others about new jail planning.

## Jail Standards and Inspections

The Jails Division continues to support the development and implementation of jail standards. Currently, 33 states have some form of jail standards. The standards vary widely among states, and not all of these states have inspection systems. In recent years, the division has seen some states abandon standards altogether, shift their standards from mandatory to voluntary, or maintain some level of standards but do away with inspection. Chief jail inspectors in states that have standards voiced their need for NIC's support, and in 1999, the Jails Division responded by establishing a network for them. The chief jail inspectors meet once each year for information-sharing and peer training, and

they are active in an electronic community forum. Biannually, the Jails Division also offers training for new jail inspectors on how to conduct a jail inspection. Additionally, the division has published three documents related to standards. The first, *Jail Standards and Inspection Programs: Resource and Implementation Guide*, provides information on how to develop or update jail standards and inspections programs. The second, developed in conjunction with state jail inspection agencies, is *Jail Inspection Basics: An Introductory Self-Study Course for Jail Inspectors*. The third document, *Jail Inspection Basics: Supervisor's Guide*, helps supervisors work with their staff as they complete the jail inspectors' self-study course. Finally, state agencies or other organizations that want to develop or revise their jail standards and inspection systems may request technical assistance from the Jails Division.

For more information on how to obtain NIC's services, documents and DVDs, readers may visit NIC's Web site at [www.nicic.gov](http://www.nicic.gov). To request hard copies of documents, readers should call the NIC Information Center at (800) 877-1461.

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