

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**Direct Supervision Jails Versus the Traditional Jail Models:
Is Direct Supervision Safer and More Cost Efficient?**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
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**By
Charles V. Jones**

**Brazos County Sheriffs Office
Bryan, Texas
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ABSTRACT

A comparison of direct supervision jails versus the traditional jail models is relevant to contemporary law enforcement as it provides information to the law enforcement community regarding the cost efficiencies relative to the operations of all jail facilities. This comparison is particularly important because county jails are the most costly part of any county budget (Cory & Gettinger, 1984). Comparison of direct supervision jails versus the traditional jail models provides information reflecting the efficiencies of maintenance and operations. A jail that is safer to maintain and operate should reduce intended or accidental injury, medical costs, and civil suits associated with each.

The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the different jail models that is easily understood and to define the fundamental differences in the facilities. This research will provide an understanding of where most jail expenses are incurred, why the county jail is such a large expense, and which jail model is least expensive to build and operate. This research will also encompass the jails' safety and security as these two issues play a large role in the expense of jail operations.

Methods of inquiry include: tours of five jails, books, magazines, journals, internet sites, and a survey of eight jail facilities. The jail tours included both direct supervision and traditional jail models. Seven direct supervision facilities and one traditional jail (an intermittent supervision facility) were surveyed. This research discovered, in most cases, that direct supervision jails' were safer for inmates and officers. These facilities were cheaper to build, maintain, and operate. In most cases, when human error does not interfere, operating costs are less as well.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem or issue to be examined considers whether or not a direct supervision jail is truly more cost effective with higher levels of officer and inmate safety than the traditional jail models. The author intends to explain what direct supervision and the traditional jail models are. A brief history of the trend to direct supervision in the national jail setting will be examined. Last, the author will attempt to show that the direct supervision jail is, in fact, more cost efficient and safer for officer and inmate population alike.

The relevance of having a safer and more cost efficient jail to the law enforcement community is that these topics will greatly impact budget through well spent funds on a safer, cheaper, and better secured jail. These items will have a direct role in reducing the possibility of costly lawsuits. Fewer lawsuits will mean less has to be paid in litigation fees and medical bills. Having a safer, more cost -effective jail will contribute to better public opinion, which keeps commissioners and sheriffs in service and paying detention officers for the doing their job professionally. One possibility for the poor public opinion is that the press can give a poor review of the sheriff's office. The sheriff and commissioners then have to worry about job security, and this will most certainly effect sheriff's office funding and salary increases.

The purpose of this research is to investigate if it is cost effective as well as if it creates a safer work environment if a department transitions into a direct supervision jail setting. Several direct supervision jails will be visited, and there will be an attempt to discover if there are fewer officer or inmate assaults. There will also be a look into the cost effectiveness factor, specifically, by doing a comparison of the different facilities'

operating costs per inmate and building costs per inmate. Last, the author will research if the direct supervision jail has spent less in medical bills, legal fees, and lawsuit settlements.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not a direct supervision jail is more cost effective and safer for detention officers and inmates. The question to be asked must also encompass the different areas that can and do contribute to jail costs and operation. Some of these areas may be jail operational costs per inmate per day, building costs per inmate per day, and medical costs, as well as lawsuits that may result from inmate fights or officer assaults.

The intended method of inquiry includes tours of five different jails that use direct supervision and the traditional jail models; books; magazine articles; journal articles; and internet sites on direct supervision, including some county operated direct supervision sites. The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research will show that, in most cases, a direct supervision jail is safer for inmates and officers. A direct supervision jail is cheaper to build, and it will be shown that the operating costs are cheaper or comparably close enough to be outweighed by the building costs of the jail.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research or be influenced by the conclusions because there is no higher cost than the operational costs a county jail accrues on a month-to-month basis (Parish, 2004; Cory & Gettinger, 1984). The most costly endeavor that any law enforcement agency will have to undergo in its lifetime is the building of a new jail facility. If direct supervision is comparably cheaper overall, coupled with a safer living/working environment for inmates and law enforcement, then

this shift to a direct supervision facility will save the sheriff's office millions of dollars through the lifetime of the jail.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Direct supervision is defined as an inmate management mode of operation where inmates are supervised by officers within their living environment and without secure barriers between the inmates and staff. This continual direct contact and interaction between staff and inmates promotes a positive environment proven to reduce tensions and assaults by inmates on staff and other inmates (Krasnow, 1998). Direct supervision is the most proactive supervision style. Two other types of supervision are indirect and intermittent supervision. Indirect supervision has an officer in a secured control room with a clear line of sight of multiple inmate pods from which he/she can summon a response team if there is trouble. Intermittent supervision, which is the most commonly used, places an officer patrolling the inmate living areas intermittently from secured hallways where they will have no contact with the inmate population. Officers only enter inmate pods when multiple officers are present. This observation style may also use closed circuit observation and audio equipment (Phillips & Griebel, 2003).

According to Wener (2005), in the early 1960s, the attorney general began looking for more innovative correctional programs and facilities. The constant push from the attorney general's office led to the evolution of the prison guard into the corrections officer in the early 1970s. The correctional officer counseled the prisoners more actively, which led to the officers working directly with the prisoner population more often. In 1974, these prior events, along with pressure from the attorney general's office, spawned the opening of three federal correction facilities that utilized a direct

supervision model. The three federal facilities were opened in New York, Chicago, and San Diego. These facilities were not immediately embraced, but the direct supervision concept was clearly a success. The concept placed the more proactive correctional officer in a normalized environment that utilized fixtures, furnishings, and materials that were not institutional grade. Psychologically, this environment, along with correctional officers being present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, helped encourage positive behavioral changes. These changes were seen in the reduction of vandalism and the reduction of inmate-on-inmate assaults as well as assaults on the correctional officers.

Cost efficiency and safety issues seem to remain intertwined because they affect each other. With injury comes medical bills and lawsuits, so the safer the county can keep the inmate population and their officers, the more money that can inherently be saved in the county budget. Cost efficiency can be broken down into two broad categories. The categories are county jail building costs and county jail operational costs. The county jail building cost is the cost to erect the facility, building supplies, and the interest on the bonds purchased to finance the building. The operational costs include officer salaries; inmate necessities, such as food and medical help/ assistance/ insurance; maintenance; officer training; and building upkeep. When comparing building costs to the operational costs of the jail, although the initial building costs are quite staggering, the operational costs over the 30-year life of the jail is almost twice as much in most cases.

According to Cory and Gettinger (1984), a cost comparison was shown using real numbers for a hypothetical situation. They hypothetically had a 500-bed facility with a construction cost of \$61,015 per bed. This figure comes out to approximately \$30

million. Then, they added hidden costs and the inflation over the three-year building cycle, and the number went up to approximately \$45 million. The jail was paid for by bonds on a 20-year note at 10% interest, and the total construction cost was calculated at \$135 million dollars. The operating costs were then figured by using a conservative estimate of \$14,000 per inmate per year (approximately \$30 a day), which totaled to about \$7 million a year. Seven million a year for an average jail life of 30 years is \$210 million. That would be a total taxpayer cost of \$350 million for a 500 bed, \$30 million dollar jail. The numbers do not change with time; they just get bigger, and the gap between building costs and operational costs increases.

Wener (2006) found that manpower and vandalism were the two biggest contributors to operational costs, and he obtained several operational cost comparisons. Dade County reported the need for 123 officers less in their direct supervision complex versus the projected staffing for a traditional jail model. Wener's (2006) comparisons noted, from a number of National Institute of Corrections' audits, that commercial grade furniture in direct supervision dorms had low breakage counts and had very low repair costs. He reported that the officers in the Manhattan House of Detention claimed 1,810 fewer sick days than officers of equivalent facilities in New York, which resulted in \$250,000 savings in overtime pay for the Manhattan House of Detention. Wener (2006) reported finding a document, which found no savings in staffing for direct supervision versus the traditional jails (as cited in Williamson, 1999). Last, there was a report showing a 60% increase in staffing for the direct supervision facilities (as cited in Bigelow, 1993).

During the 30-year life expectancy of a jail, 90% of its total cost will be the operating expense, while only 10% are from the initial construction (Cory & Gettinger, 1984; Parish, 2004). According to the National Institution of Corrections (1999), about 70% to 80% of jail operating costs can be attributed to officers' salaries and benefits.

Vandalism does not compare to lawsuits or salaries, but it does affect the county budget. According to Wener (2006), the Contra Costa jail had significant improvements in their vandalism rates. The number of damaged mattresses dropped from 150 per year to zero in two years. Costa also reported a drop from two television repairs a week to two television repairs in two years. Last, this jail reported a drop from 99 sets of inmate clothes destroyed per week to 15 sets in two years.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not a direct supervision jail facility is more cost effective to build and operate than the traditional jail models. The author will examine if direct supervision facilities are safer for the inmate and officer population. Next, the author will show how the operating cost is comparable or less for a direct supervision jail than for the traditional jail models. The operating costs will encompass information on vandalism reduction, reduced health costs, and reduced civil suits due to injury. The author will show that less is spent on officers' wages and benefits because a smaller amount of officers are needed to run each facility safely and effectively.

It is hypothesized that a direct supervision facility will have a lower building cost. The researcher believes that in addition to the lower building costs, the direct supervision facility will have a competitive operating cost when compared to traditional

jail models. The direct supervision facilities should prove to be safer and better managed, which will show reduced vandalism costs and medical expenses. The medical expenses will be easily evident by an extreme reduction in the number of inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-officer assaults.

The method of inquiry will include several different sources. Research will be examined through books, magazines, and articles. Further information will be obtained through internet sites, touring several direct supervision facilities, and through the use of a survey that will be sent to several direct supervision facilities and a single intermittent supervision facility. The instrument that will be used to measure the author's findings regarding the subject of direct supervision jails versus the traditional jail models will include a questionnaire for several direct supervision facilities and an intermittent supervision facility.

The size of the survey will consist of six questions, distributed to 11 participants from Texas county jails. The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in four completed questionnaires. While the response rate was low, four surveys can provide enough information for a basic comparison of direct supervision versus the traditional jail models. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by the author prior to publishing the findings.

FINDINGS

The author gained information from several sources in finding out whether direct supervision jail facilities were truly more cost effective and safer than the traditional jail models. Three jail types were toured: three direct supervision jails, one indirect supervision jail, and an intermittent supervision facility. The key elements looked for in

these tours were control of the inmate population, temperament of officers and inmates, cleanliness, and possible safety and security breaches. The three direct supervision facilities all had their own design and their own temperament.

Collin County was the first jail that was toured. The facility was unbelievably clean, and the staff and inmates prided themselves in that and stated it stays that way because they clean four times a day. A few inmates in the dorm were spoken to, and they were respectful and even considerate to a point. These inmates were considered to be respectful because they were mannerly with each other and the staff, and they eagerly answered questions about the jail instead of ignoring officers or attempting to obtain something for their cooperation. The inmate population, when asked, stated the others were of a similar mentality (cooperative and mannerly) because they wanted to stay in this living environment while they were incarcerated. The inmates stated if they acted out, they would quickly lose their privileges and move to a less lenient housing area. The officers seemed to enjoy their work and diligently answered any questions that were forwarded. The security was a double door controlled from outside the dormitory in a master control room. This is a considerable measure and is what jail standards dictate for maximum security inmates. The inmates were safer because the officer had a clear line of sight to the whole tank and could intervene if she/he saw a potential problem forming. The last thing inquired about was officer safety. Collin County reported three officer assaults last year, and they house approximately 890 inmates.

The other two direct supervision facilities were Galveston and Montgomery county jails. Galveston housed up to 1,240 inmates, and Montgomery County housed about 1,100 inmates. These two facilities, while not as immaculate in cleanliness, were

still much cleaner than the indirect and the intermittent supervision facility. These facilities shared the same inmate and officer mentality as Collin County and showed to be physically safer for inmates and officers when compared to alternative jail types.

The next jail that was visited was an indirect supervision facility in Fort Bend County. Fort Bend County displayed a well-kept facility. The officers seemed happy with few exceptions, and the inmates, while hesitant, would still converse freely with officers that passed by to check on the supervising officer and the inmate population. Security was just as tight as the direct supervision facilities, except officers did not have the interaction with inmates that would be seen at the direct supervision jails. Officers could see all areas from their enclosed picket, but the officer could not walk directly to the inmates having a conversation in the corner. The lack of interaction detracts from the officer's ability to proactively control the housing area; instead, he/she must react to an inmate being attacked or destroying the tank.

The last facility observed was an intermittent supervision facility in Brazos County. Brazos County has a facility that is split between two locations, and they house a total of approximately 585 inmates between the two facilities. Control of the inmate population was typical of most intermittent facilities; the officers controlled the hallways and tried to catch the inmates doing something against the rules. This housing type does not promote a proactive approach to inmate supervision. The facility is more dangerous because of the housing type, which is evidenced by the number of officer and inmate assaults. The officer's temperament to their jobs was sporadic, and the inmates were seen to display an officer versus inmate mentality; therefore, it was hard to get the inmates into a civilized conversation without resistance. The officers' job

routine included check sheets, but in this environment, the officers can only respond to problems that are called in by the inmate population or happen to be observed by the officers themselves. The jail was well maintained and clean but showed years of wear. All parts of this jail were extremely secure, and the safety measures seemed to be well in place for this supervision style.

A questionnaire was sent to 11 counties, but only four of them were returned. The questionnaire had six questions that concerned the number of assaults for inmates and officers as well as the building and operating cost of the jail. The final question on the questionnaire involved litigation and medical fees, but the author received almost no response to the question, so a comparison could not be drawn. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Collin County maintains about 890 inmates. They reported three officer assaults (.3%) and 139 reported inmate assaults (15%) in the previous fiscal year. Montgomery County houses about 1,100 inmates. They reported zero officer assaults (0%) and 115 inmate assaults (10%). Denton County houses about 470 inmates. They reported one officer assault (.2%) and 24 inmate assaults (5%) in the previous fiscal year. Brazos County was the only intermittent supervision facility to respond to the questionnaire, and they house about 585 inmates. Brazos County reported five officer assaults (.8%) and 116 inmate assaults (19%) in the previous fiscal year. The numbers of assaults in these comparisons are relatively close, but when comparing Brazos County's inmate population and relative assaults, it is clear that this intermittent facility has more problems with assaults on officers and inmates. Although there was no return on

medical expense and litigation, it is fair to assume that with these assaults, there would be medical bills and, in some cases, lawsuits.

Building costs in Collin County were estimated, in 2006, at 20 million dollars for 120 beds. They reported a total operating cost of 69 dollars per inmate. Building costs in Denton County were reported, in 2000, at 12 million dollars for 384 beds. They reported a total operating cost of 60 dollars per inmate. Montgomery County did not give any information on these questions. Brazos County was the only intermittent facility to respond to the questionnaire, and they reported, in 2000, a 4.6 million dollar addition of 145 beds. They reported an operating cost of 43 dollars a day per inmate in jail related costs only. No valid comparison can be drawn at this time with this information.

In short, this information tends to prove that the cost savings are inconsistent and will depend on the facility's individual goals. Texas jail standards require one officer to 48 inmates, which is invariably how many officers can be counted on to be employed and working on any given shift. Vandalism is shown to be greatly reduced through the comparisons displayed earlier, and the commercial grade furniture is much cheaper than the institutional grade furniture required in the traditional jail settings. Operating costs can be comparable or cheaper in a direct supervision facility than the traditional jail models. The building costs are cheaper through the requirements of less institutional grade materials and more dormitory style housing areas that have fewer walls, steel doors, and locks. There is a reduction in inmate assaults and in officer assaults, which proves that direct supervision is a safer housing environment when properly managed.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not a direct supervision jail was more cost effective and safer than traditional jail models. The cost effective part of the question evaluated and compared the several jails' building costs. Next, the evaluation inquired into their operating cost per inmate. Last, it did some research into vandalism and the actual construction materials needed. The purpose of this research was to help the legal system and, in particular, Texas county sheriffs. This research creates a better understanding of what a direct supervision jail is, the cost effectiveness of the jail, and the improved security within a direct supervision jail facility as compared to the traditional jails that are used across the state and country.

The research question focused on inmate and officer safety in direct supervision jails and traditional jail models. The research question also focused on the cost effectiveness between the traditional jails and the direct supervision facilities. Cost effectiveness was evaluated through the building costs, the operational costs, and some key issues affect the operating costs and safety. Primarily, these issues were vandalism, construction grade versus institutional grade building materials, inmate-on-inmate assaults, and inmate-on-officer assaults.

The researcher hypothesized that direct supervision jail facilities would be safer for inmates and officers when compared to the traditional jail models. It was also felt that direct supervision jails were more cost-effective in their building costs when compared to traditional jail models. Last, it was believed that the direct supervision jails operating costs would be more cost-effective than the traditional jail models or at least comparable enough to be outweighed by the building costs and other expenses

considered. The researcher concluded that the direct supervision jails were safer for inmates and officers when compared to traditional jails. The researcher also found that direct supervision jail facilities were more cost effective in their building costs and were comparable or less in the operating costs when considering manpower, officer salaries, vandalism, and supply replacements.

The findings of the research supported the hypothesis. The reason the findings support the hypothesis is due to the enormous amount of research that been done on developing this custody style at the state and, particularly, the federal level. In addition, the findings support the hypothesis because the few jails that responded to the questionnaires showed cost savings with enhanced safety. Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because of the lack of research that has been performed on direct supervision jail facilities at a county level and the small number of agencies surveyed with this questionnaire. The questionnaire used poor word choice, which caused a lack of clarity and resulted in different agencies reporting different types of information for the same question.

The study of direct supervision jails versus traditional jail models is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because there is no more costly endeavor to any county budget than building a new jail, and the largest part of any yearly county budget is maintaining and staffing their current jail facility. Any county sheriff who has to operate or build a jail stands to benefit from the results of this research because the direct supervision jail style is cost efficient, it can be operated effectively, and is easier to safely maintain.

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APPENDIX

To: Sheriff or Jail Administrator

From: Sgt. Charles V. Jones Brazos County Sheriffs Office

Date: 12-14-2007

Subject: Questionnaire for Administrative Research Paper to Benefit Texas County Jails

You are receiving this questionnaire via email or mail because I found your offices listed in the National Institute of Corrections Database as Sheriffs Office/ Detention Facilities that operate Direct Supervision Housing in your jail facilities. I am currently doing an A.R.P. for the Bill Blackwood Leadership Command College and I hope you are willing to assist me with some statistics from your jail. PLEASE answer the following questions concerning the safety and cost effectiveness of your facility and email them back to me or mail them to Sgt. Charles V. Jones at **1700 Highway 21 W. in Bryan, TX 77803**. I understand your are busy with the holidays so take your time but try to respond by January 31, 2008. Thank You in advance for benefiting our Texas jails with your knowledge.

Officer and Inmate Safety

1. In your Direct Supervision Jail or wing of jail how many officer assaults occurred in the past fiscal year?
2. In your Direct Supervision Jail or wing of jail how many inmate assaults occurred in the past fiscal year?
3. If applicable how do these numbers compare to the indirect supervision areas of the facility?

Cost Effectiveness

1. What was the Building Cost of your direct supervision jail or expansion and when.
2. What is the Operating Cost per Inmate? Direct Supervision and if applicable Indirect?
3. If applicable what was spent on Litigation and or Medical Fees in relation to inmate or officer assault in the Direct Supervision Jail and if applicable the Indirect Supervision area?