Positive Interaction Program

# Introduction

Aristotle distinguishes between two different kinds of virtues. The first being intellectual virtue, this is developed through teaching and the second is moral virtue which is developed through practice. We seek to create the circumstances where prisoners are encouraged to develop strong moral character and virtues through practice. We understand that to place too much emphasis on rules results in not enough emphasis placed on character and responsibility. As we work to develop a particular moral virtue, it is clear individuals must practice the specific acts which are attributed to the virtue they seek to grow. Within these efforts, certain conditions are necessary to actually attain this virtue so that it may become second nature:

1. One must know what the right thing is
2. One must intend to do the right thing because it is the right thing
3. One's right actions must be the products of one's own "firm and unchangeable character" - one's behavioral patterns must be habitual or second nature

# Overview

The Positive Interaction Program is designed for staff to recognize, verbally acknowledge, and document positive actions of individual prisoners that extend beyond "following the rules". The documented positive actions would be recorded in a location similar to that which warnings and conduct reports are stored, this serves the purpose of allowing equal access and visibility to each. This record of positive actions would be considered in the same circumstances that one's warning card and conduct report history are currently considered; such as work opportunities, education opportunities, and placement.

# Goals

1. **Develop a more complete image of individual prisoners:** As individual prisoners develop in their rehabilitative plan, it is necessary to acknowledge that each prisoner is not limited to the crimes they committed. As the prison system grows in its understanding of the needs of those within their care, it becomes necessary to have a full picture of who each individual is as an individual. Through the current model of only documenting and acknowledging the negative behaviors, there is only one standard to be judged, the level of bad the person is or has been. It does not allow for an assessment of risk or individual growth and progress.
2. **Create a culture of positive engagement with reduced hostility:** Through encouraging staff to focus on and acknowledge not only the rule infractions committed by prisoners, but also the positive actions performed that extend beyond the rules, this continued behavior is encouraged within the prison population. It is shown that when people are trained to look for something specific, they begin to see it everywhere; when staff is trained only to seek "wrong" behavior, it

becomes all they can see. When prisoners are trained to view staff as adversarial, they will adapt to this view going forward as well. However through the tracking of inmates' positive engagement trust can begin and this will afford staff the opportunity to use comparative analyses to accurately assess and to de-escalate potentially tense situations.

1. **Establish trust through positive interactions between staff and prisoners:** Through increasing the amount of positive interaction between staff and prisoners, we create the conditions for each to see the other as something other than an adversary; thus opening the door to trust. In the efforts to maintain a safe institution where prisoners are able to build their moral character on their way back to society, encouraging positive and humane interactions with authority and other inmates can increase the likelihood that this trust and moral character will extend beyond this particular prison and into society.
2. **Encourage proactive engagement in rehabilitative plan by staff and prisoners:** Within engagement in the rehabilitative process, prisoners will gain the practice of doing positive activities which enables individuals to create better habits. The participation of staff will enable each prisoner to track their own progress, to understand the development and receive the immediate encouragement and response from their positive actions.

**Specifications**

As an introductory program, the Positive Interaction Program may begin as a pilot program on one unit within Stanley Correctional. The units in Stanley hold 300 prisoners divided equally among three wings. There is typically four security staff members assigned to each shift on each unit. The ability to isolate each unit will reduce the amount of staff required to participate in a trial project.

The physical layout of Stanley, including the limited number of staff within the unit, will allow for an objective trial run of the Positive Interaction Program. The staff that will be chosen to work the unit receiving the trial run should be willing and in agreement to fully implement the program. After staff is selected for participation in the program, staff will be encouraged and even trained to identify the positive activities the program is looking for. In the same manner that staff is currently trained to spot rule infractions, these staff should be trained to spot positive actions and encouraged to acknowledge and document the e actkms.

The documented positive actions should be kept in a similar location as the documented negative actions; rule infractions. It is currently a fact that any staff member can locate every warning that a prisoner received within the past year and every conduct report every prisoner received throughout their incarceration with ease, but there exists no method of reviewing any positive actions of any prisoner at any time during their incarceration. This system does not allow for a clear view of prisoners, the view is designed to be focused only on the negative.

Through the implementation of this program, prisoners will be able to build their reputation in a positive manner. This current prison system is not designed to allow the prisoner to have a direct and positive impact on their environment, this program changes this system immediately. What better way to show a prisoner that they can do positive things than by acknowledging the positive things they do?

It is important to note that the kinds of positive actions we are looking to promote and document may range from major achievements, to minor assistances. For instance, volunteering to do extra work, helping a fellow prisoner understand something, lending a hand to someone who needs help; any number of things that can be witnessed during the day and traditionally ignored. The purpose is to build habits of positive actions and allow these actions to have a voice as well.

**Metrics for Tracking Results**

1. **Record unit conduct reports - number and type:** Compare the number of conduct reports written on prisoners during the course of the trial run against the number of conduct reports written on the same unit prior to implementations. Compare number of conduct reports written on prisoners within the Positive Interaction Program with those written on prisoners housed on other units.
2. **Record conduct reports written by individual staff members:** Compare conduct reports written by individual staff members that are participating in the Positive Interaction Program with the number and type of conduct reports written by the same staff members prior to the implementation of the Positive Interaction Program.
3. **Record request for programing by prisoners - educational, treatment, etc.:** Compare the number of requests for participation in programing from the prisoners within the Positive Interaction Program with those written from the same unit prior to implementation of the program. The requests for participation in programming may also be compared to the requests sent by prisoners who are living on other units.