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## **Working Behind Bars, General Rules for Penitentiary Employees**

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**Abstract:** At first glance, working in a penitentiary unit seems quite simple: the employees provides security, accommodation, food, hygiene items, clothing when needed and the possibility of daily recreation for the imprisoned persons and inmates are waiting for the time to re-enter the society. In fact, things are much more complex. The objective of the research is to identify the problems faced by prison staff, other than those clearly regulated by the normative acts as well as to establish the manner of action in case of such difficult situations. I approached this topic because it is of interest both to the new staff employed in such a complex and stressful institution and to the long-term employees in this field. In this “gray” environment, which is in a continuous tension and transformation, new situations always appear that initially seem impossible to solve, situations whose solution is not specified in laws or regulations. Prisons and convicts have been a topic of great interest recently, both in the media and in the legislation, where many changes have taken place for the benefit of persons deprived of their freedom. All this has overshadowed the other human element of the prison environment - the prison staff, which in addition to working in a very dangerous environment and sometimes have to manage people who have nothing to lose, also face the feeling of social isolation due to the numerous restrictions that come with choosing this profession. The long-term negative effects of working with inmates, as well as the unwanted habits that the employees involuntarily acquire due to the nature of the job, should not be neglected, but rather studied and stopped as much as possible.

**Keywords:** rights, information, adaptation, orientation, correctness

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## 1. Introduction

It is said that very few people in the world do what they love in life. Society offers different jobs, some more pleasant, others not at all pleasant, some that exhaust your physical strength, others that test your intellect, some more interesting, others that routine you, some better paid than others, some that turn you into a more pleasant person or vice versa, some that blend in with your lifestyle and others that have nothing to do with your personal life.

If you work in a penitentiary, you are definitely on the side of the majority, on the side of people who at least sometimes would like to do something else. However, there are also good parts that many are looking for, especially in these turbulent times, such as job stability, retirement age well below standard and above average salary income.

If you choose such a profession, you must learn to adapt to all the situations encountered, to “steal” the profession from the oldest in the system and to constantly develop to meet the system requirements that are becoming more and more complex.

If until two or three decades ago the penitentiary system lived in a shadow and the purpose of the punishment was limited to the passage of the detention time interval according to the conviction established by the court, with the incarceration of high-ranking people the penitentiary became an increasingly studied subject by the whole society and the requirements have increased for both persons deprived of their freedom and for the staff.

According to the decision<sup>1</sup> of the General Manager of the National Penitentiary Administration inmates can only be rewarded if they have enough credits accumulated. Credits may be granted only for participation in educational, psychological or social assistance programs, for gainful employment or for activities with a role in preventing situations of risk, as well as for persons carrying out support activities for the prevention of suicide in detention.

The methodology<sup>2</sup> regarding the professional training of penitentiary police officers approved by order of the Minister of Justice requires employees to acquire new

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<sup>1</sup> Decision of the General Manager of the National Administration of Penitentiaries no. 443 from May 24<sup>th</sup> 2016 regarding the approval of the Working Procedure for awarding rewards based on the Credit System for participation in educational activities and programs, psychological assistance and social assistance, lucrative activities, as well as the prevention of risk situations, art. 3, point 3

<sup>2</sup> OMJ no. 3,513 / C of September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 for the approval of the Methodology for organizing and conducting the professional training of penitentiary police officers, as well as the criteria for evaluating its results, art. 64;

professional skills and to improve their professional training through various activities such as firing weapons, physical training, specialized activities or scientific communication sessions, conferences and seminars. In order to obtain a good grade, all employees are required to accumulate at least 40 credits per year. In addition to the normative acts that largely explain the rights, obligations and general manner of action in certain situations, prison police officers must also learn the unwritten rules behind bars. They are difficult to acquire and master, in years of service with those deprived of freedom and are often passed on from those with experience in this field.

## **2. General Rules for Prison Police Officers**

Rule no. 1 – Try not to be affected, not to change

The death penalty is still regulated in very few states of the world. Currently, the society uses the most the punishment by sentencing a person to prison, by removing from the society the person who committed a violation of the rules of criminal law. Prison is a reality, an ugly place but in the same time a necessity. Try to keep your good principles of life, try not to be affected by what you find in this place, not to behave similarly to the inmates, to understand that the deprivation of freedom of some people is necessary for the protection of many people, not be affected by the life stories of those you have to manage.

Rule no. 2 – Problems at home must stay at home

Personal problems, shortcomings or inconveniences must not influence the way in which the duties are performed. The behavior at work should be normal, focused on the activities you have to perform, without the negative influences of any difficult moments from the personal level. No matter how busy you are, no matter how much you need to tell someone your problems or ask for advice, never forget that this is not the right place for such a thing. By providing details about your home, family or relatives, you can make yourself vulnerable and endanger your family and friends as well as yourself.

Rule no. 3 – It's good to come to work for pleasure

Even if at first sight this seems impossible, it is still achievable. Try to get to know your colleagues, use jokes, have a smile on your face and you will often receive a gentle answer. Working in a prison should not be associated with excessive rigidity, frowning or seriousness. For the penitentiary staff, humor and laughter have become necessary features for surviving the daily work shift, functioning as a morale booster,

as a defense mechanism against the suffering caused by certain situations, as well as a way for releasing stress. You can be what you choose to be, don't let yourself be influenced by others, don't walk on the path of the always angry persons and don't forget to smile.

Rule no. 4 – In order to impose yourself, you have to be fair, to be true

To be a true man of words, you must have honour, to assume the correctness, punctuality, responsibility of the word given, of the gesture made and all this not for fear of the laws, but because this is dictated by your common sense and soul. To live with honour means to live respecting yourself and respecting the others around you. Although it sometimes seems that in society this value has become obsolete and has been replaced by disrespect, dishonesty and cunning, however, this value is appreciated where we least expected it. The courage to stand up to non-value will be appreciated by those who have lost their freedom. Respect the person, regardless of the cultural level or the financial power and you will also receive respect; you will be able to impose yourself through what you represent and through what you transmit.

Rule no. 5 – Solve the problems

We all have things to solve, we all have smaller or bigger needs, but for those who have lost their freedom, they can sometimes be solved only with the help of prison staff. Even if they seem to be unimportant needs to those around you, for an inmate, small things can be of great importance. Usually the guarded persons request the introduction of a telephone number in the list of those they can call or the introduction of a person in the list of visitors; small things at first sight but of great significance to those in prison. If solving a request of an inmate is within your competence and it is within the legal framework, solve it as soon as possible, show him that he also matters, that his needs are known and he can also have help in the one who has to guard him and to punish him if he violates the rules of conduct. By doing this you will gain the respect of those deprived of freedom, which will make your job considerably easier.

Rule no. 6 – Do not intervene alone in conflicts

Even if you feel very well prepared, even if you have an excellent physical condition, even if you know those involved in a physical conflict, it is not advisable to intervene alone in a physical conflict. You never know what forbidden objects inmates involved in a fight may have on them, it may be a diversion; you may be attacked by