



CONTEMPLATING CAREERS

Correctional Officer

Do you enjoy interacting with others? Are you able to effectively communicate orally and in writing? Can you be assertive yet diplomatic? Do you possess excellent grammar, spelling, and punctuation? Do you carry yourself with a sense of professionalism and discipline? Is moral integrity important to you? If these characteristics describe you, then a career as a **correctional officer** is one you should consider.

Correctional officers are charged with managing inmates who are incarcerated in a jail, reformatory, prison, or penitentiary. In addition, correctional officers are charged with managing detained (but not convicted) persons waiting for or engaged in a trial. They interact with those confined, colleagues, those in the legal system, and visitors to the jail. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2012 median pay for a correctional officer was \$38,970. Like much of the criminal justice system, qualifications required for becoming a correctional officer vary. At a minimum, all jurisdictions require a

high school diploma, and attending a special training academy is routine.

The environment in which correctional officers conduct their work can be difficult and dangerous as this profession is characterized by one of the highest rates of on-the-job injuries. Correctional officers are responsible for enforcing rules, keeping order, supervising inmate activities, inspecting facilities, searching for contraband, and reporting on inmate conduct. Fitness requirements vary among agencies, although correctional officers need to be physically and psychologically fit. Correctional officers often report stress over role problems, work overload, demanding social contacts, and poor social status, although professionalization and better human resources are being employed to reduce job stress and burnout.



Career Video:

A detentions division chief discusses her experience and current issues in the field.