



Corrections &
Sentencing

DCS Spring 2025 Newsletter

Editor: Dr. Debi Koetzle

The Corrections Lab, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Division Chair's Corner

Happy Spring, Everyone! With San Francisco behind us, we are now in full swing with preparations for ASC in Washington, DC. Maybe it's because I lived in the area for 15 years, but DC is one of my favorite cities. While it will be strange to attend DC ASC at the Marriott rather than our usual Hilton, I hope the change is a good one. We'll be at the Marriott Marquis (a dog friendly hotel, for a fee) on Massachusetts Avenue, NW which is closer than the Hilton to many of DC's attractions including Capitol Hill, the Smithsonian Museums. Plus, the new set of pandas at the National Zoo are only a short metro ride away. We'll have more details about the conference in our Fall newsletter, so stay tuned as we hope to see everyone throughout the week.



Eileen Ahlin
DCS Chair

In the meantime, we hope everyone will consider nominating our stellar members for division awards. Coming soon we'll post a call, so please consider nominating people for the Lifetime Achievement, Distinguished Scholar, Distinguished New Scholar, Marguerite Q. Warren and Ted B. Palmer Differential Intervention, Edward J. Latessa Practitioner Research, Distinguished Service, Pamela K. Lattimore and RTI International Dissertation Scholarship, Ben Steiner Excellence in Corrections Student Paper, and Dr. Kimchi Memorial Graduate Travel Award. We love to celebrate our members and their work in the corrections and sentencing space. More information on the awards and past winners can be found on our website.

We are also seeking nominations for our Executive Board. This year, we are electing for the positions of Chair and two Executive Counselors. Please send your nominations (or self-nomination) to TaLisa Carter (carter@american.edu) by **August 1, 2025**. Nominations should include a short bio and statement of interest in the position. For more information on each position, please visit DCS Constitution on our website: <https://ascdcs.org/constitution/>

As we look forward to ASC, remember to renew your DCS membership and check us out on our socials for up-to-date happenings and announcements: Twitter (@ASC_DCS), Facebook, and LinkedIn (just search ASC Division on Sentencing & Corrections).



Division Leadership

Chair

Eileen Ahlin, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
ahlin@psu.edu (2023-2025)

Vice Chair

Debi Koetzle, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
dkoetzle@jjay.cuny.edu (2024-2026)

Secretary/Treasury

Daniel Butler, Iowa State University
hdbutler@iastate.edu (2024-2026)

Executive Counselors

TaLisa Carter, American University
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Megan Novisky,
University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute
Meghan.Novisky@uc.edu (2023-2025)

Janani Umamaheswar, George Mason University
jumamahe@gmu.edu (2024-2026)

Past Chair

Shelley Johnson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
slistwan@uncc.edu (2023-2025)

In This Issue

Division Chair's Corner, 1-2
Division Leadership, 3
In This Issue, 4
Award Nominations Reminder, 4
Research Note, 5
AltAc Corner, 11
Around the Division, 13
From the Editor, 16

Division Awards Reminder



The call for nominations for our division awards will be coming out shortly with submissions due **August 31, 2025**. Check out our webpage for more information about the awards, including eligibility and submission process, along with past recipients. <https://ascdcs.org/awards/>

Lifetime Achievement Award

Distinguished Scholar Award

Distinguished New Scholar Award

Marguerite Q. Warren and Ted B. Palmer Differential Intervention Award

Edward J. Latessa Practitioner Research Award

Student Awards

Pamela K. Lattimore and RTI International Dissertation Scholarship

Ben Steiner Excellence in Corrections Student Paper

Dr. Kimchi Memorial Graduate Travel Award

Research Note

Red, White, and Blue Behind Bars: Expanding veterans' pods in Texas county jails to enhance re-entry success

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University

Many United States military veterans struggle after separating from service with a variety of psychological and substance use issues, leading to a significant population of over 180,000 justice-involved veterans (JIVs) in jails and prisons (Justice for Vets, 2023). In line with the growth of veterans' treatment courts and specific resources for JIVs, one model gaining traction in correctional facilities is the veterans' service unit, often referred to as a veteran pod. These pods are dedicated dormitories that house only those who have prior military service, offering specific resources, services, and community for JIVs. This summary calls for an expansion of veteran pods in Texas jails and prisons to ensure that every former service member has the opportunity for long-term desistance.

The incarcerated veteran population

Research shows that veterans make up nearly 5–8% prisons and jails (Bronson et al., 2015; Veterans Justice Commission, 2022). JIVs without early interception in the criminal justice system suffer a variety of negative legal and health effects, including greater risk of recidivism and increased risk of correctional misconduct. The prevalence of violence and sexual violence among JIV criminal offenses limits diversion options, community supervision caseloads, and even housing locations (Morgan et al., 2023). For those JIVs awaiting case disposition or serving prison sentences, it is critical to offer treatment, health, and recovery support services tailored to veterans to reduce continued recidivism.

The unique needs of JIVs

Between 60–67% of incarcerated veterans have a mental health disorder (Bronson et al., 2015) and over found that over 93% reported a history of trauma (Hartwell et al., 2014). In particular, veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), moral injury, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) (NIC, 2019). Approximately 60–80% of JIVs struggle with substance use, particularly as a response to combat stressors (Morgan et al., 2023). These factors lead to increased criminogenic behaviors, legal barriers, loss of stable housing, and decreased health outcomes (Lennon, 2020).

The goal of veteran pods is to offer a seamless continuum of care for participants in their correctional facility to the community. Many veterans' pods offer group counseling, therapy, and 12-step meetings (Goggin et al., 2018; Ward, 2017). Veteran-specific housing in jails and prisons offer increased coordination for a variety of VA healthcare, legal resources, re-entry services, and programs designed to build prosocial opportunities. Veterans' pods in local jails offer an interception point where participants can connect with legal representatives for veterans' treatment courts and other diversion options (Bob Parsons Veterans Advocacy Clinic, 2023). Employment, housing, and education opportunities in custody can greatly improve the likelihood of re-entry success.

Military culture

While some nonveteran correctional facilities programming mirrors the treatment and re-entry services listed above, veteran pods offer a dedicated space for participants to connect through a shared military culture of discipline, pride, and respect. Veteran pod participants share a similar experience of service and military ethos that enhances the camaraderie among incarcerated veterans (Goggin et al., 2018; NIC, 2019; Stacer & Solinas-Saunders, 2024; Tsai & Goggin, 2017). Capitalizing on shared military culture allows pods to create a fraternity and group cohesion among incarcerated

veterans, in turn increasing participant buy-in to treatment goals and re-entry opportunities (Goggin et al., 2018). Some pods enhance this sense of fraternity with different uniforms, military-themes murals, and relationships with military installations (Goggin et al., 2018; NIC, 2019; Ward, 2017).

Texas veteran pods

Focusing efforts on the veteran population in Texas jails and prisons is critical for the over 1.5 million military veterans who reside in the Lone Star State (TWI Council, 2021). Texas has 15 active military installations, leading to an increased number of veterans separating from service in the state (OOG, 2025). Veterans tend to live near the areas with denser military facilities and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Medical Centers. Harris County, the most populous county in the state that encompasses much of the Houston metro area, is home to 157,761 veterans alone, making it a key area to focus veteran services and resources (TWI Council, 2021). Approximately 11,000 veterans are in Texas prisons, and an estimated 10% of incarcerated persons in local Texas jails are JIVs (Texas Jail Project, 2022). While Texas has over 33 veterans' treatment courts, they only serve a fraction of the JIV population incarcerated in the state (Morgan, 2025).

Texas operates veterans' pods at both the county and state level. The first Texas prison veteran pod was started in 2014 in Travis State Jail (TDCJ, 2015). That same year Harris County Jail opened the Stars and Stripes Program (later renamed Brothers in Arms) for incarcerated veterans (Ward, 2017). Texas does not track all the veterans-specific housing in its correctional facilities, but since the advent of these pods, many other counties, state jails, and prisons implemented veterans' pods (Weber, 2024). The Texas Department of Criminal Justice even has a prison unit for women veterans, Success Through Action Reveals Strength, or STARS (TDCJ, 2024). This is a rarity as over 99% of incarcerated veterans are male (Bronson et al., 2015); thus, nearly all veteran pods focus on housing, treatment, and services for men. County jails hosting veteran pods tend to be located in urban and suburban areas with high density of veterans, including Harris County (Houston), Ft. Bend County (Houston/Sugarland), Montgomery County (Conroe), Tarrant County (Ft. Worth), Collin County (North Dallas) (Gonzalez, 2019; Gordon, 2019; Walker, 2019; Ward, 2017; Weber, 2024).

Texas has an opportunity to implement and expand the use of veteran pods in a variety of correctional facilities in order to best serve the JIV population in the state. These pods enhance facility safety and potentially reduce recidivism. While every county jail and prison facility should adapt this model to best fit their facility, statewide guidelines on best practices and policies could help Texas pods enhance treatment and services for this unique population. Specifically:

- 1) Texas should help jails and prisons identify veterans and former service members by working with VA resources, the Texas Veterans Commission, and federal agencies. This ensures that all veterans are identified as potential participants for veteran pods.
- 2) Texas must support TDCJ in creating veteran pods and programming at many state jails and prisons.
- 3) The state should also collaborate with the Texas Veterans Commission in helping smaller and rural counties develop veteran pods and coordinate treatment for participants.
- 4) Lastly, Texas must develop lasting partnerships with federal and state stakeholders to offer a variety of needed re-entry resources for JIVs in veteran pods.

Overall, these recommendations would enhance the implementation and outcomes of Texas veteran pods.

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AltAc Corner

In this issue, we're sharing a few tips to support your potential transition into an AltAc career. We're also excited to highlight our new resource library—designed to help you navigate AltAc spaces and build meaningful connections.



QUICK TIPS



FOR TRANSITIONING TO ALTAC CAREERS

1. Reframe Your Academic Experiences

Your academic background has probably equipped you with valuable skills beyond teaching and research—project management, data analysis, public speaking, and more! For example, instead of saying “taught undergraduate courses,” you could say “designed and facilitated engaging learning experiences for a variety of audiences.” These language changes can help you align your expertise with the role.



2. Revamp Your Résumé



Unlike the academic CV, which lists everything you've done in great detail, an AltAc résumé needs to be concise, strategic, and tailored. It is helpful to focus on measurable results and impact, not just your responsibilities. Highlight what you did and the value it created—this will resonate with employers.

3. Network Strategically (and Authentically)

Many AltAc opportunities come through personal connections rather than job boards. Start building relationships by reaching out to people in roles or sectors you're curious about. Consider asking them about their path, their work, and what skills are valued in their field. Overall, these conversations may create new supportive connections and generate potential career opportunities.



4. Consider What Success Means to You



Academia may define success as getting grants, publications, or tenure, etc. In AltAc, success may look different—meaningful work, better work-life balance, creative freedom, or driving change in the community. Transitioning to an AltAc role may require you to redefine your metrics for success. AltAc careers can be incredibly impactful and fulfilling!

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



CHECK OUT OUR NEW RESOURCE LIBRARY DEVELOPED BY OUR TEAM TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE ALTAC SPACES.

AltAc Industry Rundown Guide

NEW



The AltAc Industry Rundown guide provides an overview of six key industry spaces: (1) government; (2) non-profit research, training, and technical assistance; (3) for-profit research & consulting; (4) non-profit advocacy; (5) technology; and (6) corporate America.

Each industry run-down includes more specific information, such as pace of work; typical role and position titles; expected autonomy of ideas; if employees serve as subject matter experts, generalists, or methodologists; anticipated salary and benefits; typical work audiences; and example industry companies.

AltAc Rockstar Researcher Library

The AltAc Rockstar Researcher Library provides an overview of all webinars featuring researchers across various industry spaces and rockstar biographies. Embedded in the library are links to the recordings and direct links to connect with researchers. All featured guests have agreed to be a resource and are awaiting connections!



AltAc Resource List

The AltAc resource list is a curated guide connecting you to: job boards, industry-changing blogs, and people and companies helping people move to industry.

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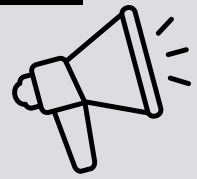
Visit the AltAc Team's Webpage:

<http://ascdcs.org/alternative-academic-careers-workshop-series/>





Around the Division



Community Engagement: The Second Chance Symposium at Sam Houston State University

Andrew Martone, Sunhye Kang, Jangwon Kim, Alexa Mata, Laura McCarty, and Bryce
Kushmerick-McCune, PhD Students,
Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology, Sam Houston State University

The College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University hosted the 2025 Second Chance Symposium on April 4th (Friday). This event was organized in honor of Second Chance Month which is a bipartisan recognition of the opportunities and challenges for individuals returning to their communities post-incarceration. Dr. Stuti Kokkalera and students from two courses (CRIJ2364: Fundamentals of Criminal Law [undergraduate Honors section] and CRIJ7336: Seminar in American Corrections [PhD seminar]) coordinated the event as an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) project. Each PhD student (total = 6) led a group of 3 or 4 undergraduate students on different aspects of the Symposium which covered organizing three sessions, marketing, scheduling/audience engagement, and a silent auction.

The first session of the Symposium was comprised of a panel of advocates from Justice Forward, an organization that funds essential reentry programs in the Houston area (represented by Devon Anderson), Pathfinders, an organization that provides family support and financial stability (represented by Erica Jaramillo), and Workfaith (represented by Robert Gil Jr.), an organization that includes faith-based support to train individuals for employment. The panelists described the work of their organizations and their own roles, before taking questions from the audience. The second session was the screening of "Long Road Back: Ex Offenders' Struggle for Acceptance" (2009), followed by



a lively Q&A discussion about the movie. In the third session, the audience heard from David Lee Garlock, a reentry advocate following his incarceration, Sydrena Tufts, a recovery coach for returning citizens experiencing substance use struggles, and Shannon Smith, an advocate for criminal justice reform about their correctional and reentry experiences.

Among all the representatives from the sessions, one common theme was the acknowledgment of the barriers and the need for a community to support those who are reentering the community after long-term incarceration. Additionally, all the panelists recognized that person-centered language matters. For instance, Justice Forward's mission statement uses the word "neighbor" to describe their treatment court clients. David discussed using the word "brotherhood" to evoke a shared connection among incarcerated people. Sydrena stressed that she calls herself a "woman in long-term recovery" to current clients in the reentry community.

Overall, the Second Chance Symposium created an opportunity for dialogue, as well as the space for practitioners and reentry advocates to share lived experiences about the reentry process. Audience members were able to listen, watch, and ask questions, which broadened the impact of such an event. Additionally, a silent auction of donated items helped raise funds for Justice Forward, Pathfinders, and WorkFaith.

Comments from the audience:

- “There is a real need for friends, family and support to help with incarceration and the re-entry process.”
- “It is critical to combat the stigma of being an incarcerated person. We need to help individuals access resources for treatment, housing, and successful supervision.”
- “The event provided great insight into the current problems with the reentry process. Many individuals face problems that I would never have thought of.”
- “This was a really successful event. It was great to hear from both sides of the reentry process.”



From the Editor

I'm excited to be editing my first DCS newsletter as Vice Chair of the Division. It has been a great experience and I'm especially thankful to Colleen Berryessa, our previous editor, and to the other members of our newsletter committee (Stuti Kokkalera, Ashely Nellis, and Heath Grant) for all their help and support with the process. I'm thrilled that we have continued the tradition of including space for the AltAc Corner and am already thinking ahead to the fall newsletter. We will be providing important reminders for ASC and recognizing this year's award winners. In addition, we would also like to feature more of all of you and your important work. In that vein, please plan to submit your news and research notes for the Fall issue.



Debi Koetzle
DCS Vice Chair

Wishing everyone a lovely summer! See you in the fall.

Call for Submissions

We are accepting corrections- and sentencing-focused teaching notes, student section contributions, or research notes for publication in our Fall newsletter. Ideally, submissions should be 500-1000 words, in APA format, with endnotes.

Submissions will be accepted through September 30, 2025 via
dkoetzle@jjay.cuny.edu