



Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office

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The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) operates direct supervision jails that have been accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA) since 2003. We supervise our population utilizing the principles of direct supervision. The principles require MCSO to maintain our jails in a safe, clean and quiet manner with 100% control, 100% of the time. Otherwise, a jail becomes unsafe for all. MCSO takes its responsibilities seriously, therefore, we adhere to direct supervision principles and manage operations to ACA standards. This management style has earned MCSO both state and national recognition in best detention practices.

MCSO is charged with the responsibility of keeping staff and inmates safe. In fact, keeping staff and inmates safe is one of the Nine Principles of Direct Supervision (Safety of Staff and Inmates). Keeping our jails safe is critical to our mission and public expectation. As with any jail population you have model inmates who follow inmate rules and regulations and they are managed in general housing pods which are designed to provide most of the conveniences of home. This type of housing is specifically designed to foster model/appropriate behavior from the inmate population.

Conversely, there are inmates who choose to behave in a manner that requires disciplinary sanctions to change their behavior. Upon entry, all inmates are provided with written rules and regulations as well as the sanctions and consequences for inappropriate behavior. To promote consistency and ensure MCSO effectively communicates expectations to the inmate population, each Detention Officer (DO) reads an orientation at the beginning of each shift (twice a day). The orientation provides each inmate with operational rules, regulations and expectations for the DO's tour of duty.

MCSO uses progressive discipline to manage inmate behavior. All of our DOs are trained and required to use progressive discipline. Progressive discipline is commonly used by DOs in the form of "In-Pod Sanctions" before utilizing the Disciplinary Detention Unit (DDU) as a disciplinary tool. "In-Pod Sanctions" may consist of extra clean up, lock down (cell confinement of 1 to 4 hours), loss of phone or visitation privileges. Once progressive discipline proves to be ineffective via "In-Pod Sanctions," DOs then consider the use of DDU. Shift Sergeants are required to approve all DDU sanctions which alleviates Pod Officers from managing disciplinary matters without oversight.

In the event the Disciplinary Detention Unit (DDU) is utilized, DOs are required to generate both a detailed incident report and inmate disciplinary report which provides the inmate with the jail infractions he or she is accused of violating, much like a traffic citation. The Shift Supervisor then conducts an informal hearing with the inmate and either approves/denies the DDU sanction. Upon supervisory approval, the inmate is transferred to DDU pending a formal hearing conducted by an Administrative Hearing Officer. MCSO is just and fair in practice which is also one of the Principles of Direct Supervision (Justice and Fairness). The Administrative Hearing Officer provides the inmate with the opportunity to explain his/her actions regarding the alleged jail infraction(s). The Administrative Hearing Officer uses the DO's report and the Shift Sergeant's informal hearing documentation along with the inmate's explanation to adjudicate the sanction(s), much like court. If a DDU sanction is upheld, policy provides inmates the opportunity to appeal the Administrative Hearing Officer's decision and subsequently request an administrative hearing with the Administrative Sergeant.

MCSO Disciplinary Detention Units are designed as either podular direct or podular remote, thus not considered solitary confinement. The podular direct design places officers in the pod with direct contact/interaction with the inmate population compared to podular remote which provides a secured officer station. YO Disciplinary Detention Units are podular direct which means DOs have interaction/contact with the YO 24/7. All inmates housed in the YO wing are housed in single cells meaning each cell is the same whether the YO offender is housed in DDU or general housing. Those housed in DDU are confined to their cell which is referred to as "single cell confinement" as they are housed in a pod with up to 12 other YOs and a Pod Officer is required to conduct a wellness check on each YO at intervals of 15 minutes. YOs on single cell confinement are allowed one hour of free time per day. In addition to the free time, YOs are allowed out of their cells to shower and use the Request Manager Application (RMA) system to request various services provided by MCSO, such as religious materials, chaplain services, medical services or their school work so they do not fall behind on their education.

MCSO Youthful Offenders' general housing inmates spend approximately five hours per day attending high school/programming with approximately four hours of free time, pending their behavior. All YO cells have a sink, toilet, bunk and desk so there is absolutely no YO housing that provides a "hole" as referred to in a recent Charlotte Observer article. The term "hole" was coined years ago when correctional/jail facilities utilized solitary confinement and housed inmates in cells without lights, toilets, sinks, shelves, linens and mattresses. The only thing a solitary confinement cell provided was a hole in the floor which served as the toilet with the flusher outside of the cell, hence the term "hole." MCSO demolished the last jail in Mecklenburg County with that type of solitary/disciplinary housing in 1994. In modern jail facilities, there is limited use for those types of cells. Today, they are referred to as safety cells and are only utilized for inmates in crisis and are an imminent threat to themselves.

MCSO is the only jail in NC that operates a high school for YOs. We also provide an incentive program for YOs to foster model behavior. MCSO utilizes a grading system with levels 1-4, level 1 being the lowest score. The YOs are graded on their behavior in class, timeliness of their school work, personal hygiene and housekeeping of their area. The rewards range from more free time, extra time out of their cells on the weekends and a treasure chest where they can choose personal items like T-shirts and shorts.

MCSO is charged with managing the largest jail system in North Carolina. This charge requires us to have 100% control of the inmate population each and every day and I think the public expects it, as it is done fairly and consistently adhering to state law, using the best detention practices and meeting national correctional standards.

In closing, MCSO contends the recent article printed in the Charlotte Observer regarding YO's and the Observer's reference to "solitary confinement" is a misrepresentation of the operational practices and only serves to misinform the public about the specific practices engaged in managing this very challenging population. MCSO has one of the most stringent detention training programs in the state. As Sheriff, I take exception to the reference to "solitary confinement." Inmates who engage in unlawful or inappropriate behavior must be managed and in some cases, removed from the general population for the protection of themselves, other inmates and my staff.

Regarding the assertions by a "former jail official" relied upon by the Charlotte Observer in presenting its articles/editorials on this topic, it should be noted that this individual was never a "jail official" and served solely in a civilian role. This individual was not certified to work in jail operations, has no law enforcement credentials and no training or expertise in management of a secure detention facility. Furthermore, this individual has no medical credentials that qualify the individual to speak with any credibility or authority on matters pertaining to any other person's mental health condition. Lastly, until this individual's employment with the Sheriff's Office ended, the individual never once voiced any concerns to the Sheriff, the individual's direct supervisor or any other administrative staff about this particular issue, and in fact, has been quoted in an article in the past as referring to the Mecklenburg County Jail as a "healing place."

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irwin Carmichael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheriff Irwin Carmichael
Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office