IACFP Bulletin

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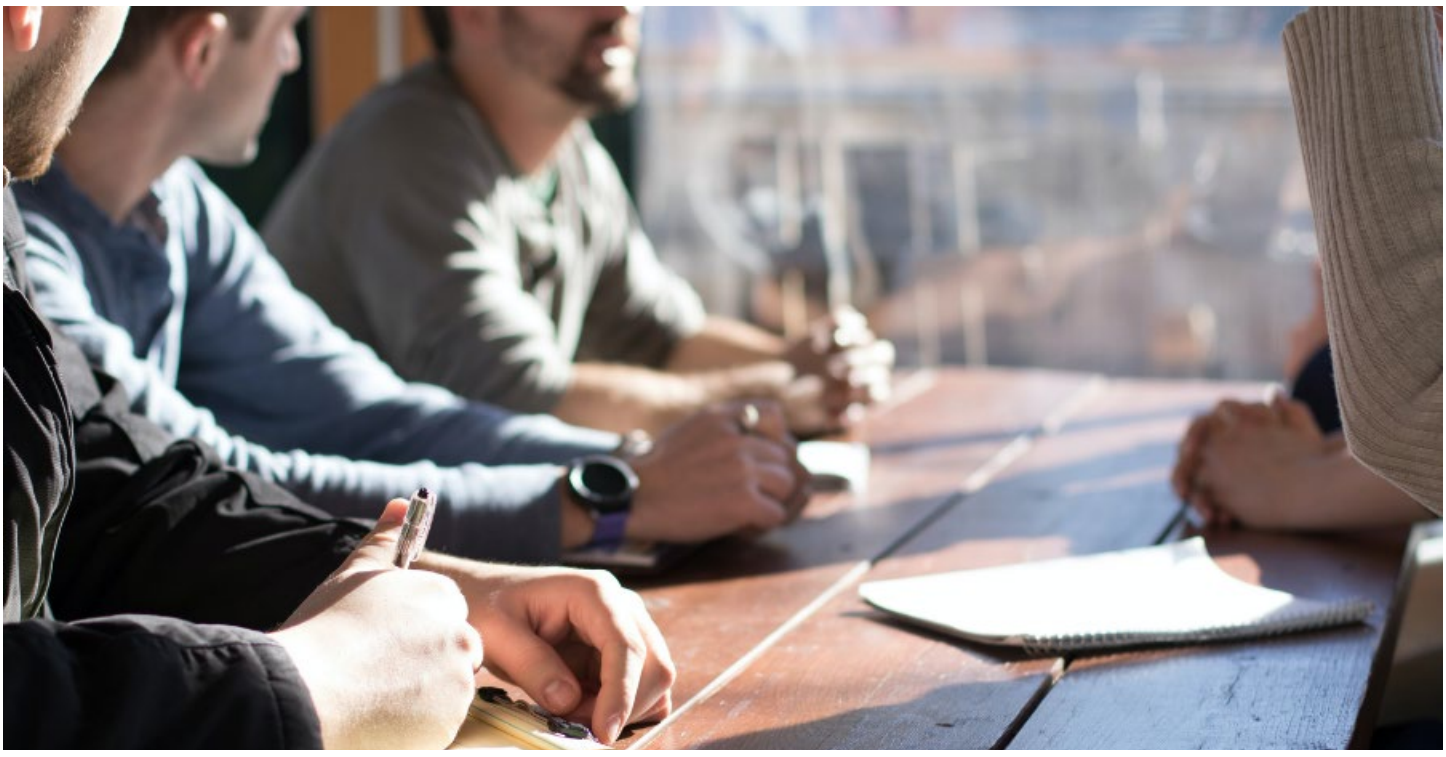

WHO WE ARE

The International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP)

The International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP) is an organization of leaders, practitioners, and researchers who are concerned with the delivery of high-quality mental health services to justice-impacted individuals. We aim to advance evidence- and practitioner-informed policies and practices, and to elevate psychology's role in correctional settings.

IACFP members are not all psychologists and are not all active in the practice of forensic evaluations or correctional mental health. However, they typically have advanced degrees in psychology and behavioral sciences and engage in the administration, practice, teaching or research relating to incarcerated populations and those under community supervision. Our strategic areas of focus for 2025-2031 are:

- **Helping the Helpers:** IACFP is dedicated to advancing the voice of psychology in corrections through supporting psychologists and other helping professionals. The current focus of this support is opportunities for connection with colleagues globally through our *Correctional Mental Health Leadership Network*, and learning through Continuous Professional Development.
- **Research to Practice and Practice to Research:** IACFP's journal, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, offers evidence-based and practitioner-informed research results and resources for practitioners. Our *IACFP Bulletin* bridges research and practice by summarizing current studies and showcasing international corrections initiatives.
- **Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Association for the Future:** IACFP is committed to building our international identity, enhancing communication with members, and strengthening partnerships with other organizations.

We are now accepting submissions.

The *IACFP Bulletin* has six issues per year, and is now accepting submissions. To inquire how to submit, please email **community@myiacfp.org** with your proposed article topic.

Foreword: When the Work Feels Closer to Home

DR EMMA REGAN / 3 MINS

Dr Emma Regan

There are times when working in criminal justice requires us to hold together things that do not always sit comfortably alongside one another. I have been thinking about that a lot while reading the contributions to this edition of the *Bulletin*, and particularly over this past week.

As I write, Ireland is dealing with the aftermath of a horrific collision on the M9 motorway in Co. Kildare. At approximately 3.00 a.m. on Sunday, 16 August 2026, five teenage boys lost their lives when the car in which they were travelling, which was being driven the wrong way along the motorway, collided head-on with another vehicle. In the other vehicle were three sisters and a seven-year-old boy, traveling towards Dublin Airport. They were all seriously injured. There has been considerable reporting about the possible role of social media, including suggestions that dangerous driving of this kind may be filmed or shared online. At the time of writing, however, I am conscious that many of the details surrounding this particular incident remain unconfirmed. The circumstances have understandably generated considerable public discussion, including commentary from An Garda Síochána, Ireland's national police service, politicians and the media.

This tragic incident has made me think about something close to home for many of us who have spent our careers in criminal justice. We can have a longstanding professional commitment to rehabilitation and still find ourselves identifying very strongly with those who have been harmed. At certain times in our lives that identification can become particularly immediate. I am a parent. I am one of three sisters. I travel those roads. I have made early morning journeys to airports with my own family. It is difficult to read about what happened without imagining the fear of the people traveling in the other car.

My reaction does not change what I believe professionally, but it does remind me that those of us working in rehabilitation remain members of the communities our criminal justice systems are there to serve. We are parents, partners, siblings, friends and sometimes victims ourselves. Our professional knowledge does not remove the ordinary human reactions we have to serious harm. Compassion and anger are not mutually exclusive. Understanding developmental adversity does not erase agency or harm. Rehabilitation does not require emotional detachment from victims. We can recognise the suffering caused by harmful behaviour, understand the wish for accountability and still believe that people are capable of change. Tragically, those five teenage boys no longer have any opportunity to change. They leave behind five grieving families to deal with their loss amid considerable public anger, some of which has played out very harshly on social media, while another family deals with the devastating consequences of the collision.

It is against this backdrop that I found myself reading the contributions to this *Bulletin*. Taken together, the contributions' common theme is the need to respond to the person and the risk in front of us while also looking beyond the immediate situation. Someone can present a serious risk today and still live differently in the future. We cannot predict the future but we work with the

> **We can recognise the suffering caused by harmful behaviour, understand the wish for accountability and still believe that people are capable of change.**

evidence available to us, manage risk as carefully as we can and try to create the conditions in which a safer future is more likely.

Simone Shaw's Changing Trajectories considers work with young adults in the Ripley Unit in Corrections Victoria. Her discussion of continuing development in young adulthood, and particularly the importance of identity, relationships, competence and hope, reminds us that the person we encounter at one point in their life may still have considerable capacity to change.

Shadd Maruna touches on something similar from a desistance perspective. He reminds us to look beyond the institutionalised person in front of us and consider the person they may eventually become.

Sharen Barboza and Maria Masotta's contribution on suicide watch approaches this from a different direction. Their focus on balancing immediate safety and containment with therapeutic engagement reminds us that responding to the immediate crisis and thinking about what may help someone move beyond it can sit alongside one another.

Working in criminal justice rehabilitation demands that we hold particular tensions. People can experience harm and cause harm to others. They can be responsible for harm and still have the capacity for a different future. We can (and should) take the experiences of victims very seriously while continuing the work of reducing future risk with those who have offended. For me, this is where rehabilitation and public protection truly comes together.

Our commitment to rehabilitation does not make us immune to fear, anger or identification with those who have been harmed. At different points in our lives, and in response to different events, one perspective may come much closer to home than another. The M9 collision has brought that tension particularly close for me. I can identify strongly with the family traveling along that motorway to the airport and feel deeply for what they and their families are experiencing, while remaining committed to the principles of development, rehabilitation and human change that have shaped my career. Both can be true at the same time.

In the days following the collision, I found Irish Senator Lynn Ruane's comments helpful and grounding. She has worked extensively with young people in challenging circumstances and has a longstanding background in community work and advocacy. In *The Irish Times* newspaper she is quoted as saying:

> "It begins by knowing our young people, understanding the communities they are growing up in and investing in relationships, trusted adults, families, education, mental health, community development and opportunities that give young people a genuine sense of purpose and belonging."

More on this in our next edition….

Her next point probably comes closest to what I have been trying to work through in writing this piece:

> "We can be clear about the harm caused but if we dehumanise young people or use disparaging terms rather than doing the harder work of understanding the 'why', we fail everybody."

That, for me, is the balance. There will inevitably be times when one side of that balance feels closer to us than the other. Perhaps simply acknowledging that is part of remaining human in this work.

Dr Emma Regan
IACFP President
August 2026

Changing Trajectories: Working holistically and responsively with young men in an Australian prison

SIMONE SHAW / 10 MINS

Simone Shaw

Young men, those aged 18-25, are developmentally and criminogenically, different to the broader adult offending population. Corrections Victoria, Australia, in recognising this reality, has taken the opportunity to customise a unit called Ripley, within a medium security prison facility in the state of Victoria, to respond to the unique needs of this cohort. The goal is to improve not only their mental, physical, and psychological health, but to support smoother transition into the broader prison population in an effort to interrupt the possible contaminating effect of prison for vulnerable young men. The ultimate goal is to improve outcomes for these young adults when they are released from custody by recognising the need to manage their unique presentation responsively.

In 2024 Corrections Victoria released its Correctional Practice Framework[1] in which a commitment was made to adopt "practices with demonstrable efficacy in engaging, motivating, and supporting the people within our system to make prosocial change allow(ing) us as a service to function with both human rights, and long-term community protection, at the centre of our efforts". The development of the Ripley Unit is but one service initiative aimed at achieving these goals.

If we don't adapt and act responsively to young men and their unique needs in prison environments, we run the risk of entrenching the criminal identity and pathway they are on. Our goal must be to help them interrupt this potential – for them, and for our communities. Continuing to apply a one-size fits all adult model to everyone over the age of 18 risks wasting one of the highest impact windows for change we have. The way we work with people can either interrupt a trajectory or accelerate it.

Issues unique to the 18-25 male cohort

Neurological Differences

Neurologically, the brains of this cohort remain 'under construction'. Their executive functioning is continuing to develop, particularly their impulse control, emotional regulation, their future-oriented thinking, and their risk appraisal. "Executive function and emotional responses are not just less developed or different …: These two capacities are also less closely linked than in the typical adult brain. As a result, a (youth) may intellectually understand an issue and emotionally have a response to that issue, but those two processes may occur nearly in parallel rather than in dialogue. Emotional and executive functions must work together to bring about almost any kind of decision."[2]

By importing traditional behaviour change programs for use with this cohort; programs that rely on the capacity for abstract reasoning, delayed rewards, and insight-first change, we are potentially setting these young men up to fail. Rather than viewing disengagement or lack of motivation by this group in these programs as

> **Being responsive to people within the Victorian correctional system to achieve the most efficacious outcomes is integral to correctional success. The operationalisation of the Ripley Unit is demonstratable evidence of this commitment.**

resistance, we can instead recognise that what we've created is a developmental mismatch. To be responsive to young men, our interventions and programs need to be concrete, experiential, and scaffolded, not just cognitively demanding[3].

Fluid and Developing Identity

The self-identity of men aged 18-25 is still forming, as is their masculine self-construct, their moral framework, and their sense of belonging. From an intervention point of view, this means that their criminal identity is less entrenched, making change far more possible if the intervention strategies are targeted and empirically informed. This group is also massively influenced by peers[4], making them highly sensitive to status, respect, shame, and perceived injustice. What this means is that work with this group must acknowledge and target prosocial identity formation, rather than simply risk management, to be effective.

The Impact of the Prison Culture

Unsurprisingly, young men are more vulnerable within a prison environment to intimidation and exploitation. As a result, some can attempt to adopt a hyper-masculine posture to 'survive'. From an intervention standpoint, this means traditional 'compliance-focussed' approaches won't work, as they will likely trigger defensive-based aggression, and entrench the 'us versus them' mentality. Rather, young men in these circumstances will do better with a focus on strong relational containment (rather than behavioural control).

Differences in Risk Profile

Research indicates that young men are disproportionately represented in violent and impulsive offending[5]. They are more influenced by peers than personal values and are more likely to desist if the right supports are in place. Desistance theory comes to the fore here: young men haven't yet 'failed' repeatedly as adults. They are more open to alternative futures, which means that the concept of hope still works. Interventions for this group therefore need to be bedded in relational learning, and focus on future roles and possibilities, competence and mastery, and finding non-criminal sources of status and 'respect'.

Motivation

Motivation works differently for this group. Given their developmental stage, setting shorter-term, tangible goals works better than long term goals. A focus on skill-building rather than insight development works best, and with all behaviour change efforts, the interventions need to be both strengths-based and collaborative.

Ripley Unit

Corrections Victoria's Ripley Unit is a 16-bed structured intervention unit, staffed by 11 specially trained allied health and custodial staff, with two trained mentors (adult incarcerated men). It has a mixed model for intervention delivery, allowing participants to engage in therapeutically focussed groups and activities within the unit, and access to external programs (within the broader prison) as individually indicated. Placement within the unit is voluntary, and the environment is considered a therapeutic one, with an immersive focus on strong prosocial (peer-focussed) relational engagement. All staff and mentors are committed to the approach and are encouraged to engage and deliver therapeutic content. Role modelling (prosocial

and healthy, mature masculinity) is considered a key therapeutic driver for building agency, personal values, and problem solving. Self-determination is considered key to success.

Clinical framework

A clinical model aimed at creating a structured, scaffolding approach to those idiosyncratic issues identified earlier is underway. The foundation of which will be prosocial identity formation informed by an understanding of each individual through orientation derived case formulation. Unit 'values' modules will be delivered to orient residents to the prosocial nature of the environment and help them begin to identify their own values and goals (both short- and longer-term). Short, offence-related program offerings will cover content such as impulse control, emotional regulation, relationships, masculinity, and identity formation.

A structured day approach allows for a paralleling of 'life on the outside' with expectations for both behaviour and engagement, that targets those factors unique to a youth cohort, including education (literacy, numeracy, digital literacy), vocation, physical activity, and skill development.

Given the goal of the unit is to support transition and begin the pathway to desistance from crime, Ripley caters for young men on remand, those who are sentenced, and for people with varying lengths of sentence. It is an opportunity to begin the change process.

Conclusion

Being responsive to people within the Victorian correctional system to achieve the most efficacious outcomes is integral to correctional success. The operationalisation of the Ripley Unit is demonstratable evidence of this commitment. The unit recognises the unique needs of the youth cohort within an adult system and aims to promote immersive therapeutic engagement through participation in education, wellbeing, and rehabilitative activities while fostering a safe and respectful environment that supports growth, resilience, and preparation for successful reintegration into the larger prison environment and then the broader community.

Questions? Contact Simone.shaw@justice.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA State Government | Justice and Community Safety

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Distinguished Scholar Spotlight: Dr. Shadd Maruna

TIA TOURVILLE / 10 MINS

Dr. Shadd Maruna

Last month, I got the opportunity to sit down with Professor Shadd Maruna, IACFP's sponsored Distinguished Scholar at this year's annual International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA) conference, scheduled for the end of October in Belfast, Northern Ireland. We discussed some highlights from his upcoming keynote on lived experience as well as his perspectives on current research and practical approaches to rehabilitation in the criminal justice space.

Background

Prof Maruna grew up in southern Illinois, United States, during the wave of 'tough on crime' rhetoric that was prominent in the 1980's and 90's. His first experience in criminal justice was at a halfway house for justice-involved youth in Alaska, where he determined that research was more his calling than direct service. He moved to Liverpool, England on a Fulbright Grant around 1995, where he fell in love with the city and the United Kingdom, and has spent most of his career there since then.

Throughout his career, Prof. Maruna has worked at several universities across the globe, including Rutgers University, Cambridge University and Queen's University Belfast. He is now back at the University of Liverpool, where he serves as head of the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology. Prof Maruna is a longstanding member of the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP) and has worked with several community-based organisations in the UK and Ireland. Prof Maruna's current expertise is criminology (rehabilitation), desistance from crime, and community corrections. His focus on prison-based research commenced 10 to 15 years ago. His academic background is somewhat eclectic; he does not have degrees specifically in criminology or sociology, but rather in fields like philosophy, human development, and social policy.

A big focus of Prof Maruna's current work is lived experience: how people who have been through the criminal justice system should be involved as collaborators, co-researchers, and co-designers, not just as research subjects. He views the inclusion of lived experience in research as an essential addition to making rehabilitation research relevant and effective for practitioners, and applicable to the people it is designed to help. During the COVID-19 pandemic when nearly all prison research across the world was put on hold, Prof Maruna and colleagues trained 99 incarcerated individuals as co-researchers, allowing a large-scale study to take place without external researchers entering the facility. Although this process still had significant challenges associated, it became a fantastic example of the benefits of including people with lived experience in the research process. Prof Maruna is now studying the broader implications of including people with lived experience in a variety of criminal justice spaces. He plans to expand on this topic during his keynote talk at ICPA this October.

Perspectives on Current Systems

In addition to his current work, Prof Maruna also spoke about his perspectives on some current contemporary strategies in correctional research. We discussed what seems to be going well, in addition to what needs more work. Three main themes are highlighted:

1. Modern Buzzwords in Practice

Prof Maruna emphasized that there are several new concepts including lived experience that are reshaping conversations around rehabilitation (e.g., trauma-informed care, neurodiversity even desistance-informed practice). He cautioned that, although important and impactful, these new labels are meaningless without real change to practices. People may use these "buzzwords" without making any significant changes to their work. Simply thinking about these concepts is not enough; we must incorporate them into our actions in research, practice, mentorship, and supervision strategies. Prof Maruna put it best when he said,

> "Words are important, and I'll never underestimate the power of a label, but what really matters is our practice on the outside … if our practices don't change, if our clients say 'no, I didn't feel anything trauma-informed about the way they treated me,' then it's not trauma-informed practice—just rhetoric."

2. Decline of Prison Research

Citing Wacquant (2002), Prof Maruna also discussed the significant decline in prison research over the last several decades, while incarceration rates continued to rise. Although not necessarily intentional, overcrowding has pushed prison officials away from allowing external researchers into facilities. The extent of resistance to prison research has led many researchers to avoid even trying. However, Prof Maruna cautions against giving up entirely. It may require more work, but if nobody tries, good research can't be done.

Now, Prof Maruna is seeing prisons become more open to research again, albeit on their terms. There are more obstacles to consider, including low staffing and overcrowded facilities, but Prof Maruna is comforted that he and other UK-based prison researchers are being allowed to do good, theory-driven research in prisons. It just takes a little extra effort and drive to do so. His plea was simple:

> "Please don't give up on [prison] research, because it's … the last wall of defense against … just pure[ly] carceral. We just become warehouses if we give up on rehabilitation research, in general."

3. Competing Theories

A final thought Prof Maruna shared on contemporary correctional research and practice pushed back on treating different rehabilitative approaches as competing theories. He emphasized the benefits of considering multiple theoretical perspectives. For example, the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model and Desistance Theory work better as complementary instruments than as adversaries. RNR focuses on what works in terms of programs, who fits best, and how the rehabilitative approach should adjust for individual needs. Desistance theory focuses more on a person's longer term journey, which may or may not include programs along the way. Prof Maruna views these (and other rehabilitative approaches) as tools in a tool belt, which should be drawn upon as needed, rather than adhering to one tool, model or approach. As Prof Maruna said,

> "You'll have some people who succeed in a program and others who fail, and both journeys are important to understand, and that's what some of the desistance research can give us, those kind of wider contexts of what might be happening to them."

[Prof Maruna] views the inclusion of lived experience in research as an essential addition to making rehabilitation research relevant and effective for practitioners, and applicable to the people it is designed to help.

Looking Ahead

Finally, Prof Maruna shared his perspectives on the future of correctional psychology research and practice. Of course, there are obvious financial and bureaucratic obstacles. However, he emphasizes culture over structure, arguing that shifting the daily practices and narratives within an institution is more effective than policy change alone.

Prof Maruna recalled a conversation with a prison governor who wanted incarcerated individuals to display baby photos on their cell doors as a reminder of their humanity. Prof Maruna offered his own twist on the idea: picturing instead who that person might become – a future neighbor, a future colleague – rather than who they currently appear to be. He said of incarcerated people,

> "Don't treat them like the institutionalized person you currently see in orange; treat them like the person who you want [them] to be out on the streets, as your neighbor or your bus driver, or [whoever]."

Prof Maruna closed our discussion by reflecting on how rarely correctional staff get to witness the success stories of the people they've worked with, since those who do well typically don't return to correctional spaces. Celebrating successes is important both for correctional staff and incarcerated people. Focusing more on next steps than past actions can help redirect individual motivations in their rehabilitation journey. These perspectives can also shift institutional narratives around correctional work, creating an environment that may be more open to facilitating and assisting in research and practical development.

We hope you can join us for more on these topics at Prof Maruna's keynote at the ICPA conference this fall, titled "Who Owns Reintegration?: Collaboration, Lived Experience and Co-Production of Justice Outcomes."

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Re-Thinking Suicide Watch: Engaging Solutions for Crisis Care

DR SHAREN BARBOZA, DR MARIA MASOTTA / 15 MINS

Sharen Barboza, Ph.D.

Maria Masotta, Psy.D.

Correctional systems typically respond to suicidal and acute psychiatric crises using suicide watch practices that rely on isolation, restricted property, limited stimulation, and brief risk-focused clinical contacts. Although intended to prevent immediate danger, these practices may undermine key mechanisms associated with effective crisis intervention. This article critiques the continued use of isolation-based suicide watch in correctional environments and argues that such practices may discourage honest disclosure, intensify distress, and increase longer-term risk for incarcerated individuals, the staff, and institutions. Drawing on principles from community psychiatric care, safety planning, crisis response planning, and research on special observation, the authors propose a less restrictive crisis intervention model that emphasizes engagement, therapeutic activity, peer and family connection, individualized observation, and out-of-cell clinical support. The article also acknowledges operational barriers, including staffing, physical plant limitations, and security concerns, while encouraging gradual implementation through stepwise reductions in isolation. Reframing suicide watch as an active, treatment-centered intervention rather than a restrictive containment strategy may better align correctional mental health care with evidence-informed crisis standards and the ethical obligation to reduce harm.

Re-Thinking Suicide Watch

Correctional settings overwhelmingly use isolation and restricted property for prolonged periods of time in response to individuals experiencing a self-reported or objectively obvious mental health crisis. This practice is commonly known as “suicide watch.” For decades, the authors have struggled with this practice and in turn, endeavored to find a means by which correctional environments can balance safety risks associated with mental health crises, security concerns regarding the improper use of crisis housing, and the need for autonomy and support for the individual who is experiencing the crisis. While we continue to research this topic and explore alternatives available in other settings and across current carceral systems, we hope to use the current forum to expand our thoughts and spark a movement away from isolation and restriction as the default intervention for crises in carceral settings.

Any mental health professional and most non-clinicians will affirm that contact with supportive friends or family, time spent outdoors in nature, and hobbies or activities to distract oneself are crucial for anyone experiencing psychiatric distress. Individual and group psychotherapy help people process and resolve emotional distress and develop skills for relapse prevention. Specific to suicidal crises, safety and crisis response planning have proven to be effective immediate interventions to reduce risk. The efficacy of safety planning and crisis response planning have been attributed to seven factors, including providing distraction, increasing connection, fostering autonomy, building competence, reducing engagement with impulsive urges, increasing the difficulty of suicidal

behavior, and managing cognitive load (Rogers, et al., 2022). The only one of the mechanisms served by placing an individual in isolation during a suicidal crisis is increasing the difficulty of engaging in suicidal behavior. Several of the other risk factors addressed by safety planning and crisis response planning are actually exacerbated by the use of traditional suicide watch including lack of distraction, absence of connection, limited autonomy, no opportunities for building competence, no support in reducing engagement with urges, and no skill development in managing cognitive load.

When a community member has an acute crisis that rises to the level of risk of harm to self or others, the individual is often hospitalized in a psychiatric unit where contact with family and friends is encouraged. Leisure or recreational activities as well as psychotherapy are expected and provided in the least restrictive environment possible. Connection with clinical staff and peers is encouraged, autonomy and choice are supported, competence is increased, and cognitive load is reduced.

In contrast, incarcerated individuals experiencing an acute psychiatric crisis are typically isolated in a locked cell, away from peers or any stimulation. They may be given heavy smocks to wear; shoes and undergarments are rarely provided. Access to television, leisure/recreational activities, time outside or visits with supportive family and friends is unlikely. In contrast to community standards and research on the management of suicidal patients, clinical contacts are often limited to brief daily risk assessments (often at the cell door) with limited targeted treatment interventions being provided.

In our experience, many individuals experience the conditions of suicide watch as a disincentive for engaging in genuine clinical interactions and will often recant suicidal ideation or other symptoms with the goal of being removed from suicide watch. Even for individuals who have not experienced suicide watch directly, the fear of isolation and humiliation along with the belief that their distress will be exacerbated by the conditions of suicide watch creates resistance to seeking help during a crisis. Thus, the data gleaned from clinical assessments of individuals in crisis used to determine if suicide watch is initiated, continued, or discontinued, are limited in utility and not likely be reliable.

Essentially, suicide watch, the practice that is used to ensure safety, increases overall risk. ... In the correctional environment, the current default is overly restrictive which causes the highest form of emotional suffering and unnecessary harm for some patients.

Essentially, suicide watch, the practice that is used to ensure safety, increases overall risk. In the mental health field beyond carceral settings, the approach to treatment is least restrictive intervention with the least risk for harm. In the correctional environment, the current default is overly restrictive which causes the highest form of emotional suffering and unnecessary harm for some patients. The authors can recall numerous patients who have shared that the circumstances of the suicide watch exacerbated old traumas or created new traumas, leading patients to wholeheartedly say, “I’m not telling anyone I’m suicidal again,” thus increasing the risk to the individual, staff and the correctional environment. In addition to the conditions and isolation of suicide watch, with the focus on monitoring and restriction of access to items that can cause harm, there is a lack of targeted treatment despite the overwhelming need.

An Alternative Model

The authors propose consideration of a crisis intervention model which balances autonomy and safety within the least restrictive setting; ultimately discontinuing the use of isolation to manage individuals in crisis.

The authors propose a model that is parallel to that available to community psychiatric patients where the patient can interact freely with staff and peers while under increased monitoring. The patient would remain in the standard correctional uniform. Level of observation would be implemented as clinically indicated based on the assessed level of risk. Ray, Perkins, and Meijer (2011) explored the use of observation for individuals in crisis in psychiatric hospitals. They found that while constant visual observation could reduce the incidence of self-injury when staff were able to intervene and stop the behavior, there were few other positive benefits. In fact, they noted that constant observation could result in adverse patient reactions including increased agitation and verbalized despair. The authors noted that engagement along with having a staff member within proximity to the patient and available to provide support and discuss the patient's urges without restricting the patient's movements or freedom served to increase the patient's trust of staff and their own ability to control their impulses, thus reducing short and long-term risk. In correctional settings, increased observation could occur in the patient's current housing unit or a specialized mental health treatment unit. Instead of the patient remaining in the cell while under observation, we propose that the observer accompany the patient to a myriad of individualized out-of-cell therapeutic activities including group therapy and recreational activities. Out-of-cell time would also include meals, visits, and phone calls unless clinically contra-indicated. When the patient wants to be in the cell, the cell door should be open to allow for engagement with peers and support for autonomy. As noted earlier, an effective model of crisis intervention should provide distraction, increase connection, foster autonomy, build competence, reduce engagement with impulsive urges, increase the difficulty of suicidal behavior, and support the individual in managing their cognitive load (Rogers, et al., 2022).

This model may seem too drastic from current practices. An alternative approach would be to transition the current system of isolation to a stepwise process of decreasing isolation. This slower process will likely be more acceptable to staff and patients. As a first step, we suggest increasing out-of-cell time as much as possible for individuals under psychiatric observation or on suicide watch. This includes access to recreational activities, outdoor space (where possible), and clinical interventions in private offices.

As a first step, we suggest increasing out-of-cell time as much as possible for individuals under psychiatric observation or on suicide watch. This includes access to recreational activities, outdoor space (where possible), and clinical interventions in private offices.

The authors recognize that there are various barriers to transition from total isolation/seclusion. To name a few, barriers such as physical plant (e.g., lack of private therapeutic space, lack of outdoor space), increased staffing needs, and security concerns/resistance are real. Resistance from both clinical and custodial staff may stem from perceptions that the incarcerated person is feigning or exaggerating symptoms or falsely reporting suicidal ideation to secure a housing change or gain access to privileges, female staff, peers, or more freedom. The perception may be that increasing engagement with others and decreasing isolation/seclusion will act as a reinforcement for individuals looking to obtain these "secondary gains" by feigning a crisis. The authors fully believe the benefits outweigh the costs. In this case, the benefits include the provision of evidence-based interventions in keeping with community standards and saving lives, while the costs include preventable death, unnecessary suffering, unsafe environments, and staff burnout. Another cost may be that individuals who are not in acute crisis gain access to increased clinical contacts. This is not a negative outcome. Close consultation between custody and clinical staff with these individuals can help determine which interventions and/or consequences will best support the individual in making more adaptive choices and decreasing violence toward themselves and others.

While there may be some growing pains and resistance, the time is long overdue to improve the provision of treatment to incarcerated patients in crisis who need suicide watch or psychiatric observation.

> "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new."
>
> — Socrates in *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* by Dan Millman

As we work to develop our model, we would love to hear your thoughts regarding improvement of mental health care for our most acute patients. We can be reached at sharen@sharenbarboza.com or maria@drmariamasotta.com.

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IACFP International News, Research, and Resources

TIA TOURVILLE / 15 MINS

We've pulled together a selection of international updates, research highlights and upcoming professional development opportunities that may be of interest to *IACFP Bulletin* readers working across prisons, probation and community corrections. If there's something happening in your region that we should know about — news, research calls, webinars or conferences, etc. — please get in touch with us at community@myiacfp.org.

1. International Updates

Incarcerated Law Students Graduate from Accredited U.S. Law School

In a major milestone for United States correctional education and justice reform, Maureen Onyelobi and Jeffery Young have become the first incarcerated individuals to earn Juris Doctor degrees from an American Bar Association accredited law school while serving their sentences.

Participating from the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee, Onyelobi and Young completed full, accredited legal curricula through a collaborative initiative involving the Minnesota Department of Corrections, Mitchell Hamline School of Law, The Legal Revolution (All Square), and the Prison to Law Pipeline project. Both graduates plan to take the bar exam and use their legal training to drive systemic change and advance public service. Read the full news release here.

NCCHC Updates Healthcare Standards for Jails and Prisons

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) has released its 2026 Standards for Health Services in Jails and Prisons, updated to reflect best practices and legal expectations. Highlights include, but are not limited to, new requirements for gender-affirming healthcare, expanded protocols for substance use disorders and chronic disease management, mandatory health insurance application support prior to release, and increased focus on infection control. The standards took effect for accredited facilities on January 1, 2026. By establishing updated guidelines around specialized treatment, mental health screenings, and reentry support, the new framework reinforces the critical role that comprehensive, ethical healthcare plays in supporting overall population well-being and successful community transition.

2. Research & Reports

Call for Papers: *CJB* Special Issue on Correctional Interventions

IACFP's journal, *Criminal Justice & Behavior* (*CJB*), is now accepting submissions for a January 2028 special issue, "*Effectiveness of Correctional Interventions and Rehabilitation Across Contexts*," co-edited by Kristy Holtfreter and Mark Olver. The issue will focus on evidence-based, desistance-oriented, and culturally adapted frameworks across adult and juvenile settings, with priority given to comparative international research and implementation fidelity. Submissions are due May 1, 2027. Accepted papers will be paired with practitioner perspectives and featured as summaries in the *IACFP Bulletin*. See full details on page 18.

UNODC Brief Highlights Global Prison Overcrowding and Pretrial Detention

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released a new Prison Matters brief marking 2026's International Nelson Mandela Day (July 18), detailing critical global trends across correctional systems. Drawing on data from 2024, the report reveals that 11.6 million people are incarcerated worldwide, an approximately 5% increase over the past decade. Globally, over one-third (3.6 million) of all prisoners remain in pre-trial detention, while prison systems in 64% of reporting countries operate above 100% capacity, with more than 25% operating at over 150% capacity.

By highlighting the widespread systemic pressures of overcrowding, regional disparities in pre-trial detention, and safety risks behind bars, the brief emphasizes the urgent need for international collaboration, legal reform, and enhanced behavioral health supports to ensure humane conditions and effective justice systems worldwide.

3. Workshops, Webinars, & Continuing Professional Development

IACFP Webinar Series: *Making Correctional Research Make Sense*

IACFP's Make Correctional Research Make Sense webinar series continues on September 23rd (EDT). Designed to bridge the gap between academia and practice, Session 2 will focus on implementing the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model in under-resourced settings. Drs Shelley Brown and Mark Olver will emphasize practical, evidence-informed strategies for identifying realistic and appropriate interventions when the resources to do so are limited. Learn more and find information to register on our website.

ITA Training Opportunity

The *In the Act* team (article featured in IACFP's Mar/April 2026 *Bulletin*) has partnered with CONCEPT Continuing and Professional Studies at Palo Alto University in California to offer two webinars. The full, two-part (3.5 CE hours per day, 7 CE hours total) train-the-trainer style session will include reviewing program goals, key learning tools, and effective group facilitation skills, and will allow attendees to practice delivering training segments in a safe and supportive environment.

Register here: November 2 – 3, 2026

4. Conferences

6th Australasian Youth Justice Conference

September 30 – October 2
Adelaide, South Australia

The 6th Australasian Youth Justice Conference focuses on place-based, community-driven solutions to address diversity and overrepresentation within the youth justice system. Co-hosted by the Australasian Youth Justice Administrators and Swinburne University's Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, the event brings together researchers, practitioners, and advocates to emphasize culturally grounded interventions and weave youth voices into evidence-informed practice. The preliminary event program has been released on the conference website.

Connect to Protect – Children & Youth at Risk

October 5 – 6
Athens, Greece

The *Connect to Protect Conference* in Athens serves as a vital international forum for strengthening child protection systems and addressing violence against vulnerable youth. The event bridges the gap between research and frontline practice, featuring insights from global leaders on safeguarding children's rights in an age of digital harm and social crisis. Attendees will explore trauma-informed prevention strategies and rights-based policies through collaborative sessions and networking events.

International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA) Annual Conference

October 25–30, 2026
Belfast, Northern Ireland

ICPA's 2026 Annual Conference will bring together the international corrections community to address worldwide rising custody numbers and complex risk profiles through collaboration with government, research bodies, non-profits, and local communities. The program features sessions on global prison health data, lived experience in justice reform, relational approaches to reintegration, sport-based interventions, and more. Some additional highlights include a Welcome Reception at Belfast City Hall, the 20th Anniversary celebration of the *Advancing Corrections* journal, an Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner, and facility visits across local prisons.

6th North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference (N6)

The 6th *North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology* Conference (N6) is officially scheduled for June 3-5, 2027, in Victoria, Canada. Hosted by the Canadian Psychological Association, this international gathering will bring together global researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to exchange innovative work at the cutting edge of criminal justice and correctional psychology. The lineup of keynote speakers is already locked in, and interested attendees should keep an eye out as the call for abstracts is set to open soon.

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior*

Effectiveness of Correctional Interventions and Rehabilitation Across Contexts

Criminal Justice and Behavior (*CJB*) invites submissions for a special issue focused on the effectiveness of correctional interventions and rehabilitation across diverse populations and contexts. The issue is co-edited by Kristy Holtfreter and Mark Olver.

This special issue seeks to advance understanding of what works, for whom, and under what conditions in correctional intervention. Contributions may examine a range of approaches, including but not limited to cognitive-behavioral and other evidence-informed interventions, desistance-oriented, strengths-based, and recovery-informed models, as well as other emerging and established therapeutic frameworks. We particularly welcome submissions that address:

- The effectiveness of interventions across adult and juvenile populations, in custody and in the community
- Desistance-oriented, strengths-based, and recovery-informed approaches within correctional contexts, including peer-led models of intervention
- Adaptation of interventions for culturally specific (e.g., Indigenous populations) or underrepresented groups (e.g., women)
- Implementation challenges, including institutional and organizational contexts shaping intervention effectiveness (e.g., staff engagement, program fidelity, and resource constraints)
- Comparative and international perspectives on correctional intervention, including work from underrepresented and low-resource regions

Submissions should follow all standard manuscript style and format guidelines available on the journal's website. Authors are encouraged to clearly describe the sociocultural characteristics of study participants and to consider how these factors may shape intervention processes and outcomes.

Accepted articles will be paired with brief expert or practitioner perspectives; these will be invited and coordinated by the co-editors. Accepted articles may also be featured in the *IACFP Bulletin* through brief practitioner-oriented summaries prepared in coordination with the co-editors.

Submissions are due no later than May 1, 2027. Earlier submissions are welcome. Manuscripts submitted for consideration in the special issue will receive expedited peer review, with initial decisions expected by July 1, 2027. The anticipated publication date for the special issue is January 2028.

Manuscripts not selected for the special issue may be considered for a regular issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior*.

Please direct any inquiries to CJBeditor@gmail.com with "Special Issue" in the subject line.

Criminal Justice & Behavior Practitioner Summaries

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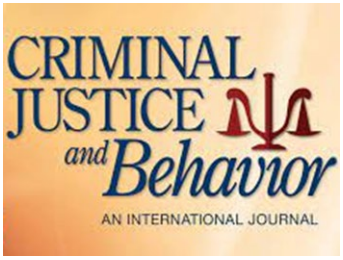

Authors publishing articles in *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (*CJB*) now include practitioner summaries to bridge the gap between research and practice in forensic and correctional psychology fields across international jurisdictions. Below, we highlight some of the most practitioner-relevant summaries which have been approved for publication in *CJB*, and may have already appeared in OnLine First or in a printed journal or may be scheduled for publication. In this issue of the *IACFP Bulletin*, included articles address a wide variety of topics, including familial influences on youth and adult justice involvement, correctional staff identities and wellness, and court involved therapy for sexually exploited youth.

Bellair & Lopez (2026). **Differential Reinforcement in Context: Prior Imprisonment as a Condition for Kin-Based Criminal Influence on Recidivism.** https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548261459670

> "While families are often viewed as protective, they can serve as primary conduits for antisocial influence among individuals "embedded" in the correctional system. This research indicates that differential reinforcement (DR) from family members, including direct encouragement and anticipated social rewards for crime, more than triples recidivism risk for men with a history of prior incarceration. Crucially, this effect is specific to kin networks and does not extend to non-kin peers. Consequently, policy should shift toward kin-targeted interventions and robust screening of familial risk factors. Since returning citizens rely heavily on kin for survival needs like housing, familial approval is acutely consequential. Effective reentry strategies must include family-based therapy and subsidized housing alternatives to prevent individuals from having to choose between homelessness and returning to high-risk home environments."

Cloud et al. (2026). **"It has given us an opportunity to reinvent ourselves": Exploring a Novel Intervention to Recalibrate the Professional Identities of Prison Staff.** https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548261473800

> "This study reports findings from an evaluation of the Contact Mentor Program, a pilot initiative that the Oregon Department of Corrections adapted from Norway's contact officer model. The program gives prison staff a formal role in helping incarcerated people set goals, prevent and de-escalate conflicts, identify reentry needs, and connect with education, housing, employment, and other services. Staff who served as contact mentors described greater autonomy, clearer support from leadership, better communication with incarcerated people, and a stronger sense of purpose. Some also reported less stress at work. These findings suggest that changing some of the duties and expectations of prison staff, including greater emphasis on dynamic security, mentorship, and reentry support, may benefit staff purpose and well-being. They also suggest that sustaining or scaling this approach requires dedicated time, training, supervision, access to programs and reentry resources, and clear institutional support."

Lakshman et al. (2026). **Between Protection and Coercion: Survivor and Stakeholder Perspectives on Court-Involved Therapy for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in Atlanta, Georgia.** https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548261459661

> "Using qualitative data from 31 survivors and multidisciplinary stakeholders in Atlanta, Georgia, this study examines how court-involved therapy for commercially sexually exploited youth can be structured to center survivor autonomy, prevent retraumatization, and engage families meaningfully. Effective court-involved care is not primarily about program design or court structure. Instead, outcomes hinge on whether survivors are treated as active agents rather than passive recipients, whether courts distinguish between mandating attendance and mandating participation, and whether families are integrated into treatment planning rather than treated as an afterthought. Survivors were unequivocal: peer mentorship, survivor-led practitioner training, and meaningful involvement in program design are not optional enhancements; they are prerequisites for trust and engagement. For correctional leaders, forensic psychologists, and juvenile justice practitioners, the takeaway is clear: embedding survivor voice at every level, preserving autonomy within mandated frameworks, and investing in family-facing services are critical to effective implementation."

Parker et al. (2026). **Inside and Out: Examining the Individual, Environmental, and Organizational Predictors of Personal and Professional Wellness Among Prison Staff.** https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548261467874

> "Correctional staff routinely face exposure to violence, trauma, and occupational stressors that can undermine their mental, physical, and professional well-being. Using survey data from 585 employees across five Minnesota prisons, this study examined how individual characteristics, work environment factors, and organizational conditions relate to nine indicators of staff wellness, including burnout, job satisfaction, perceptions of safety, psychological wellness, and sleep quality. While demographic and environmental factors explained some variation in outcomes, staff perceptions of organizational policies and practices emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor across all wellness measures. Employees who believed facility policies were transparent, beneficial, and supportive of daily operations reported significantly better personal and professional wellness. These findings suggest that correctional leaders can strengthen workforce wellness not only through staffing and safety initiatives, but also by improving policy transparency, communication, and opportunities for staff feedback and organizational buy-in."

Rice & Walsh (2026). **The Gendered Nature of Community- and Family-Level Adversity: Perspectives from Justice-Involved Youth in Northern Ireland.** https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548261456567

> "This study investigated the gendered nature of community- and family-level adversity amongst young offenders in Northern Ireland. Socioeconomic deprivation, while a gender-neutral criminogenic need, does not exert the same effects on boys and girls. Young people reported their experience of gender-based differences in treatment, particularly by police. Family dysfunction appeared to impact girls more acutely. Girls in this study were more likely to describe a lack of relational safety as being precipitous to youth justice contact. Girls engaged differently with youth justice practitioners, valuing the supportive and trusting relationships in the absence of family and community support. This study underscores the importance of early, gender-specific interventions that respond to the lived realities of girls, before justice contact, particularly in jurisdictions outside of the US where these interventions are less common. Further, our study points to the need for gender-sensitivity training for justice professionals and investment in community-based supports."

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International Association for Correctional and Forensic Psychology (IACFP)

Promoting evidence-based and practitioner-informed practices and research to support correctional and forensic psychologists and other helping professionals who work with justice-involved individuals since 1954.

Learn more about IACFP or become a member at www.myiacfp.org.

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