



Career Advisor Guide

BC Corrections—Adult Custody Division

Your resource for helping people explore careers as correctional officers.

Inside:

- BC Corrections—Adult Custody labour market information
- Engaging activities for clients
- Learning outcomes to assist you with facilitation
- Reading materials and discussion questions
- Training and hiring information



Where ideas work



Contact Us

Visit our website, where we provide more information on correctional officer careers, including the application and training processes, and contact information for recruiting officers:

employment.gov.bc.ca/corrections

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Introduction

The Adult Custody Division of BC Corrections offers meaningful careers to people who have the skills and personal qualities needed in peace officers. Every day, correctional officers have the opportunity to make a difference in their communities and to help create change in offenders by modelling positive behaviours. BC Corrections—Adult Custody Division would like to increase awareness of careers in corrections (in provincial correctional centres) and provide a more accurate perspective on the work done in this sector. By helping people to understand the nature of our work as well as the characteristics and skill sets of those who do it, we hope to encourage more career searchers to consider opportunities in this field.

This guide is designed to support and assist you, career advisors, in providing information on careers in corrections with your students and clients. The first section, Labour Market Information, provides a workforce overview of the organization to familiarize you with the BC Corrections—

Adult Custody Division employment sector. The sections that follow offer activities for you to present in a classroom setting or individual session as well as information to assist you with attaining the necessary learning outcomes for your students and clients. Feel free to modify the activities to suit the informational and learning needs of your clientele, and print out and distribute the articles in the appendix of this guide for use during the activities. The activities cover a range of subjects—from a summary of the organization to situational responses for correctional officers—and all are designed to help you provide the students and adults interested in correctional careers with the information they need to make informed career decisions.

For more information on careers with BC Corrections, visit our website: employment.gov.bc.ca/corrections.



Labour Market Information

The following information is current as of December 2009.

All Staff—BC Corrections, Adult Custody Division

Currently Employed: 1,553

Gender

Female: 34% Male: 66%

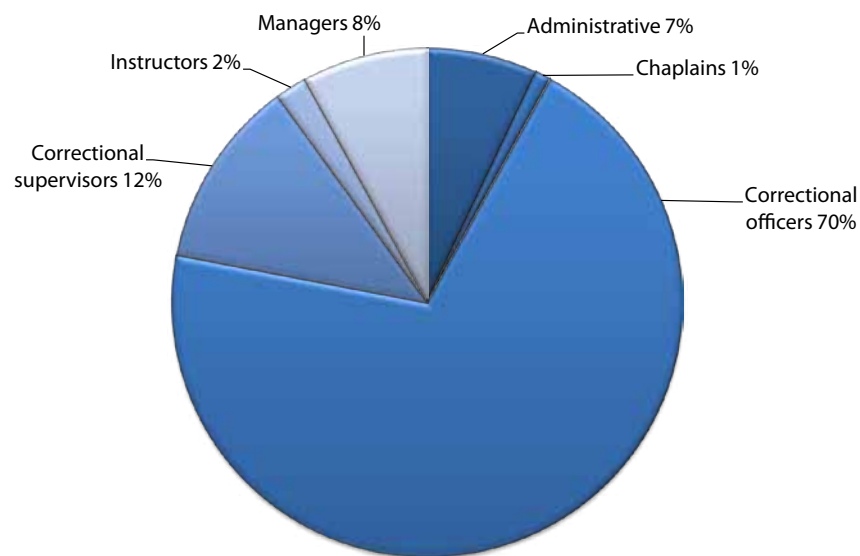
Age Groups

20–24 5%
25–34 22%
35–44 33%
45–54 30%
55–64 9%
65+ 1%

Years of Service

Less than 2 years 20%
2–5 years 20%
6–10 years 14%
11–15 years 16%
16–20 years 14%
21–25 years 10%
26–30 years 4%
31 or more years 2%

Positions of Employment



Annual Growth 2010–2013: 3.1%

New buildings in Maple Ridge and Surrey will create 194 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions over the next four years:

- Alouette Correctional Centre for Women: 50 new FTEs by fall 2010. (*As per BC Corrections, Adult Custody policy, only female officers supervise female inmates.*)
- Surrey Pretrial Services Centre: 144 new FTEs by fall 2013.

Retirement

(Percentage of current employees who will be eligible to retire.)

Within the next 4 years . . .	15%
In 5–7 years	8%
In 8–10 years	11%
In 11–20 years	35%
In more than 20 years . . .	31%

Employment by Region

Northern B.C.: 177 (11%)

Prince George Regional Correctional Centre: 177

Thompson Okanagan: 181 (12%)

Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre: 181

Lower Mainland: 839 (54%)

Alouette Correctional Centre for Women: 85

Ford Mountain Correctional Centre: 43

Fraser Regional Correctional Centre: 255

North Fraser Pretrial Centre: 261

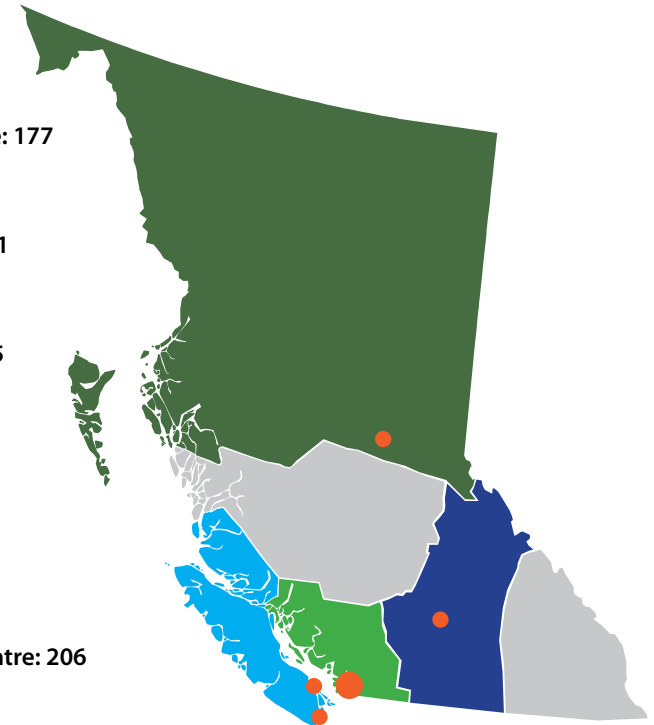
Surrey Pretrial Services Centre: 195

Vancouver Island: 356 (23%)

Nanaimo Correctional Centre: 120

Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre: 206

Headquarters: 30



Correctional Officers

Currently Employed: 1090

National Occupational Classification (NOC) code: 6462 Correctional Service Officers

Salary

Hourly wage: \$19.99 – \$30.18*

Correctional officers progress through the steps of the correctional officer growth series, from training to the full working level, upon successfully completing the associated training, the required number of hours and a satisfactory performance appraisal. New hires begin earning an hourly training wage of \$19.99 and progress throughout their career to the maximum hourly wage of \$30.18. It takes about 5.5 years of full-time work to reach the maximum salary level.

All new officers are offered regular status employment as an employee of the BC Public Service with full health and dental benefits, vacation, pension, life insurance and access to numerous employee programs and services. In many cases, our correctional centres offer new hires part-time positions that guarantee 35 hours of work bi-weekly. Full-time positions work 70 hours bi-weekly.

*Includes a temporary market adjustment.

Retirement—Correctional Officers

(Percentage of current correctional officers who will be eligible to retire.)

Within the next 4 years . . . 9%

In 5–7 years 6%

In 8–10 years 9%

In 11–20 years 34%

In more than 20 years . . . 42%



3. Assessing Skills: The Role of a Correctional Officer



Advisor Notes

Correctional officers must use communication and leadership skills in their roles to effectively manage both individuals and large groups of inmates in a direct supervision model. These skills also include listening, problem-solving, observation, managing body language, word choice and tone, as well as the ability to project confidence and maturity. The article, "The Role of a Correctional Officer" (see Appendix D), shows how these skills are put into action on a daily basis.

Activity summary: Through reading the article and answering situational-response questions, participants consider what a correctional officer does and what skills are required to perform the role effectively.

Activity outcomes: Participants grasp the importance of their own behaviour in effectively resolving conflict.



Suggested time required:

- Activity 3.1: 30–40 minutes
- Activity 3.2: 20–30 minutes.

Activity 3.1



1. Before participants read "The Role of a Correctional Officer" (located in Appendix D), ask them to think about what types of skills a correctional officer might need to manage individuals and large groups of inmates. They can make a list of these skills on a sheet of paper.



2. Now, ask participants to read the article.



3. After reading the article, facilitate a discussion on what types of skills the officers in the article displayed in the real-life situations they described. Are they the same skills as the ones the participants previously wrote down? In what ways are they different?

Handwriting practice area with 15 horizontal lines and three circular markers on the left side.

BC Corrections—Adult Custody Division

The people, places and priorities that help to maintain safe and secure custody in provincial correctional centres.

The Adult Custody Division of BC Corrections is responsible for the secure housing of remanded inmates (those who are awaiting trial), immigration



Teamwork and service: Employees with a diverse set of skills and functions work together to protect communities and reduce reoffending.

detainees and offenders who have been sentenced to less than two years. Within that time, they provide inmates with tools to learn better ways of living. “It’s what we do with the people while they are in our custody that fulfills our mission,” says Pete Coulson, Provincial Director of the division. Through programs, role modelling and education, correctional officers can lengthen the time it takes inmates to

reoffend, reduce the offence’s severity and, in some cases, stop the cycle altogether.

“Many in our custody have never experienced respectful behaviour—they don’t know what it is,” says Marnie Mayhew, Director of Programs and Strategic Services. “Our officers play an instrumental role in making change by modelling better behaviours and showing [the inmates] how they might do things differently on the outside.” Officers interact directly with inmates through programs designed to address each person’s specific behavioural and social problems. The programs are constantly tested and refined to make sure the correctional officers can, and do, help people become less dangerous. “The officers and other staff here want to know they’ve made a difference, whether at the end of an hour, a shift or their career,” says Coulson.

Our People

Bonnie Smith, one of the Adult Custody Division’s 1,100 correctional officers, isn’t who most people expect. “I surprise people because I’m only five-foot-two and I started my training at 38,” she says. Like many of her fellow officers and the 450 support staff members in the organization, Smith brought a wide range of earlier work experience to her career in corrections. As a mental health officer, she relies

particularly on her experience as a parent. “Being a mom taught me to be organized, to multitask, to listen and to have a sense of humour,” says Smith. “It’s about having good communication skills, and caring about the well-being of others.”

Aj Dhaliwal, a fellow officer, began working in corrections at 19 to get experience for joining the police force. “But once I started working here, the rest was history. I love putting on the uniform and going to work every day.” Dhaliwal says that working in corrections is about having a good outlook, being responsible and being mature. “If you are negative, that will show. You get more out of the inmates if you are approachable and show you care.”

Our Facilities

B.C.’s nine provincial facilities are like self-contained communities, with complex internal systems that must move like clockwork every day and every hour. Each year the officers at these facilities admit over 23,000 inmates, who are clothed, fed, educated, employed, trained, counselled and provided with medical, dental and spiritual services. All of these routines must be provided within structures that are safe, efficient and effective in creating change.

The Fraser Regional Correctional Centre in Maple Ridge, the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre,



Top: Surrey Pretrial Services Centre
Middle: Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre
Bottom: Alouette Correctional Centre for Women

the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre and the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre in Victoria securely house inmates classified under a range of risk levels and offer vocational, rehabilitative and work programs. Two pretrial centres, the Surrey Pretrial Services Centre and the North Fraser Pretrial Centre in Port Coquitlam, house inmates awaiting trial (on remand).

Three medium-security centres take advantage of B.C.’s natural beauty to provide camp-like settings in which inmates can learn life skills that will help them in their transition back into the community. Ford Mountain Correctional Centre in Chilliwack has special programming for sex offenders and mentally disordered inmates. Alouette Correctional Centre for Women in Maple Ridge and the Nanaimo Correctional Centre have units with innovative programming that addresses the roots of offenders’ criminal behaviour.

These facilities have reached capacity, so new buildings are under construction. New technologies and security systems will also be installed at the existing centres to ensure that all staff and inmates have the most secure environment possible.

Our Evolution

Pete Coulson says people who work in corrections today are much more empowered to contribute to the organization than when he started as an officer in 1984. “In the past it was more hierarchical. Now we try to create an environment where people are comfortable asking questions or offering ideas, and they can feel confident they will get feedback.” This new openness has fostered creativity and innovation, says Coulson.

Carmen Gress, Director of Research, Planning and Offender Programming, says

no program can remain static. “If it isn’t working, we change it until it does. If it is, we try to make it work even better.” She says that B.C. is a leader in research and in teaching its officers to be role models to encourage better behaviour in inmates. “A lot of the provinces are now moving forward to switch from housing criminals to being places of opportunity. I think we jumped on that faster, and we stand out in our ability to collect and interpret data.”

Innovations now in development at BC Corrections focus on literacy and education as tools that help prevent violence and crime. Improving the way officers communicate with inmates is also a priority. “Our mission will not change,” says Coulson, “but how we accomplish it through our programs will continue to develop as we learn more.” ■

Our mission: As corrections professionals, we provide safe and secure custody of inmates and deliver programs that promote public safety and reduce criminal behaviour.

Giving Back to People and Places

Constructive experience creates valuable services that make a difference to communities everywhere.

*A fortress on a windswept island.
A walled castle, lit by searchlights.
A population cut off from the world.*



Managers Montee and Maurice see how community programs such as this one make a difference. At the Allco Fish Hatchery in Maple Ridge, inmates have raised and released more than 35-million salmon fry into local watersheds.

These stereotypical images of prisons conflict with the very modern reality of the province's correctional service. The inmates currently residing in British Columbia's correctional centres were only recently in the community, and most will be there again soon. In fact, the average stay for provincial offenders is just 30 days for remand custody and 56 days for sentenced

inmates. For the short time that inmates are in their care, correctional officers know that working with the outside world, that is, the community, to teach inmates a better path is the best way to a safer community.

"These guys live in my town," says Allan Teschuk, a correctional officer at Prince George Regional Correctional Centre (PGRCC). He often meets former inmates on the street and at a local therapeutic centre where he volunteers to lead healing circles. In fact, since tobacco—which is an important aspect of some First Nation ceremonies—is not allowed inside correctional centres, inmates will often ask him to offer some for their prayers when he is off work. "It's a huge step of humility and bravery for them to do that, and to know they won't be laughed at by me or the other inmates," says Teschuk. He says he never "changes hats" when he enters or leaves PGRCC. "It seems like a fine line, but it isn't. I am always who I am as an individual: a father of four daughters who wants to create a future that is prosperous and secure."

Work programs are a central mechanism for providing offenders with tools to turn their lives around. "They give the inmates a chance to integrate and learn life skills," says Montee Dunbar, an assistant deputy warden at Fraser Regional Correctional Centre (FRCC). Along with her colleague, Maurice Weistra, she oversees the centre's vocational training and core programs designed to teach participants how to recognize and overcome destructive behaviours.

While Dunbar works with offenders inside, Weistra manages outside inmate crews who work within—and for—the community. After passing a risk assessment, the inmates assist with flood sandbagging, road maintenance and forest management at a local tree farm, setting up the fairground for the city of Maple Ridge and identifying and removing invasive weeds for the Ministry of Environment. Crews at other facilities build sheds and outhouses for parks, sort and assess merchandise for charity thrift stores and work alongside forest-fire crews to move, set up and manage base camps. One of Weistra's crews was even responsible for setting up tents for military personnel at the 2010 Winter Olympics sites.

Two community partnerships at FRCC are particular sources of pride for Dunbar and Weistra, and for the inmates who participate. Each year, their crews travel to the Zajac Ranch, a non-profit camp for children with disabilities, to construct jungle gyms, pools, docks and trails. FRCC also works with the Alouette River Management Society and the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to run the Allco Fish Hatchery, a facility that is just a short drive from the centre. In the program's 30 years, inmates have raised and released more than 35-million salmon fry into local watersheds. When the adult salmon return to the river to spawn,



Left: The lumber mill at Nanaimo Correctional Centre
Centre: Bicycle repair program at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre
Right: Female inmates at Prince George Regional Correctional Centre make blankets for newborns

inmates corral and capture them to collect new eggs. “Sometimes it looks like you could walk across the river on the backs of the fish,” says Weistra.

Inmates earn a wage while gaining valuable trades experience they can use after their release. What’s more, they get a chance to feel what it’s like to do work that has a larger purpose and benefits their community. “They like to be able to give back,” says Dunbar. “We get letters telling us how they’ve learned to think in new ways.” The community, too, often reaches out in return. The operators of the Maple Ridge fairground recently gave the inmate work crew an appreciation party, and every September more than 1,000 members of the public come to the Allco hatchery for Rivers Day, where the inmates flip hamburgers, tell people about the release process and clean fish that kids catch in the overstocked trout pond.

Other projects contribute in a global sense. The inmates at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre refurbish damaged bicycles and donate them

to international development projects. A program at North Fraser Pretrial Centre collects and measures eyeglasses to ship to third-world countries. Bonnie Smith, a mental health liaison officer who started a program that helps imprisoned women in Sudan is now hoping to develop new projects to raise awareness of mental illness in that country and at home. “Working here, I feel I make a difference every day,” she says. Smith runs the Willow program for inmates with mental health disorders at the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women—a program named by its participants after a tree that is flexible and grows fast. The women in the program make quilts and preemie hats for medical centres and sew bags for their fellow inmates to use to carry their belongings on their release.

Like Teschuk and many of her co-workers, Smith tries to contribute outside of work, in her case by volunteering in her community. Other BC Corrections staff participate in fundraising efforts for heart, stroke and cancer foundations, adopt-a-family

programs, violence prevention organizations, food and toy drives as well as many local and international causes. As peace officers, correctional staff join in the World Police and Fire Games, and those who are members of the Provincial Honour Guard take part in memorial ceremonies.

“There’s a real sense of community in a very tangible way,” says Marnie Mayhew, Director of Programs and Strategic Services at the BC Corrections head office in Victoria. “People would be surprised at the human atmosphere.” She says their efforts must go beyond the safe control of inmates to fulfill a larger mandate. “The big picture is about more than law and order. It’s about trying to inspire people and model for them a different way of conducting themselves.” By reaching beyond the facility to integrate the outside world into the correctional environment of offenders in custody, employees turn many small contributions into one greater one: a safer community. ■

Individual Values Assessment

Do I model the professional values of the BC Public Service?

This checklist provides employees and supervisors with examples of behaviours to guide them in their daily work and help bring to life the professional values of the BC Public Service.

In considering employment with BC Corrections (a branch within the BC Public Service), how do your values align with ours?

Integrity

- I would uphold the Standards of Conduct for the BC Public Service and Corrections Branch employees*
- I make the individual choice to do what is right for the right reasons

Courage

- I take thoughtful risks in generating and implementing ideas
- I have a strong bias for action
- I have imagination and empower others to take initiative even in uncertain environments

- I can see the possibilities with a future orientation

Teamwork

- I build trust by respecting the ideas and contributions of others
- I encourage new ideas and communicate how the work of the team contributes to larger goals
- I contribute to positive engagement of staff
- I support others in succeeding and share information freely as appropriate

Passion

- I take pride in my work
- I am excited about seeing ideas and people succeed
- I am a model of motivation and positive influence for others

Service

- I have a clear focus on creating positive outcomes for citizens
- I work collaboratively across government to enable success proactively

- I value different viewpoints
- I place organizational objectives ahead of personal goals

Curiosity

- I continuously look for better ways to accomplish goals
- I continuously learn and develop myself
- I welcome ideas from others
- I learn from failures as well as successes

Accountability

- I set clear and measurable goals and I measure success
- I stay focused on the outcomes government is trying to achieve
- I take responsibility for decisions and completing tasks
- I am consistently proactive in decisions
- I display persistence and tenacity to overcome obstacles

*Corrections Branch employees serve as officers of the court and/or peace officers, and are entrusted with confidential information related to clients and matters before the courts. To comply with these responsibilities, Corrections Branch employees adhere to special standards of on- and off-duty conduct beyond those expected of regular government employees.

The Role of a Correctional Officer



“We have the ability to make positive change.”—Monica, Correctional Officer

The nearly 1,100 correctional officers who work within the Adult Custody Division of BC Corrections represent the front line in the organization’s mission to make the community safer. Achieving this comes down to two basic duties:

(1) creating a safe and secure environment for inmates, staff and the surrounding community, and (2) promoting change in the behaviour of offenders through programs and positive role modelling. BC Corrections operates with a direct supervision model, which means there is no barrier between the correctional officers and the inmates they supervise. It’s a challenging job that requires skill, integrity, strong values and a lot of personal resources, but it also provides incredible opportunities to make a real difference in people’s lives.

Denean Jones, a recruiting officer for BC Corrections, says that communication is the most important skill a correctional officer can have when working with inmates. “You need to be able to build rapport, be clear and concise, and use body language, tone and word choice effectively. On your first day you will walk into a facility and be among all the inmates living on the unit, a situation which comes with intimidation—and that has nothing to do with size or gender.” Jones says she looks for candidates with leadership skills who are “team players, good communicators and have integrity,” and who can bring their personal strengths to work. Officers must

project confidence and maturity, be able to stay calm in high-stress situations and be good at problem solving. By modelling accountability, maturity and respectful behaviour, officers motivate inmates to respond in the same way.

But even while they build rapport with inmates, Jones says that officers must always remember where they are, and never get complacent. Each facility has trained emergency-response teams to handle serious incidents, but on an ongoing basis every officer must be alert, observant, analytical and able to defuse potential incidents. “We’re always putting out small fires,” says Jones. “Inmates are dealing with the stress of waiting for trials, family problems, mental health disorders, withdrawal—they don’t want to be there to begin with. We work with conflict every day, every shift.” Correctional officers must learn to quickly analyze and dissect problems, then use their judgment to solve them.

“On a shift, you are doing many different things at a time,” says Jones. “There are up to 60 inmates on the unit with you; two are asking you questions, the phone is ringing, the radio is broadcasting, two inmates are coming back from recreation, three are being sent out, and there is a lot of background noise.” Jones says correctional officers need to be able to prioritize and be able to instantly create an organized plan for dealing with all of these issues in turn.



Monica Franz, a correctional officer, says she learned fast how to think ahead in order to keep things running smoothly. She supervises outdoor crews at the Ford Mountain Correctional Centre, a medium-security facility in Chilliwack. “You constantly assess, watch and observe. It can be challenging, but it sure does make you grow.” Before taking her current role in the operations department, Franz worked in programs, where she helped inmates through a series of sessions designed to give them life skills and learn better behaviours, such as cognitive skills, substance-abuse management, developing respectful relationships and preventing violence. “There is a lot of one-to-one contact. You get to know their stories and backgrounds, and how they got where they are.” The challenge in that role is to meet everyone’s needs, and to balance



the interests of inmates who have diverse backgrounds.

Franz says you have to be a “people person” to work in corrections, not just in terms of working with the inmates, but because of the close-knit atmosphere among staff. “In all the facilities I’ve worked in, the other officers have been excellent. There’s a lot of support and teamwork,” she says. Correctional officers depend on each other for safety and security, plus the unique work environment fosters a strong sense of camaraderie. Career development programs at BC Corrections tap into that team environment to help staff members develop through mentorship programs and multigenerational learning partnerships.

As peace officers, correctional officers share a common purpose, which comes with

shared responsibilities. Officers have a duty to protect the rights of inmates and uphold various acts and policies, including the Privacy Act—which often amplifies the sense of being on a team, since many things that happen in a work day can’t be discussed outside the facility. All new correctional officers swear an oath of service and are expected to live up to a code of conduct, off duty and on. Keeping the public trust is paramount and expectations of professionalism are high.

“I’m proud to be a correctional officer,” says Franz. “I think the job title defines perfectly what we do: we correct the inmates’ behaviour,” she says. “We try to address what they’re doing wrong and show them how they could improve. And we hope they will take that into the community with them.” ■

An Interview with a Recruiting Officer



Recruiting officer Denean meets with applicants who come from many different backgrounds.

Denean Jones is a correctional supervisor responsible for recruitment for the Fraser Regional Correctional District. In her 20 years of experience in corrections she has worked in secure and medium units, within open-custody centres, as a bail supervisor and at the Justice Institute of British Columbia as an

Adult Custody Division training instructor. We asked Jones to tell us what she has learned about what it takes to be a correctional officer, and what she looks for when hiring new recruits.

Do new applicants often have false ideas about correctional work? What is the reality?

When I talk to people at job fairs, I find many do believe that working in BC Corrections is similar to what they see on TV shows like *Oz* and *Prison Break*. I try to dispel the myths by describing a modern living unit in a provincial correctional facility: rooms with doors, all surrounding a common area where inmates eat and participate in programs while a single officer works among them. There is no barrier between the officer and 40 to 60 adult inmates who are not happy to be in jail; on a day-to-day basis, brain is more important than brawn. I tell them that

they need to be able to use their wits and motivate people through how they present themselves and by showing confidence.

Describe for me a typical applicant. Are they usually young?

I don't think there is a "typical" recruit anymore. It's now common for people to have many careers in a lifetime. During the past economic downturn, we started to see a different age of applicant come into the mix, and people from all different types of employment backgrounds. We want people who are well-rounded, experienced and who work with confidence and have a mature approach.

But the most effective teams have a generational mix, and we need younger people too. I remember a 19-year-old applicant who convinced me he is capable because he showed how he had been working to support himself since he was sixteen. He had even already set up an RRSP account for himself. That showed a maturity that many don't have at that age. What matters is experience and being a good fit for the role, and you can see that in how we have set up the application process.

What personal qualities do you look for in a correctional officer? How do you assess them?

There's a lot you can tell from an application. If one 25-year-old has had 17 jobs, and another has

had two, the second has shown me loyalty and commitment to an employer. We look for people who can withhold judgment and operate in a fair and consistent manner. We look for signs that someone is curious, open to different types of people, excited to learn new things, respectful of those who have more experience and able to take constructive criticism. We look for morals, honesty and integrity, with a strong sense of accountability. When you work in law enforcement you must consider your personal choices and exercise boundaries as you're going to be scrutinized on duty and off.

How do you know what kind of lifestyle an applicant leads?

Your application to BC Corrections will be scrutinized. Applicants must also undergo a criminal record check and their fingerprints are sent through a federal database. We do a full background check, including interviews with family and neighbours and voice-stress analysis [lie-detector test] to verify the lifestyle questions. We wouldn't hire someone who lied on the application, or tried to hide a past mistake. The mistake might have been forgivable but if they aren't open about it, we know we can't trust them.

What are the requirements for getting hired?

The basic requirements are a Class 5 B.C. driver's licence, Canadian citizenship or Landed Immigrant



status, a grade 12 diploma or GED, an Occupational First Aid Level 1 certificate and a minimum age of nineteen. You have to pass a standard physical fitness test, as well as an English language proficiency test. Finally, you have to know your way around a computer, since all of our documents are electronic and much of the training is online. Beyond those specific requirements, we look for confidence; great communication skills; problem-solving and conflict-management experience; leadership skills; and an ability to multitask and prioritize. From submitting the application to hire, the assessment and screening process takes about 6 to 12 weeks.

How competitive is the hiring process? Do applicants need experience in the justice system or in security?

We have applications from people who have worked as sheriffs and police officers, people with military or security backgrounds; and from social workers—all individuals with a high degree of confidence, leadership skills and experience. To make your application look more attractive, I suggest taking post-secondary courses in social sciences like law, criminology or sociology, or any classes or training

from the Justice Institute of BC. Computer or self-defence courses are helpful if you need development there. There are also companies that can train you to pass the physical fitness test. Volunteer experience is important, so include any involvement in community policing, victim services, shelters, Big Brothers or Big Sisters, or even coaching or team sports. Think about the qualities you need to show, and spend a lot of time and care on that application to give us the kinds of details that make you stand out. We see a lot of applications and it's your one chance to impress us.

What training is provided after being hired?

In the six weeks of paid training, you will cover interpersonal communication skills, ethics and code of conduct, safety and security, offender safety supervision, control-room monitoring, case management programs and services, use of force, computer systems, organizational structure, staff systems and development, and an overview of the administrative processes.

Why should someone consider corrections as a career? What are the rewards?

There are the obvious benefits: medical, dental, extended health, pension, scholarships, student loan forgiveness and great work-life balance. There's flexibility and career options, and the ability to direct your own career and move up if you want. We are one of the top employers in Canada for all of those reasons. But there's more to it than that. My motto is that a person can make a difference in just one

life. It can be frustrating to work hard with inmates, to build a rapport and give them solid release plans, and yet see them come back time and time again. But after a while you learn that you can and do make a difference, even if it is in small ways, or with just one person. For example, officers make a difference by modelling positive behaviour. So you say "good morning" and get "good morning" back. You teach them how to be respectful with people. You model for them these positive behavioural skills, and it improves their life skills in custody and out in the community; it helps their parents, children, future employers and everyone around them. You have a huge amount of influence, and you need to use it in a positive way.

Do you have any advice to someone who wants to apply to BC Corrections?

I always say, it's not a job, it's a career. You don't wake up one morning and decide to be a correctional officer—it's something you prepare for and work toward. It's much more serious, much more gratifying, and has much more responsibility than many other choices. You need to do an assessment of yourself to determine if it is something you want to do, and then make a plan and set goals for the things you are going to achieve to make your application competitive the first time you apply. Don't just throw in an application, because it's very evident when someone hasn't put in the effort. We have a lot of pride in what we do, and we want people who are going to share that pride. ■



Where ideas work