

**Boot Camps:
A Washington State Update and Overview of National Findings
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The number of adult and juvenile boot camps is increasing nationwide, beginning with a 50-bed program in Georgia in 1983. At least 70 boot camps for adult offenders are now operating in state, federal, and local jails and prisons. Boot camps for adults are becoming increasingly open to female offenders, including Washington's co-ed Work Ethic Camp; most juvenile camps serve male offenders exclusively.

Most state boot camp programs have incorporated many typical military features, such as military titles and protocol, barracks-style housing, drill instructors, grouping in platoons, and summary punishment. Boot camps do vary widely, however, with respect to the amount of time spent per day on military drill and discipline--many emphasize education, job training, and counseling, with the typical state program allocating 20 percent of each day to such.

With the absence of effective evaluation results to date, it is difficult to determine if boot camps are achieving their multiple goals of reducing recidivism, achieving cost savings, and having a positive effect on prison crowding.* There does appear to be evidence that boot camps have a positive effect on adult and juvenile offenders' attitudes, and that it improves their educational performance and physical conditioning.

National Findings for Adult Boot Camps:

- Current research findings do not support the claims that boot camps reduce **recidivism** rates: "the impact of boot camp programs on offender recidivism is at best negligible" and "there is still no clear evidence that boot camps reduce recidivism."
- Several states do have boot camp programs that are large enough to affect **prison crowding**. New York's boot camp program, the second largest nationwide, was estimated to have saved their Department of Correctional Services over 1,800 beds. Researchers summarized, "...carefully designed programs can reduce prison crowding."
- **Cost savings** can be achieved only when boot camps keep offenders a shorter time than they would have spent in prison. The actual daily operating cost per inmate for boot camp programs exceeds that of prison. If boot camp is used as an alternative to lower-cost sentencing alternatives, such as parole, costs will be increased. The key to controlling costs lies in the *selection process* into the program--camps whose inmates are selected by the state Department of Corrections, from among offenders who would have otherwise served time in prison, are more likely to achieve cost savings. Several states have estimated a substantial

* Continuing to follow the evaluation results of studies on boot camp programs in Oregon and California may provide more information on the effects of boot camps on recidivism.

cost savings associated with their boot camp programs (New York, Louisiana, Florida, and Oregon).

Washington's Work Ethic Camp:

Washington's co-ed Work Ethic Camp for adult offenders, located at the McNeil Island Corrections Center, opened on November 1, 1993. This highly-regimented 120-day program emphasizes work skills, social skills, education, and substance abuse rehabilitation in a highly-structured environment. The enacting legislation requires that an outcome evaluation of the camp be completed by January 15, 1998.

Washington's Juvenile Basic Training Camp:

Due to open in late 1995, Washington's Juvenile Basic Training Camp was enacted into legislation in SESH Bill 2319, a package of measures to address youth violence. This camp is to provide basic education, work-based learning, counseling, and substance abuse intervention, as well as "structured intensive physical training." The site for the camp has not yet been determined.