

# Improving Public Safety by Positively Changing Lives

## Washington Way

Fact Sheet  
October 2024



### ***The Washington Way is implemented at:***

- *Reentry Centers*
- *Cedar Creek Corrections Center*
- *Clallam Bay Corrections Center*
- *Coyote Ridge Corrections Center*
- *Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women*
- *Stafford Creek Corrections Center*
- *Washington Corrections Center for Women*
- *Washington State Penitentiary*

*The WA Way program employs five full-time employees with additional dedicated staff working in facilities.*

### **About**

The Washington Way (WA Way) represents the Washington State Department of Corrections partnership with Amend at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) to bring a health-focused approach to transforming correctional culture inside Washington's prisons and Reentry Centers with an emphasis on increasing staff wellness while working to better support and prepare residents for their successful reintegration to the community.

Amend, at the USFC, is a public health program that works with select U.S. prisons to improve the safety, health, and well-being of correctional staff and incarcerated individuals. Amend is led by a physician and staffed by public health and public policy experts, lawyers, researchers, formerly incarcerated people, and former correctional professionals who collectively have many decades of experience working in partnership with prisons in the U.S. and around the world.

Amend's primary partner for developing and implementing its program is the Norwegian Correctional Service, widely recognized as among the world's best-performing correctional systems with the least violence and lowest recidivism. Beyond Norway, Amend draws on international best practices in corrections, occupational health, and public health.

### **Core Principles**

#### **Dynamic Security**

Dynamic security is the frequent, effective, and respectful communication between correctional staff and prison residents that characterizes the safest prisons. Staff who practice dynamic security know the incarcerated individuals they are responsible for and are invested in their success.

#### **Normalization**

Normalization means that life inside prison should resemble life outside of prison as much as possible. A more normal environment and daily life better prepare people for reentry and help make sure that the prison environment is not harmful to the people who work there.


#### **Progression**

Progression means that every incarcerated individual knows what they need to do to be successful where they are – and has opportunities to earn trust (i.e., more privileges or lower security housing) alongside increasing responsibility (employment, education, programming, mentorship, or other duties connected to the success of the prison community) while they're incarcerated.

### **Core Models**

#### **Change Agents**

A Change Agent is a staff person who is motivated to support culture change efforts at their facility, voluntarily attend additional training, and is encouraged to submit staff proposals presenting solutions to common challenges experienced by their



colleagues and residents. All staff motivated and engaged in improving the culture of their facility are Change Agents, including participating on a Resource or Activity Team, interacting with residents as a Contact Officer, or supporting positive culture through staff-led efforts (e.g., staff wellness rooms, holiday events for staff and residents, etc.).

### **Resource & Activity Team**

Research shows that long-term isolation is harmful and ineffective – it doesn't support behavior change – and that working in restrictive housing units takes a unique toll on staff's physical and mental health. The Resource/Activity Team approach empowers uniformed staff to work safely and effectively with the highest-risk, highest-need incarcerated individuals to dramatically increase time-out-of-cell and ultimately support them to live safely and successfully without isolation.

A Resource Team is based in a restrictive housing unit; an Activity Team is mobile, working throughout the prison, and focusing on people who are self-isolating and other high-risk individuals who need extra support to stay on track and out of restrictive housing. Resource/Activity Team members receive extensive additional training, and dedicated project time, to work effectively with the most complex individuals.

### **Contact Officer/Staff**

A Contact Officer is a correctional officer or staff person who is assigned to a small number of incarcerated individuals to support their success and prevent problems before they arise. The Contact Officer might connect incarcerated individuals to resources and opportunities, support them as a coach, mentor, and role model, or create events or small projects that make their housing unit a better place to work and live. The Contact Officer model is flexible and adaptable; the specific role of a Contact Officer should differ from unit to unit and prison to prison based on the participating staff's strengths, opportunities, and goals.

### **Partnership Goals**

Key goals of the partnership include:

- Self-reported improved health, well-being, and job satisfaction among staff
- Self-reported improved readiness for return to the community among residents
- Anecdotal evidence of improved wellbeing among staff's families
- Reduction of use of force (reactive and planned)
- Reduction of staff assaults and reduced violence among residents
- Reduction in use of solitary confinement

#### **For more information:**

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