# Choosing a Corrections Officer Career in Canada

## Introduction

Corrections officers or sometimes known as prison guards have the responsibility of taking care of inmates, keeping order, and giving directions when necessary. Being a corrections officer in Canada has both benefits and disadvantages on equal measure. As a corrections officer in Canada, an individual can provide communal services of rehabilitating inmates through the assistance of workmates. On the other hand, they are some challenges that an individual has to know before choosing a career as a corrections officer since they have to change inmate’s perception, and are sometimes forced to offer counseling. According to Reeves, they conducted a study to find reasons for corrections officer’s burnout, absenteeism and poor physical health due to the challenges they experience while working. The process of choosing a corrections officer career in Canada has its challenges that include harsh aspects experienced by a corrections officer, oppression from the boss and co-workers, and long and tiring shifts.

## Harsh Aspects of a Corrections Officer

To start with, corrections officers in Canada work in difficult conditions. These harsh aspects include working in cold and hot environments since some cells are built underground where sunlight can reach. The cells are sometimes poorly ventilated, and thus during hot seasons, the corrections officer has to persevere the hot temperatures as they stand guard and watch the inmates. In some instances, the correctional facility can be noisy, especially when there is a fight or an argument between two inmates. Also, it can be noisy during breaks, especially the meal breaks. The corrections officer can be forced to work in an overcrowded environment, where there are more than enough inmates sent to the correctional facility. The overcrowding can lead to airborne disease since people are close to each other, and thus the spread becomes fast and easy. Furthermore, the harsh aspect a corrections officer can experience is working in a damp and dirty place. In some correctional facilities, cleaners may fail to do the clean-up due to various reasons, and also the inmates can intentionally throw dirt and garbage. This result in unhealthy working area, which makes the corrections officer uncomfortable (Goff, 1999). One of the worst harsh conditions the corrections officer can experience is working in a busy and rowdy environment that is characterized by violence and confusion. The existence of rude and stubborn inmates poses high risks to corrections officers since they might be injured or sometimes lose a life. The sanitary of some of the correctional facilities is sometimes wanting since officers are forced to work in conditions where there are raw sewage leakages and molds. In the process of separating a fight between two inmates, the corrections officer might be infected with threatening contagious diseases that is as a result of scratch and bites

## Oppression from the Boss/ Co-Workers

It is true that dealing with hostile and abusive bosses and co-workers can affect someone’s psychology since a person is stressful and reduces the confidence (King, 2008). As a result of this, bullying becomes one of the factors resulting from oppression from the bosses and co-workers. Bullying is a behavior that should not be tolerated in any institution, be it in learning institution, social institution or, in this case, correctional facility. During a disagreement, which cannot be avoided, corrections officers sometimes are oppressed and mishandled by their bosses. As stated earlier this situation can escalate and destroy the teamwork of the corrections officers. Teamwork is significant in a correctional facility, and if an officer cannot trust their co-workers or bosses, it becomes unsafe to work in such an environment. Through this weakness, the officer is vulnerable to attacks and intimidation from the inmates at any given time. As professionals, it is important to show respect to fellow workers. To avoid this situation, correctional facilities need to create standards of conduct that all employees should follow. Instances such as stealing secrets from the facility and airing them out are unacceptable. Also, vandalism, sexual harassment and negative comments from co-workers and bosses should not be tolerated.

## The shift work like how long shifts can be, are the shifts tiring?

Correctional facilities need to be monitored 24 hours each day of the week, and for this reason, the correction officers are required to be present all the time (Canada Service Canada, 2015). They work in shifts depending on the arrangement the correctional facility has provided. Unfortunately, the corrections officers are made to work overtime in some instances when one of the co-workers is absent due to various reasons. Furthermore, they might be summoned from the comfort of their homes to assist in cases of emergencies at odd hours. This is very frustrating since an individual cannot rest (Schaufeli, & Peeters, 2000). Furthermore, the correctional officers are expected to work on weekends and holidays just to ensure that the facility is monitored and there enough staff members are available to do the task (Swenson, Waseleski, & Hartl, 2008). There are two types of correction officers, the jail staff, and road staff officers. For road staff officers, they are required to be on duty overnight, and also during the holidays to transport the inmates when medical emergencies occur. The shifts and hours vary from one correctional facility to another in Canada. For instance, an officer may begin working from midnight until eight in the morning. Also, they can alternate the allocated shift times that have been spread throughout the week. Some correctional facilities are moving to 12-hour workdays to enable officers to have enough resting time when they are off (Canada Service Canada, 2015). Apart from shifts that last to 12 hours, the officers can use the rotating schedules. Through this, the officer can plan to work in rotating schedule where they also include weekends. They will be working eight hours a day for days they will be working in that week. For instance, an officer can work on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Then on the following week, they work on Monday through to Friday and have all the weekend off. This rotating schedule enables them to have time with their friends and family.

## Conclusion

To sum up, choosing a corrections officer career in Canada has challenges that a person needs to consider before beginning the application. Some of the challenges discussed in this research include the harsh conditions that the correctional officer might face such as dirty and damp environment, hot and cold temperatures, poor sanitation, noisy and crowdie environment among others. Furthermore, the correctional officer might face oppression from bosses and co-workers. This will result in lack of morale and confidence, and also destroy the teamwork between co-workers, which is necessary. Lastly, the long shifts and being called upon during odd hours in off days is discouraging. This makes the corrections officer unhappy and lacks time to interact with friends and family. That said, it is important for correctional facilities in Canada to improve the working environment for the officers to boost their morale while working since they are doing a good job of counseling and guiding the inmates.

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