

Public Information Systems for Prison Reform

Purpose: The point of this is to put public pressure on the worst ranked prisons, to encourage prison improvement. This prison information connection lets the public know how it's money is spent, how effective the prison is, and how it works for them.

Requirements: Online web data base that can be edited by a hierarchy of various public office holders. Data access can be hidden depending on a hierarchy of viewing privileges. Data entry includes text, numerical data, and hyperlinks. Data entry must have a pipeline approval process. Changes made to the system must be logged, and have the possibility of an undo.

Data Storage: Baseline information such as prison locations, populations, programs, size, staff, cost, rules, lock down rate, spiritual access, visitation process, and other factors will be extended over time.

Data Interpretation: People new to the system must have the ability to turn on data interpretations, which explain what the data means, how it was measured, and when it was entered or updated. Experienced people, or people accessing on a cell phone, must have the ability to minimize the display, to get just what they need.

Data ranking and comparisons: This online service must provide various ways to inspect prison conditions and allow ranking and comparisons between prisons. It should also allow interactive query, so that a user can ask a new questions, and to look at old data in new ways.

1. **Data Ranking:** Data weights, or the power given to the data, must be available for display with an explanation. For example, food quality might be on a scale of 1 to 10, and visitation by family members might be on a scale of 1 to 10. When overall comparisons are used, both of these scales are 'normalized' or converted by their identified equations. This may mean that food quality lower than 2 has great meaning, and visitation higher than 6 has no great meaning. Once the user has selected the fields, the ranking can be displayed. If the user wants to know how the ranking was done, they should be able to dig down and get help.
2. **Data Time Graphs:** Where it is found sufficiently useful, some data might be displayed on a graph. For example the rate of lockdown, displayed by days, or months or years.
3. **Custom Screen building:** The user must be able to select fields, for later display. This way they can browse through screens of data, and pick items of interest. They might even be able to name these created selections, so that they can log in and just start with the selected items to see if new data has been entered. They can thus monitor change.

Personal Stories: While much of the information stored is universal, like the number of people at a prison, or the number of guards, their needs to be a place for personal stories. To record experiences of people entangled in the prison system. Often prison meaning is made real within a personal story, so this system just be open to those additions.