

Presentation title:

International collaboration in criminal corrections: Perspectives from Sweden

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In the United States, the challenges inherent in managing a carceral environment have grown over recent years. Issues in staffing, safety, and resources have impacted almost every facet of prison life for both staff and incarcerated people. In some cases, this has forced correctional facilities to do more with less, cutting back on services that are not required or necessary. In other cases, leaders have sought out alternative options for reforming the prison environment in ways that can improve staff well-being and develop unique, evidence-based programming for incarcerated people that may reduce recidivism and make the prison safer. The Scandinavian countries have become a focal point for many conversations about prison reform. Characterized by low crime and recidivism rates, relatively small prisons, and high levels of community reintegration, these countries provide a striking counterfactual to the Anglo-American prison environments. From this position, Norway and Sweden have become an epicenter of international correctional collaborations over the past decade; their respective prison and probation services receive hundreds of international visits each year. The main focus of these professional collaborations is often to identify aspects of Scandinavian principles and practices that can be successfully adapted and implemented elsewhere. This panel will focus on the experiences of such international partnerships from the perspective of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, with a particular emphasis on an important question: What can Sweden learn from “Little Scandinavia” and other international correctional partners?