



Inside shock incarceration - A CNY Central special report by [Jim Kenyon](#)

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SCHUYLER COUNTY -- It was 5:30 a.m. on Thursday April 18th when, inside a darkened barracks, a loud whistle blew. As the lights turned on, 16 men yelling at the top of their lungs jump out of their beds and lined up at attention in their underwear. This is part of a daily routine at the Monterey Shock Incarceration Facility in a remote part of Schuyler County, about 15 miles away from the City of Corning.

CNY Central's Jim Kenyon spent two days at the camp to witness first hand what Shock Incarceration is all about.

Shock Incarceration resembles a military style boot camp. The intense 6 month program offers non-violent felons an opportunity to be paroled back into their communities upon graduation, which drastically reduces their prison sentences by months or even years.

Often the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision will place convicts into the early release program without notifying prosecutors, judges or victims. Onondaga County District Attorney Bill Fitzpatrick feels the state should be obligated to give authorities advance notice. "It's really an administrative usurpation of a judge's power and sometimes a jury's power," Fitzpatrick told Kenyon.

In a statement from DOCCS they say, "DOCCS is not obligated to notify victims or the District Attorney of a decision to place an inmate into shock incarceration. Instead, program availability and eligibility should already be known to the judges and district attorneys during the plea/sentencing phase of the criminal justice system."

When Kenyon contacted DOCCS, officials invited him to visit the Monterey Facility on April 17th and attend a graduation ceremony the next day.

Every aspect of the inmate's life during the 6 months of shock incarceration is tightly regimented including their dress, hygiene and even the way they eat at the mess hall. Every morning, the convicts go through nearly an hour of non-stop physical training including push ups, leg raises, jumping jacks and running in place, all under the watchful eyes of drill instructors. The calisthenics are followed by a two mile run in formation.

During the day, they're required to attend drug and alcohol counseling, education classes, and join work crews who often assist surrounding communities by working in parks or along roadsides.

Captain Matt Whitmore, a corrections officer for 31 years says, "The theory is to break them down and build them up."

According to the State Corrections Department, since 1987, 46,077 inmates graduated shock incarceration and were granted early release. The savings to taxpayers amounts to \$1.426 billion. The rate of recidivism, those who commit crimes after their release, is 26.4 percent for shock incarceration grads. That compares to a recidivism rate of 42 percent for ex-convicts from conventional prisons.

When it started in 1987, shock incarceration was geared toward young men who committed non violent crimes, but it has since expanded to include repeat offenders, women and convicts up to the age of 49.

Christopher Kocienski is a 40-year-old father of three daughters from Massena who was sentenced to 3 and a half years for dealing cocaine. He will shave 2 and a half years off that sentence by completing shock incarceration. "My attitude's totally different. My behaviors are different. I used to be pretty wild and act out without thinking about it. This program has changed me all the way around," Kocienski says.



Shock incarceration at the Monterey Facility

Photo: Andy Wynn

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