

CHAPTER 5 CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

I. INTRODUCTION

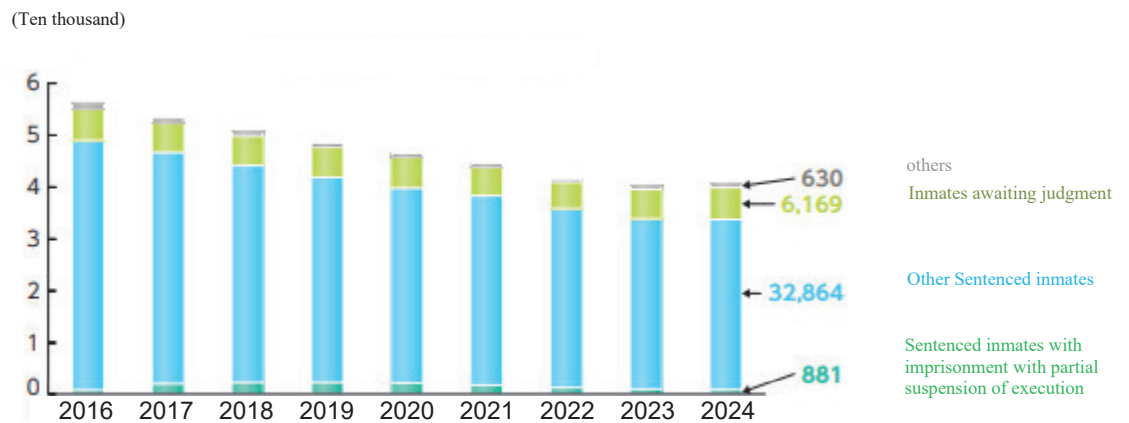
This chapter addresses the treatment of offenders in correctional facilities, as well as the duties and functions of correctional officers. Correctional facilities include: i) penal institutions, ii) juvenile assessment centres, and iii) juvenile training schools. Whereas penal institutions are mainly for adult offenders, juvenile assessment centres and juvenile training schools are a part of the juvenile corrections system.

II. TREATMENT OF INMATES IN PENAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Trends in the Inmate Population in Penal Institutions

The average population of inmates in Japanese penal institutions generally decreased from the end of World War II to 1992, when it numbered 44,876; however, it rose steadily between 1993 and 2007, when it reached 80,684, and it exceeded the capacity of penal institutions between 2001 and 2006. Because of construction and renovation of penal institutions and the decrease of the inmate population since 2008, this situation has changed. As of 31 December 2024, the total capacity of penal institutions is 81,204 (63,923 for sentenced inmates and 17,281 for pre-trial detainees), and the actual population is 40,544 (34,268 sentenced inmates and 6,276 pre-trial detainees).

Fig. 1 Trend in the Year-end Population of Inmates in Penal Institutions



(Source: White Paper on Crime 2025)

B. Philosophy of the Treatment of Inmates

The Act on Penal Institutions and the Treatment of Sentenced Inmates stipulates basic principles on the administration of penal institutions and treatment of inmates as follows:

The purpose of this Act shall be to conduct adequate treatment of inmates ... with respect for their human rights and in accordance with their respective circumstances, as well as to achieve the appropriate management and administration of penal detention facilities (i.e. penal institutions, ...).

As regards the purpose of treatment of sentenced inmates, the Act provides as follows:

Treatment of a sentenced inmate shall be conducted with the aim of stimulating motivation for reformation and rehabilitation and developing the adaptability to life in society by working on his or her sense of consciousness in accordance with his or her personality and circumstances.

Further, the Act provides that:

Upon treatment of a pre-trial detainee, special attention shall be paid to the prevention of his or her escape and destruction of evidence and to the respect for his or her right of defence, while taking into consideration

his or her status as a pre-trial detainee.

C. Correctional Treatment for Sentenced Inmates

Correctional treatment for sentenced inmates consists of three main components: (i) work, (ii) guidance for improvement, and (iii) guidance in school courses. In order to implement them effectively, the penal institutions conduct assessments of individual inmates, place them into separate groups, and determine the treatment guidelines for each inmate. In addition, various measures such as alleviation of restrictions, the granting of privileges, work release, and day leave and furlough are provided.

Regarding the establishment of the new sentence of imprisonment, in June 2022, a law was enacted to partially revise the Penal Code, changing the definition of imprisonment. The law stipulates that those sentenced under the new law may be made to perform work or be provided with guidance that will help improve rehabilitation. This new definition means that performing prison work will not necessarily be a requirement of imprisonment, and corrections officers will have greater flexibility in providing treatment tailored to the needs of each inmate. We expect this will result in more effective rehabilitation and will facilitate smooth reintegration into society. The new sentence of imprisonment took effect on June 1, 2025. We are in the process of conducting various studies and carrying out initiatives at penal institutions related to implementation of new forms of treatment.

1. Assessment for Treatment

Penal institutions conduct periodic assessment of inmates. The initial assessment takes place when their sentence has become final and binding. It is a comprehensive assessment and looks into various factors: physical and mental conditions; life history; academic background; employment history; membership in organized crime groups; criminal tendencies; family and life environments; aptitude for jobs or education; life and future plans; and any other relevant matters. This assessment applies medical, psychological, pedagogical and sociological techniques, and other expert knowledge and techniques, by methods such as interviews and clinical examination, and with the assistance of risk/needs assessment tools. In Japan, assessment based on the RNR Model is mainly conducted by assessment specialists at penal institutions.

There are two stages to the initial assessment. The first half is conducted in the penal institution in which the inmate is accommodated at the time of the finalization of the sentence. The focus is on determining the most appropriate correctional treatment programme tailored to the needs of each inmate. The second half of the assessment is conducted in the penal institution to which the inmate has been transferred. This is a more detailed assessment that looks thoroughly into the inmate's background.

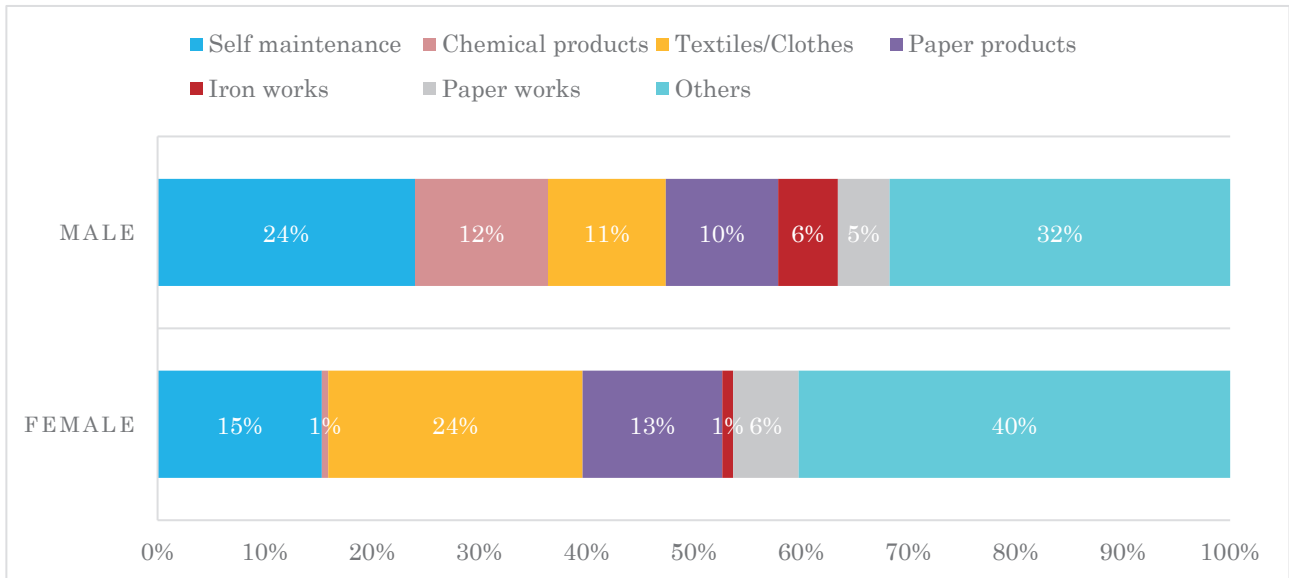
On the basis of those assessments, an Individual Treatment Plan (ITP), which provides the objective, the contents, and the methods of correctional treatment, will be determined for each inmate. The inmate's progress will be reviewed every six months and on an as-needed basis according to the ITP, which will be revised if necessary.

2. Prison Work for the Purpose of Improvement and Rehabilitation

Under the new sentence of imprisonment, inmates must clearly understand the purpose of the work which they have been assigned and what they can expect from engaging in it. So work that will help inmates acquire the basic skills necessary to work as members of society after being released from prison is referred to as "basic work," and work that supplements areas the inmate may be lacking in, such as communication skills, and is performed to improve areas that need to be improved is called "functional work." Work is reorganized and implemented in conjunction with vocational training to help inmates acquire qualifications and other skills in line with employment-related needs. Also, to make work more effective regarding reformation, rehabilitation, and smooth reintegration into society, inmates are encouraged to work with their own goals in mind.

Prison work in Japan is divided broadly into four categories: production work, vocational training, social contribution work and self-maintenance work. Figure 2 shows the types of prison work, and the numbers of sentenced inmates and workhouse detainees engaged in each work type.

Fig. 2 Ratio of the types of prison work for released inmates in 2024



(Source: Annual Report of Statistics on Correction)

Inmates engaged in prison work receive incentive remuneration. It is not a wage paid according to the amount of work, but an incentive paid for the purpose of encouraging work and providing inmates with funds to prepare for life after release. The average remuneration paid monthly to a sentenced inmate in FY 2025 was 4,556 yen (on the budget basis).

Sentenced inmates usually work within penal institutions, but those who satisfy the necessary conditions may be permitted to commute to a business establishment outside without the supervision of penal institution staff.



Vocational Training

3. Guidance for Improvement

Guidance for improvement is provided in order to encourage sentenced inmates to take responsibility for their crimes, and to acquire the knowledge and lifestyle necessary for adapting themselves to life in society. There are two types of guidance: general guidance for all sentenced inmates and special guidance for inmates with certain difficulties.

General guidance is provided through lectures, interviews, and other available measures, and it aims

(i) to make inmates understand the circumstances and feelings of crime victims; (ii) to let them develop a regular lifestyle and a sound perspective and point of view; and (iii) to make them understand information for life planning after release and develop a law-abiding spirit and behaviour.

As for special guidance, the following six programmes are currently provided: guidance for overcoming drug addiction; guidance for withdrawal from an organized crime group; reoffending prevention guidance for sex offenders; education from the victim's viewpoint; traffic safety guidance; and violence prevention guidance.



Group Work

4. Guidance in School Courses

Many sentenced inmates lack sufficient educational attainments to lead a productive life. For such inmates, penal institutions provide guidance in elementary school and junior high school courses, which include Japanese language courses and mathematics courses. Inmates who have not finished compulsory education may have a chance to study and to take junior high school equivalency examinations. For inmates whose progress in studies has been deemed particularly conducive to smooth re-entry into society, guidance in high school or university courses may be provided.

D. Complaints Mechanism

Inmates are allowed to file various forms of complaints, as follows.

1. Claim for Review and Appeal

An inmate who is dissatisfied with the measures taken by the warden of the penal institution, such as restriction on correspondence and disciplinary punishment, may file a claim for review with the Superintendent of the Regional Correction Headquarters. Inmates dissatisfied with the Superintendent's determination may file an appeal with the Minister of Justice.

2. Report of Cases

An inmate who has suffered an illegal or unjust act by a staff member of the penal institution may report the case to the Superintendent of the Regional Correction Headquarters. The Superintendent of the Regional Headquarters shall confirm whether or not the case occurred and notify the inmate of the findings. If dissatisfied with the results, the inmate may report the case to the Minister of Justice.

3. Filing of Complaints

All of the inmates may file a complaint with the Minister of Justice, the inspector, or the warden of the penal institution with regard to any treatment they have received. The inspector is appointed by the Minister of Justice to conduct on-the-spot inspections at each penal institution at least once a year to ensure that the penal institution is appropriately administered.

4. Complaints in Juvenile Correctional Facilities

A juvenile may file a request for relief with the Minister of Justice, or a complaint with the inspector or the superintendent of the juvenile training school (assessment centre) with regard to any treatment they have received. The inspector is appointed by the Minister of Justice to conduct on-the-spot inspections at each juvenile training school (assessment centre) at least once a year to ensure that the juvenile training school (assessment centre) is appropriately administered.

E. Correctional Institution Visiting Committee

Each correctional institution (for both juveniles and adults) has its own Visiting Committee, a third party committee composed of a maximum of ten members appointed by the Minister of Justice. The Committee studies the administration of its corresponding correctional institution by visiting it and interviewing inmates/juveniles and provides its opinion to the warden/superintendent. This system serves to ensure transparency in the administration of correctional institutions, contribute to its improvement, and enhance the partnership between the correctional institutions and the community.

F. Act on the Transnational Transfer of Sentenced Persons

Japan has ratified the Council of Europe's "Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons". The Convention has been signed by a total of 70 countries including Japan, the United States of America, Canada and the Republic of Korea, as well as the member states of the Council of Europe (45 countries). Japan has also signed transnational transfer agreements with Thailand, Brazil, Iran and Viet Nam. As regards domestic law, there is the Act on the Transnational Transfer of Sentenced Persons (2002). The agreement of both countries involved, the Justice Minister's judgement of appropriateness and the consent of the person subject to transfer are all required for a person to be transferred under this law.

III. TREATMENT OF JUVENILES IN JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

A. Juvenile Assessment Centres

1. Background

"The Juvenile Classification Home Act¹ which comprehensively provides the duties and functions of juvenile classification homes, entered into force on 1 June 2015. Previously, there was no law on juvenile classification homes, but there were a few provisions that addressed juvenile classification homes in the former Juvenile Training School Act. Under the Juvenile Classification Home Act, juvenile classification homes have three main duties: 1) conducting classification of juveniles in response to requests from the family court, 2) providing appropriate treatment for juvenile inmates, and 3) supporting crime and delinquency prevention activities in the local community. Juvenile Classification Homes have been renamed as Juvenile Assessment Centres, considering their expanded role in the community.

2. Recent Trends

The number of juveniles committed to juvenile assessment centres by the family court for protective detention decreased after 2003, when 23,063 juvenile delinquents were committed. In 2024, 6,012 juveniles were committed to juvenile assessment centres.

3. Classification

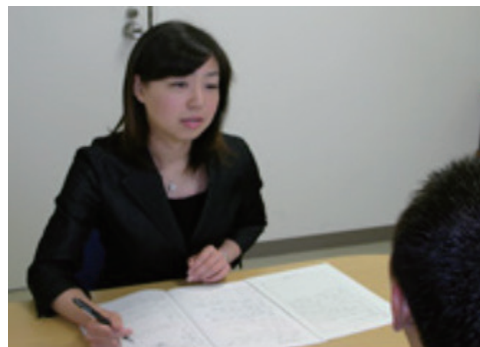
(1) Classification for the family court hearing

Juvenile assessment centres conduct classification based on a comprehensive assessment of each juvenile

¹ Juvenile Classification Homes have been renamed as Juvenile Assessment Centres. However, because the former name is still used in the name of the Act, the former name is still used here.

delinquent and make a report which is submitted to the family court. Classification is carried out during the term of protective detention (within 2 weeks but subject to necessary extension up to 8 weeks in total.).

During this process, the problem areas of the juvenile's character and social environment that led to their commission of the crime or delinquency are assessed and identified. Also, appropriate guidance addressing the identified problems is offered to improve the juvenile's situation. There are three measures in classification: psychological assessment, behavioural observation and medical checkup. Thus, classification is based on expert knowledge and skills of various fields such as medicine, psychology, pedagogy and sociology.



Assessment Interview

(2) Assessment for correctional treatment

When a family court judge decides to send a juvenile to a juvenile training school, the juvenile assessment centre where the juvenile resides has the authority to decide to which juvenile training school the juvenile will be sent, taking account of factors such as the juvenile's individual needs for treatment based on their characteristics and whether the location of the juvenile training school is accessible to the juvenile's parents or guardians, who are expected to visit the committed juvenile.

In addition, the juvenile assessment centre recommends treatment guidelines for each juvenile. These recommendations are considered by the juvenile training school that takes custody of the juvenile. The guidelines include correctional education to be provided, issues related to security risks, parental circumstances and so on.

Following the amendment of the Juvenile Classification Home Act, from December 2023, assessments are conducted at the request of penal institutions for inmates, including young people, to understand the progress of their correctional treatment and ensure support from relevant organizations after release. In addition, assessments are conducted at the request of probation offices for parolees and those on suspended probation.

(3) Assessment tool for juveniles

The Correction Bureau of the Ministry of Justice has developed an assessment tool for juveniles, named the Ministry of Justice Case Assessment tool (MJCA), which has been implemented and used in juvenile assessment centres since 2013 as a unified assessment tool. The MJCA is based on Risk-Needs-Responsivity principles and plays an important role in the assessment. It is used to estimate the juvenile's reoffending risk and other important elements for further treatment. The MJCA also is used to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of correctional treatment in juvenile training schools.

The MJCA refers to static and dynamic risk factors. Static risk factors, such as family history and history of delinquency, are unchangeable but are important in estimating juveniles' reoffending risk. Dynamic risk factors, sometimes called criminogenic needs, are changeable and important in specifying the problematic areas to be addressed through treatment.

4. Working with the Community

Juvenile assessment centres provide knowledge and skills through various activities for the local community to prevent delinquency and crime in the community at large. Juvenile assessment centres undertake the following activities.

- 1) Consultation with juveniles, their family, schoolteachers, and so on
- 2) Dispatching experts as speakers/lecturers
- 3) Legal education for children and students



Consultation



Legal Education for Students

B. Juvenile Training Schools

1. Background

In Japan, treatment of juveniles has a long history of over 100 years focusing on their developmental and situational differences from adults. Current juvenile training schools have been operating since 1949 under the Juvenile Act and the Juvenile Training School Act. The new Juvenile Training School Act entered into force on 1 June 2015, clarifying the duties and functions of juvenile training schools to engage not only in correctional education but also in supporting juveniles' reintegration into society.

2. Recent Trends

The number of newly admitted juveniles per year decreased after 2000, when 6,052 juveniles were admitted. In 2024, 1,828 juveniles were admitted to juvenile training schools.

3. Classes of Juvenile Training Schools

There are five classes of juvenile training schools, from Class 1 to Class 5, according to the juvenile's age, criminal tendency level, and whether or not they have a serious physical or mental disorder.

- 1) Class 1: persons for whom protective measures are to be imposed; the person must not have a serious physical or mental disorder and must generally be between 12 and 23 years old.
- 2) Class 2: persons for whom protective measures are to be imposed, who have serious criminal tendencies, who do not have a serious physical or mental disorder, and who are generally between 16 and 23 years old.
- 3) Class 3: persons for whom protective measures are to be imposed, who have a serious physical or mental disorder and who are generally between 12 and 26 years old.
- 4) Class 4: persons who are to serve their imprisonment sentences in a juvenile training school.
- 5) Class 5: "specified juveniles" (aged 18 and 19) who have been placed on two years of probation and who have, during such probation, failed to comply with the conditions of probation. The degree of non-compliance will have been found to be serious, and the improvement and rehabilitation of the juvenile cannot be achieved without treatment at a juvenile treatment school.

4. Individual Plan for Correctional Education

Correctional education is based on an Individual Plan for Correctional Education. Each juvenile undergoes their own educational plan during the term of the commitment. Juvenile training schools design the plans based on various information including the records of the family court and the juvenile assessment centre based on the RNR model. As a result, the plan responds to and addresses each juvenile's risk, needs and responsivity. Although the programme is based on the RNR model, it also incorporates techniques such as relapse prevention, the Good Lives Model (GLM), motivational interviewing, mindfulness etc.

5. Correctional Education

Correctional education consists of five different measures:

- 1) Lifestyle guidance: guidance for juveniles to obtain basic knowledge and develop constructive attitudes for living independently after release. In addition, there are six types of specific guidance which address certain problematic areas, (1) Education that incorporates the perspective of victims, (2) Drug prevention guidance, (3) Guidance on prevention of sexual misconduct, (4) Violence

prevention guidance, (5) Family relationship guidance, (6) Peer relationship guidance. Adult social participation guidance has also been implemented in accordance with “specified juveniles” from April 2022.

- 2) Vocational guidance: guidance aiming at enhancing motivation to work and obtaining useful knowledge and skills for employment.
- 3) School course teaching: guidance for juveniles who have not completed compulsory education or who wish to enter high school. The juveniles may have the opportunity to take the national examination to obtain a qualification equivalent to a high school diploma.
- 4) Physical education: guidance to foster a healthy mind and body fundamental to living an independent life as a sound member of society.
- 5) Special activities guidance: guidance related to implementation of social contribution activities, outdoor activities, athletics, music, theatrical activities and other activities instrumental to enriching emotional stability and fostering a spirit of independence, autonomy and cooperation.



Group Session



Special Activity

6. Cooperation with Parents or Other Custodians

Working together with the juvenile’s custodians is critical to promote the juvenile’s effective rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Juvenile training schools make efforts to encourage the custodians to be involved in the exercise of correctional education programmes to facilitate their understanding and cooperation. For instance, juvenile training schools conduct interviews and consultations with the juvenile together with their custodians and encourage the custodians to participate in educational events.



Meeting with Custodians

IV. MEASURES FOR CRIME VICTIMS

In Japan, measures have been introduced to incorporate the perspectives and interests of crime victims into correctional treatment. Following the amendment to the Act on Penal Detention Facilities and Treatment of Inmates and Detainees, which was enacted in 2022 and entered into force in 2023, provisions were established requiring consideration of the feelings and views of crime victims and their families within correctional institutions. The main measures include: (i) the system for hearing victims’ statements regarding the impact of the offence upon request; (ii) the requirement to take victims’ feelings and views into account in formulating treatment plans and providing correctional treatment and social reintegration support for sentenced inmates; and (iii) the system for conveying victims’ statements to inmates as part of correctional guidance, when victims so request. In 2024, victims’ statements were heard in 96 cases and conveyed to inmates in 92 cases under these measures.

V. MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS COOPERATION IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In general, social reintegration support includes housing, employment and schooling. The aim is to secure housing after release and comprehensive employment and schooling support measures for inmates released from prisons or for juveniles released from juvenile training schools.

Some companies employ individuals upon their release from correctional institutions and provide them with accommodations in company dormitories. These companies collaborate with the facilities in advance, offering tentative job placement prior to release to ensure a smoother transition and reintegration into society.

Regarding multi-stakeholder partnerships, firstly, penal institutions work closely with probation offices from the time the inmates are admitted, providing information on their personal history, behaviour in prison and progress toward correctional treatment. This information helps probation offices coordinate their re-entry after release. Some inmates face various challenges, such as old age or disability, and require seamless guidance and support in the community. Penal institutions therefore collaborate not only with criminal justice agencies, including probation offices, but also with *hogoshi*, Cooperating Employers, local governments, health and medical institutions, welfare service providers, and other private organizations, to reduce reoffending and facilitate smooth reintegration into society. As described above, multi-stakeholder partnerships are crucial for a safe and secure society, and several case studies are presented in Chapter 7.

It is important that penal institutions work closely with probation offices from the outset of the incarceration period because the probation office is the primary service provider to rehabilitate the offender in the community. Prisons contact probation offices to inform them of important information on admitted offenders. This helps the probation offices to start the arrangement of the offenders' anticipated living environments upon release. When conditions allow, prisons apply to the regional parole board to seek parole of eligible inmates. In addition to working with probation offices, prisons provide additional rehabilitation support such as providing information about job openings and connecting elderly, disabled or other eligible inmates to welfare services. Thus, the multi-stakeholder approach is key to promoting offender rehabilitation.

Juveniles re-enter society after the completion of correctional education in the juvenile training school. Planning ahead for release, juvenile training schools coordinate the re-entry (mainly accommodation and employment) for each juvenile from an early stage after commitment. Juvenile training schools consider many factors such as those related to accommodation, employment, family relationships, and need for welfare and medical services. Additionally, juveniles can continue to receive advice and support even after being released. The juvenile training schools will cooperate with their guardians, family members, employers and other supporters to help.

In particular, according to the Annual Correctional Statistical Report, the parole rate among juveniles has consistently remained in the 99% range, indicating that parole is applied in almost all juvenile cases in Japan — and in nearly every such case, a *hogoshi* is assigned to provide supervision and support.