

## *A Message From the Producer:*

### Three Reasons Why You Need an Experienced Correctional Production Company To Produce Your Videos

1) **YOU NEED A GOOD REPRESENTATIVE** In my experience working with administrative staff, correctional officers and correctional educators from Texas, New York and Florida; you have a real opportunity when you send a production crew to work with them. If you handle the situation correctly, they are glad you came, feel appreciated, and feel like they have been fairly represented - and they have even more of a personal investment in your programs.

However, I have also learned that some personnel, especially correctional officers and security, have good reason to be cautious of unknown visitors. And if they feel people who don't respect procedures might threaten security, they can be on the defensive and choose not to cooperate. This is also due to the "60 Minutes Factor" - they see a camera crew and sometimes wonder if they are being investigated or maligned in some way. Therefore, it is crucial to deal with these issues well in advance of showing up at the facility. I do that by prior communication with the Warden or Administrator, then ask that person to make first contact with whoever heads their security. I follow up by contacting security and providing crew background information, equipment checklists and production schedule details in advance and assuring them that our crew understands security issues and will not cause them any problems. What this all boils down to is making sure that the people at the facility realize that I and my crew are "on their side," and that we are there to make them look good, not cause any problems. In that way, by the time we actually show up we have a fair chance of proving ourselves.

Of course, that is when the rubber hits the road - when we show up at the gate, we have to demonstrate that we are, in fact, patient, cooperative, friendly and trustworthy. In my experience working with correctional facilities, once you gain at least a little trust from the people who work there, they will really open up and be extremely cooperative and helpful. I have met some very fine and likeable professionals and made some good friends when doing field production in correctional institutions.

**2) YOU NEED A PROFESSIONAL CREW** Field production in a correctional facility takes some special skills. The crew needs to be flexible, adaptable and creative.

You need to be able to get your crew and gear through security checks and searches in a cooperative manner. That means timing your production so as not to conflict with shift change traffic, and planning your schedule in advance around count times and meal times. We also provide security with a detailed equipment checklist, which they always appreciate because it makes everyone's job easier.

And once inside the gate, it means being able quickly set up, light and dress what are often stark environments to provide a visually pleasant interview environment. It means being able to document classroom, vocational training and counseling activities with a minimum of intrusive activity. It means being sensitive to security issues and not videotaping gates, fences or anything else that might cause a problem. And possibly most important, it means helping those persons on-camera feel relaxed and comfortable about being videotaped so that your footage has a natural, believable quality.

**3) YOU NEED A CREW WHO UNDERSTANDS CORRECTIONS** And it is especially in interviews when our experience pays off. I have interviewed, on-camera, hundreds of administrative staff, correctional officers, correctional educators and inmates. One of the compliments that is most often paid to me is how relaxed and comfortable our interview subjects feel - how they felt it was easy talking to us and that they really enjoyed the experience, often after substantial reluctance. I talk with staff and inmates in a way that helps them realize that we truly understand their issues and empathize with their situation. When a person opens up on-camera and speaks from the heart, it is obvious to anyone who sees the results, and makes the value of your training programs credible and differentiated.

Please call me to discuss any projects that you are considering - I will be happy to offer my thoughts and suggestions regardless of whether we do business.

Lex Mathews