



Correctional Officers and Bailiffs

Summary



Correctional officers inspect the living quarters of the inmates who they oversee.

Quick Facts: Correctional Officers and Bailiffs	
2015 Median Pay	\$40,580 per year \$19.51 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	High school diploma or equivalent
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Number of Jobs, 2014	474,800
Job Outlook, 2014-24	4% (Slower than average)
Employment Change, 2014-24	17,900

[What Correctional Officers and Bailiffs Do](#)

Correctional officers are responsible for overseeing individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or who have been sentenced to serve time in jail or prison. Bailiffs are law enforcement officers who maintain safety and order in courtrooms.

[Work Environment](#)

Working in a correctional institution can be stressful and dangerous. Correctional officers and jailers have one of the highest rates of injuries and illnesses, often resulting from confrontations with inmates. Security must be provided 24 hours a day in correctional facilities, so officers work in shifts that cover all hours of the day and night, weekends and holidays. Bailiffs work with prisoners, who may become violent.

[How to Become a Correctional Officer or Bailiff](#)

Correctional officers go through a training academy and then are assigned to a facility for on-the-job training. Although qualifications vary by state and agency, all agencies require a high school diploma and have an age requirement. Some federal agencies also require some college education or related work experience.

Pay

The median annual wage for correctional officers and bailiffs was \$40,580 in May 2015.

Job Outlook

Employment of correctional officers and bailiffs is projected to grow 4 percent from 2014 to 2024, slower than the average for all occupations. Although state and local budget constraints and prison populations will determine how many correctional officers are necessary, employment opportunities will continue because the stress associated with the job causes many to leave the occupation each year.

State & Area Data

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for correctional officers and bailiffs.

Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of correctional officers and bailiffs with similar occupations.

More Information, Including Links to O*NET

Learn more about correctional officers and bailiffs by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

What Correctional Officers and Bailiffs Do



Correctional officers must follow procedures to maintain their personal safety as well as the safety of the inmates they oversee.

Correctional officers are responsible for overseeing individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or who have been sentenced to serve time in jail or prison. Bailiffs, also known as *marshals* or *court officers*, are law enforcement officers who maintain safety and order in courtrooms. Their duties, which vary by location, include enforcing courtroom rules, assisting judges, guarding juries, delivering court documents, and providing general security for courthouses.

Duties

Correctional officers typically do the following:

- Enforce rules and keep order within jails or prisons
- Supervise activities of inmates
- Aid in rehabilitation and counseling of prisoners
- Inspect facilities to ensure that they meet security and safety standards

- Search inmates for contraband items
- Report on inmate conduct

Inside the prison or jail, correctional officers enforce rules and regulations. They maintain security by preventing disturbances, assaults, and escapes. They must also ensure the whereabouts of all inmates at all times.

On any given day, officers search inmates for contraband, such as weapons and drugs, settle disputes between inmates, and enforce discipline. Officers enforce regulations through effective communication and the use of progressive sanctions, which involve punishments such as loss of privileges. Sanctions are progressive in that they start out small for a lesser offense but become more severe for more serious offenses. In addition, officers may aid inmates in their rehabilitation by scheduling work assignments, counseling, and educational opportunities.

Correctional officers inspect facilities periodically. They check cells and other areas for unsanitary conditions, contraband, signs of a security breach (such as tampering with window bars and doors), and any other evidence of violations of the rules. Officers also inspect mail and visitors for prohibited items. They write reports and fill out daily logs detailing inmate behavior and anything else of note that occurred during their shift.

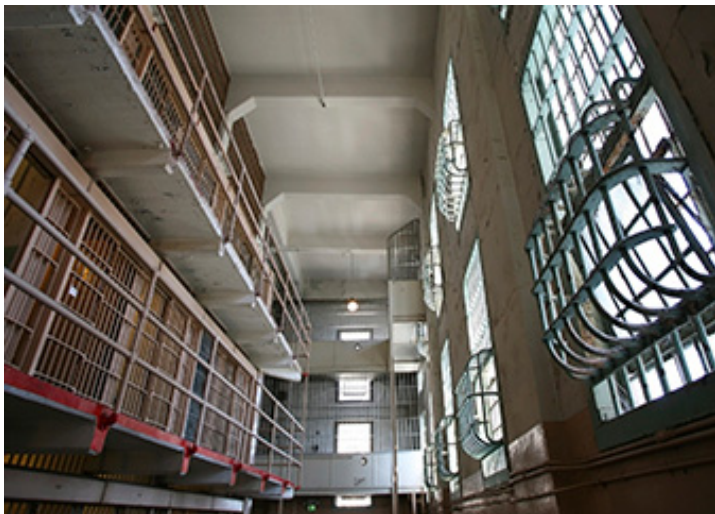
Correctional officers may have to restrain inmates in handcuffs and leg irons to escort them safely to and from cells and to see authorized visitors. Officers also escort prisoners between the institution where they are held and courtrooms, medical facilities, and other destinations.

Correctional officers must report any inmate who violates the rules. If a crime is committed within their institution or an inmate escapes, they help law enforcement authorities investigate and search for the escapee.

Because prisoners typically stay longer in state and federal prisons than in county jails, correctional officers in prisons get to know the people in their charge.

Correctional officers have no law enforcement responsibilities outside their place of work.

Work Environment



Because jail and prison security must be provided 24 hours a day, officers work in shifts that cover all hours of the day and night, weekends and holidays.

Correctional officers and bailiffs held about 474,800 jobs in 2014. Correctional officers and jailers held about 457,600 jobs in 2014. Bailiffs held about 17,300 jobs in 2014. About 95 percent of correctional officers and bailiffs worked for federal, state, and local governments. The remainder were employed by private companies that provide correctional services to prisons and jails.

Correctional officers may work indoors or outdoors. Some correctional institutions are modern and temperature controlled, but others are old, overcrowded, hot, and noisy.

Correctional officers may be required to stand for long periods. Bailiffs generally work in courtrooms.

Injuries and Illnesses

Working in a correctional institution can be stressful and dangerous. Every year, correctional officers are injured in confrontations with inmates and some are exposed to contagious diseases. As a result, correctional officers have one of the highest rates of injuries and illnesses of all occupations. Bailiffs work with prisoners, who may become violent.

The job demands that officers be alert and ready to react throughout their entire shift. As a result, some officers experience anxiety.

Work Schedules

Correctional officers usually work 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, on rotating shifts. Because jail and prison security must be provided around the clock, officers work all hours of the day and night, weekends and holidays. Some correctional facilities have longer shifts and more days off between scheduled workweeks. Many officers are required to work overtime. Bailiffs' hours are determined by when court is in session.

How to Become a Correctional Officer or Bailiff



Correctional officers typically attend training at an academy before being assigned to a facility.

Correctional officers go through a training academy and then are assigned to a facility for on-the-job training. Although qualifications vary by state and agency, all agencies require a high school diploma. Bailiff positions also require a high school diploma. Federal agencies may also require some college education or previous work experience.

Correctional officers must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and must have no felony convictions. Many agencies establish a minimum age for correctional officers, which is typically between 18 and 21 years of age. New applicants for federal corrections positions must be appointed before they are 37 years old.

Education

Correctional officers must have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Some state and local corrections agencies require some college credits. Law enforcement or military experience may be substituted for this requirement.

For employment in federal prisons, the [Federal Bureau of Prisons](#) requires entry-level correctional officers to have at least a bachelor's degree; 3 years of full-time experience in a field providing counseling, assistance, or supervision to individuals; or a combination of the two.

Training

Federal, state, and some local departments of corrections, as well as some private corrections companies, provide training for correctional officers based on guidelines established by the [American Correctional Association](#) (ACA). Some states have regional training academies that are available to local agencies. Academy trainees receive instruction in a number of subjects, including self-defense, institutional policies, regulations, operations, and custody and security

procedures. Although most correctional officers do not carry firearms when on duty, they may receive training in the use of firearms.

After formal academy instruction, state and local correctional agencies provide on-the-job training, including training on legal restrictions and interpersonal relations. Trainees typically receive several weeks or months of training under the supervision of an experienced officer. However, on-the-job training varies widely from agency to agency.

New federal correctional officers must undergo 200 hours of formal training within the first year of employment, including 120 hours of specialized training at the Federal Bureau of Prisons residential training center. Experienced officers receive annual inservice training to keep up to date on new developments and procedures.

Correctional officers who are members of prison tactical response teams are trained to respond to disturbances, riots, hostage situations, and other dangerous circumstances. Team members practice disarming prisoners, wielding weapons, and using other tactics to maintain the safety of inmates and officers alike.

Bailiffs must undergo training in court procedures and the proper way to place someone under arrest, and they may also learn how to use a firearm.

Other Experience

Military experience is viewed as excellent preparation for becoming a correctional officer.

Advancement

Qualified officers may advance to the position of correctional sergeant. Sergeants are responsible for maintaining security and directing the activities of other officers. Qualified officers may also be promoted to supervisory or administrative positions, including warden. Officers sometimes transfer to related jobs, such as [probation officers and correctional treatment specialists](#).

Important Qualities

Good judgment. Correctional officers and bailiffs must use both their training and common sense to quickly determine the best course of action and to take the necessary steps to achieve a desired outcome.

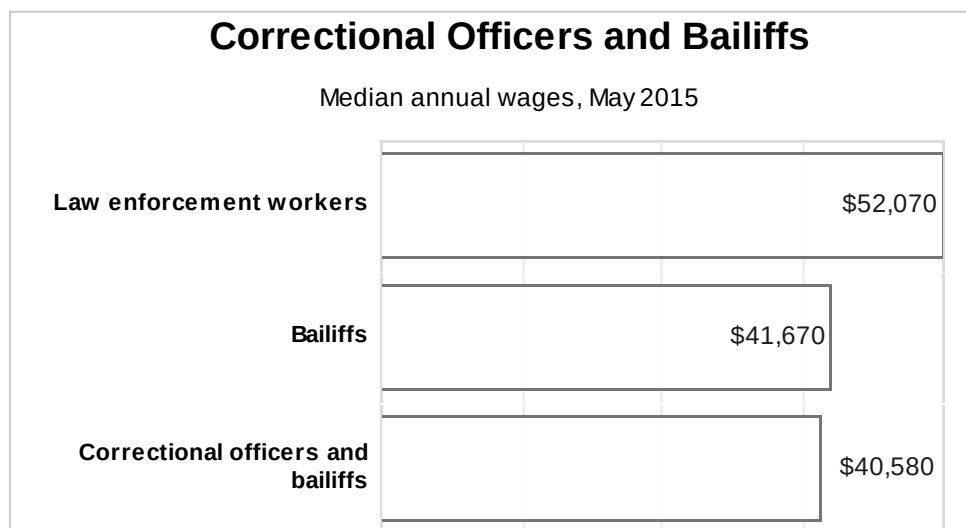
Interpersonal skills. Correctional officers and bailiffs must be able to interact and communicate effectively with inmates and others to maintain order in correctional facilities and courtrooms.

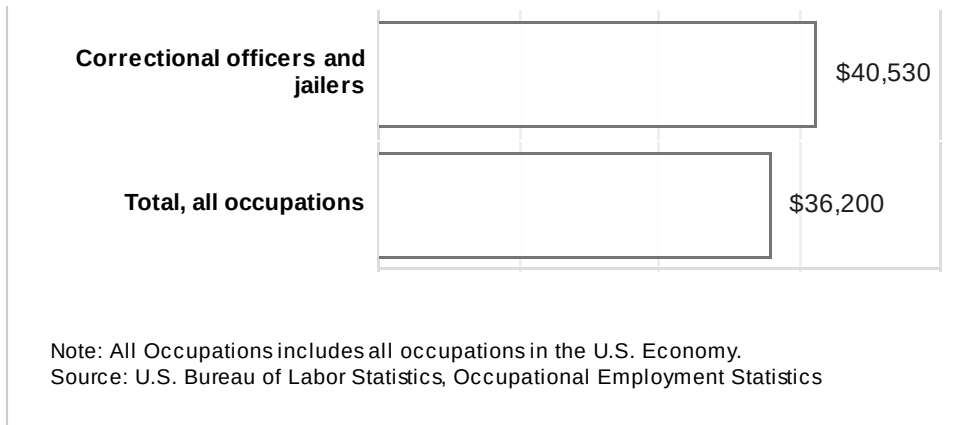
Negotiating skills. Correctional officers must be able to assist others in resolving differences in order to avoid conflict.

Physical strength. Correctional officers and bailiffs must have the strength to physically subdue inmates or others.

Self-discipline. Correctional officers must control their emotions when confronted with hostile situations.

Pay





The median annual wage for bailiffs was \$41,670 in May 2015. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$22,650, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$73,070.

The median annual wage for correctional officers and jailers was \$40,530 in May 2015. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$27,830, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$73,060.

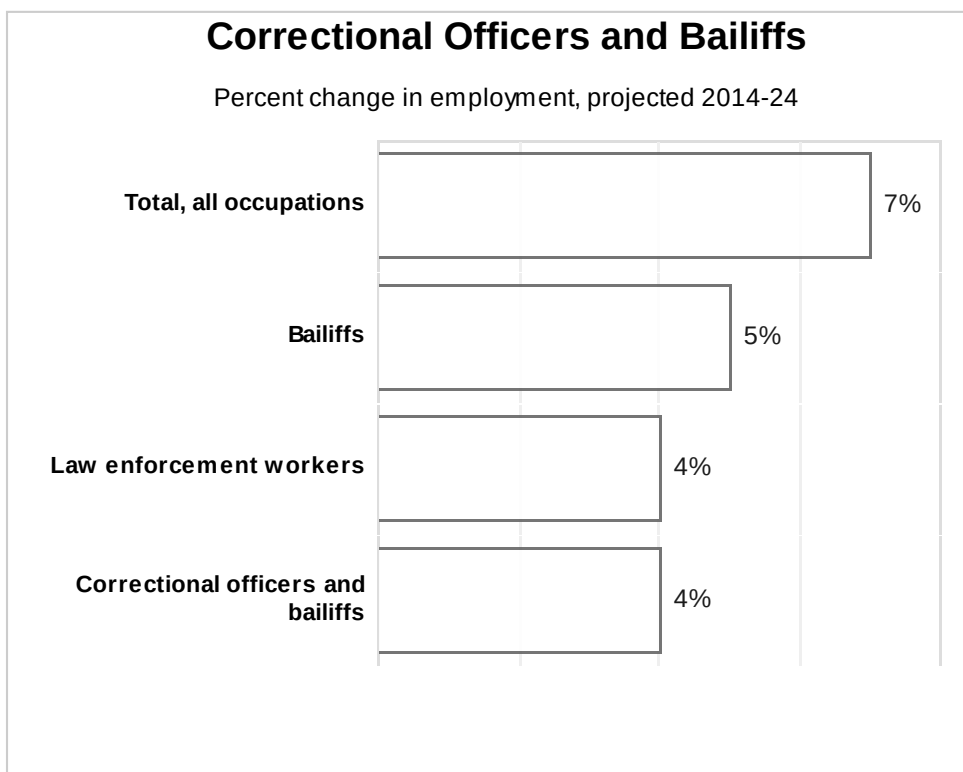
In addition to receiving typical benefits, correctional officers employed in the public sector usually are provided with uniforms or with a clothing allowance to buy their own uniforms. Many departments offer retirement benefits, although benefits vary.

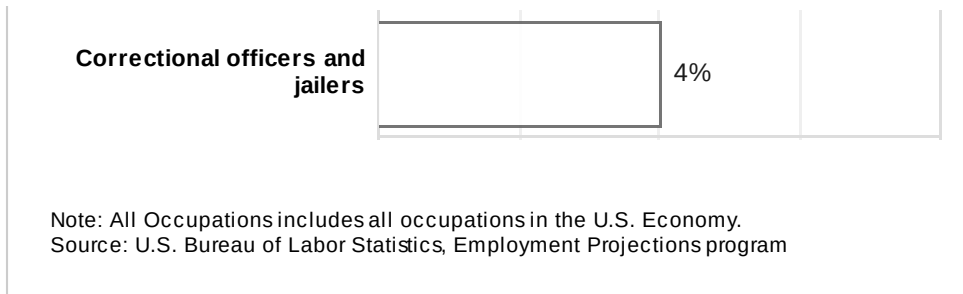
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Union Membership

Compared with workers in all occupations, correctional officers had a higher percentage of workers who belonged to a union in 2014.

Job Outlook





Employment of correctional officers and bailiffs is projected to grow 4 percent from 2014 to 2024, slower than the average for all occupations.

Correctional officers will continue to be needed to watch over the U.S. prison population. Most states are projecting that they will have more prisoners in the future. However, changes to criminal laws can have a large effect on how many people are arrested and incarcerated each year.

Faced with high costs for keeping people in prison, many state governments have moved toward laws requiring shorter prison terms and alternatives to prison. While keeping the public safe, community-based programs designed to rehabilitate prisoners and limit their risk of repeated offenses may also reduce prisoner counts.

Bailiffs will continue to be needed to keep order in courtrooms.

Job Prospects

Job prospects should be good as some local and state corrections agencies experience high job turnover. The need to replace correctional officers who retire, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force—coupled with rising employment demand—should generate job openings.

Employment projections data for correctional officers and bailiffs, 2014-24

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2014	Projected Employment, 2024	Change, 2014-24		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Bailiffs, correctional officers, and jailers	33-3010	474,800	492,800	4	17,900	[XLSX]
Bailiffs	33-3011	17,300	18,100	5	800	[XLSX]
Correctional officers and jailers	33-3012	457,600	474,700	4	17,100	[XLSX]

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

State & Area Data

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

The [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (OES) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OES data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

- [Bailiffs](#)
- [Correctional officers and jailers](#)

Projections Central

Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual




state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at www.projectionscentral.com. Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state's websites where these data may be retrieved.

Career InfoNet

America's Career InfoNet includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of correctional officers and bailiffs.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2015 MEDIAN PAY
	Police and Detectives	Police officers protect lives and property. Detectives and criminal investigators, who are sometimes called <i>agents</i> or <i>special agents</i> , gather facts and collect evidence of possible crimes.	See How to Become One	\$60,270
	Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists monitor and work with probationers to prevent them from committing new crimes.	Bachelor's degree	\$49,360
	Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers	Security guards and gaming surveillance officers patrol and protect property against theft, vandalism, terrorism, and illegal activity.	High school diploma or equivalent	\$24,680

Contacts for More Information

For more information about correctional officers, visit

[American Correctional Association](#)

[American Jail Association](#)

For information about career opportunities for correctional officers at the federal level, visit

[Federal Bureau of Prisons](#)

For information about federal government requirements for correctional officers position, visit

[U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)

To find job openings for correctional officers, visit

[USAJOBS](#)

O*NET

[Bailiffs](#)[Correctional Officers and Jailers](#)**Suggested citation:**

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, PSB Suite 2135, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE Washington, DC 20212-0001

www.bls.gov/ooh | Telephone: 1-202-691-5700 | [Contact OOH](#)