

## **Learning Disorders - Addiction – Incarceration**

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Recent press regarding prison violations due to neglect or inappropriate behavior by staff and guards highlight the need for comprehensive change within prisons. While well-meaning, these articles almost always miss the deeper problems that plague prisons. Chief among those problems are the underlying causes of incarceration. The leading cause of imprisonment in the United States is drug-related crimes, and not surprisingly, drugs are the leading cause of recidivism. However, it's not the substance abuse that causes incarceration, but the crime committed by the individual with a substance use disorder (SUD) to acquire the drugs for their habit, which inevitably results in their imprisonment. These crimes can be formidable and include child trafficking, armed robbery, identity theft, prostitution rings, murder for hire, and the transport and sale of weapons across state lines.

People frequently mistake low- to moderate-security prison inmates for trifling or insignificant crimes. However, this is not the case. Low to moderate-security prisons can house individuals whose crimes were deemed by law to merit a sentence of life without parole. Inmates are housed in facilities based on evaluating whether they pose a low, medium, or high threat level to the guards or society, not on the significance of the crime committed or the length of their sentence. Generally speaking, facilities that house female inmates are low to medium-security facilities because female inmates tend to be less prone to violent behavior. Female inmates with life sentences for murder may be housed in the same facility as inmates sentenced for non-violent white-collar crimes. The latter makes up a small percentage of the overall prison population.

Recent genetic studies on learning disorders (LDs) and addiction have noted a genetic link between ADHD and substance abuse. Additionally, studies have revealed a genetic link between dyslexia and ADHD. Children born with Dyslexia, ADHD, or Spectrum disorder may have a higher probability of engaging in substance abuse in their later years. SUD is a leading contributor to criminal behavior and often leads to incarceration. Furthermore, LDs are disproportionately high within prisons. Public schools seem to miss the opportunity to fully address learning disorders effectively. Thus, children unable to excel in school drop out and become targets for gang indoctrination. Schools need early screening and remediation tools to detect children with LDs. Early interventions for children with learning disorders may reduce future crime while saving lives and money.