

Dr. Mel Brown

Supporter & Advocate

Recipient of the NJDA Donald R. Hammergren Distinguished Service Award (1994)



Dr. Brown's experience with juvenile detention and corrections goes back to his initial involvement working with jails and prisons. Early in his career, he was offered the job of Assistant Director of Tarrant County Juvenile Center in Fort Worth, Texas. He was responsible for developing programs and recruiting volunteers. While working as Assistant Director, he attended an NJDA conference in Dallas. He then began attending NJDA conferences and teaching workshops for on report writing in detention, behavior management in detention, and managing detention centers. He left Tarrant County to become Director of Institutions for Dallas County Juvenile Probation Department. He chaired the committee to develop the first juvenile detention standards for the State of Texas and was later recognized by NJDA with the Donald R. Hammergren Distinguished Service Award for his outstanding contributions to juvenile detention services.

Although Dr. Brown was always active with juvenile centers, he was prompted to get more involved with NJDA because of the opportunity to network and learn more about how improvements can be made within the juvenile justice system. He believes in contributing to the field that has done so much for him and tries to give back to the associations and organizations in any way that he can. He emphasizes the importance of networking and collaborating with other people in order to ensure that the goals of the organization are always recognized and implemented.

Dr. Brown said that one of his single most important goals as President of the Texas Juvenile Detention Association was advancing the mission and purpose of the association to provide quality detention care. Quality care not only provides a secure place for kids, but also a therapeutic, caring environment. He also provided leadership on the national level to create a working definition of juvenile detention so that everyone could be on the same page in detention centers. A key component of this effort was the development of position papers to help educate

practitioners across the country about how to properly operate detention centers. Dr. Brown is also renowned for his keynote speaking and writing for the organization—one of his favorite things about being a part of NJDA.

Since his tenure with NJDA, Brown identified two significant advancements that have been made within the organization: the development of standards and improvements in the conditions of confinement (e.g. health care, security, food services). He stresses the importance of these standards in ensuring public safety while simultaneously ensuring a safe and productive environment for juveniles, recognizing that juvenile detention and correction services should be multi-faceted in order to serve the complex population of youth.

He emphasizes the importance of being aware of whom you are dealing with at the end of each day: humans, kids. He encourages us to be aware of this and do the best we can for all of those involved in the juvenile justice system.