



Jailed: COVID-19 Puts Correctional System Behind Bars

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The criminal justice system in the United States is broadly divided into three interrelated segments: law enforcement, judicial and corrections. All three components require close communication and physical contact between a variety of people. The level of interpersonal contact and activities reflects the human aspects of the American criminal justice system – at the same time, that human aspect is highly vulnerable to any form of infectious disease. Most people employed in or moving through the American justice system understand this and during the current COVID-19 pandemic use some level of PPE – personal protective equipment – hand sanitizer, gloves, mask or other such tools when able to do so. This human contact and an imperfect system of protection, combined with a population unable to maintain “perfect” hygiene or without access to protective equipment, exacerbate the chance of disease spread when the agent of infection can be transmitted by casual contact.

The 2020 coronavirus health crisis has highlighted an intractable weakness in public health measures – the lack thereof – in the justice system and has resulted in much-needed fundamental changes in the operations of each major component within the system.

In simple terms, law enforcement is a group of agencies and personnel responsible for the prevention of crime, the maintenance of peace and public order, and the apprehension of alleged offenders – think police departments and sheriff’s offices. The next component in the system is the judiciary. The courtrooms fill with prosecuting and defending attorneys, judges and related personnel who “administer” justice according to a system of penal laws, procedural rules and case precedents. The judiciary is the intermediary between law enforcement and corrections components. Law enforcement agencies arrest alleged offenders, gather evidence, present the offenders to the courts, and provide evidence to the prosecutors. The judiciary hears cases and turns adjudicated defendants whose cases result in correctional sanctions over to the correctional phase. Corrections is a system of custodial and community corrections that enforces the penalties or other results of the court’s adjudicatory processes. For offenders under a sentence of incarceration, corrections facilities hold the convicted in a jail or prison for a period that varies with a range of factors. Other offenders with non-incarceration sanctions are supervised in the community by a probation agency.

Consider the bubble of contact as people move through the criminal justice system in each municipality across the country. Thousands of people move through this system, from street to law enforcement lock-up facility, to the courthouse and back to the street or off to incarceration. Moving with them are law enforcement officers, attorneys, judges, police and courthouse support staff, victims, witnesses, friends and family who travel along through the process, from venue to venue.

All three phases of the American criminal justice system are “hands on.” Law enforcement officers are in close contact with each other and the public, and also in physical contact with offenders taken under arrest. In the courts, prosecutors meet with police officers, witnesses, victims and each other; defense attorneys meet with new defendants, friends and family of those in court, and witnesses. Pretrial service staff and prosecution support staff meet defendants, witnesses,

victims, prosecutors and defense attorneys, according to the varied roles they play.

The rise of COVID-19 in the United States has now inserted itself into all these human interactions. The response to COVID-19 has varied widely by onset, tactics, logistics and the realities of each entity's operational, legal and constitutional roles, as well as the realities of the novel coronavirus.

For law enforcement agencies – those agencies with significant public exposure that provide the necessary operations for public safety 24 hours daily, 7 days a week, 365 days a year – the realities of COVID-19 were immediate. As first responders, law enforcement officers and their activities naturally result in a high level of physical interaction – so much so it has been referred to, in jest, as a "contact sport."¹ Law enforcement officers are called to fires, road closures, medical emergencies and crime situations. Now, since the onset of COVID-19, departments have continued to provide policing services but have closed down or substantially limited public access to their stations to minimize transmission between officers and the public. This approach has been taken, for example, in areas in Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon and California.

At the same time police have restricted civilian access to law enforcement facilities, police departments have made tactical choices to reduce direct personal contact with the public, some making policy decisions to reduce arrests in favor of citations. Such citations have allowed lower-level and nonviolent suspects to appear in court at a later date in Miami; Rockford, Illinois; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; and Fort Worth, Texas.² Other contact-limiting practices have included warning people rather than arresting (San Francisco) and not issuing parking and traffic citations when public safety is not at issue (Philadelphia and Chicago)³

¹ Rosa Brooks, "Police officers nationwide need to consider going hands-off during this crisis," (April 24, 2020); <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/24/this-pandemic-standard-police-practices-risk-spreading-infection/>.

² Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, "Law Enforcement Best Practices Can Help Halt the Spread of COVID-19 by Keeping People Out of Jail," (March 27, 2020); <https://www.vera.org/blog/covid-19-1/law-enforcement-best-practices-can-help-halt-the-spread-of-covid-19-by-keeping-people-out-of-jail>.

³ Brennan Center for Justice, "Police Responses to Covid-19," (March 27, 2020); <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/police-responses-covid-19>.

Some agencies have gone a step further, announcing they would “no longer (be) sending officers to take incident reports for certain low-level offenses” and instead referring callers to provide information through “their online reporting portal.”⁴ Some departments have gone even further, implementing changes to reduce the number of officers appearing in their stations: roll calls held in the field, electronic sharing of information, or suspending roll call procedures altogether⁵. These changes in practice have reduced arrests in some jurisdictions by more than 75% and helped reduce the flow of offenders through local detention facilities and courthouses.⁶

Not all law enforcement agencies have changed their approach to arrests and detention during the pandemic. Some agencies have maintained their rate of custodial arrests, despite the increased risk of infection of all involved in such events. Police and sheriff’s deputies in San Diego continued to make arrests for nonviolent and minor misdemeanors; more than one in every four bookings was for someone accused of minor and nonviolent crimes, including 580 arrests for “public intoxication” from March 12 to April 30, 2020.⁷

The reduction in numbers of people driving their cars, shopping at malls, attending events and generally doing their business has changed the calculus of crime. Crime is the combination of three factors: a willing offender, an available target and an opportunity or motive. Shelter-in-place efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 have nearly eliminated the three ingredients in many areas,⁸ but not in all.

⁴ Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, “Law Enforcement Best Practices Can Help Halt the Spread of COVID-19 by Keeping People Out of Jail,” (March 27, 2020); <https://www.vera.org/blog/covid-19-1/law-enforcement-best-practices-can-help-halt-the-spread-of-covid-19-by-keeping-people-out-of-jail>.

⁵ Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, “Law Enforcement Best Practices Can Help Halt the Spread of COVID-19 by Keeping People Out of Jail,” (March 27, 2020); <https://www.vera.org/blog/covid-19-1/law-enforcement-best-practices-can-help-halt-the-spread-of-covid-19-by-keeping-people-out-of-jail>.

⁶ Brennan Center for Justice, “Police Responses to Covid-19,” (March 27, 2020); <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/police-responses-covid-19>.

⁷ Kelly David, Lauryn Schroeder, and Jeff McDonald, “Despite pandemic, sheriff continues booking suspects on minor, nonviolent offenses,” (May 17, 2020); <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/watchdog/story/2020-05-17/despite-pandemic-sheriff-continues-booking-suspects-on-minor-nonviolent-offenses>.

⁸ Neil MacFarquhar and Serge Kovalski, “A Pandemic Bright Spot: In Many Places, Less Crime,” (May 28, 2020); <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/26/us/coronavirus-crime.html>.

Even though arrests were down 73% in Chicago, the 2020 Memorial Day weekend drew people from their homes and witnessed the largest number of homicides in the city in five years. Some areas experienced ups and downs: Crime dropped in tourist- and retail-related categories in New York City, but increased in its suburbs. The Big Apple saw a 21% drop in crime overall, but burglaries and car thefts jumped approximately 68% over the prior year.⁹ Another example: In Baltimore, while most offenses reported dropped, residential robberies jumped, like New York, by nearly 75%.¹⁰

Additionally, other forms of crime – those committed out of the public view – have skyrocketed. Reports of online abuse of children soared from a monthly rate of one million reports in April 2019 to more than four million reports in April 2020.¹¹ Domestic violence hotlines and law enforcement agencies fielded significantly more calls than in similar timeframes. At the same time, sadly, domestic violence hotlines and shelter agencies reported an inability to effectively fundraise. Many experts in social work and public safety anticipated the rise in criminal incidents – a result of school and business closures and job losses, toxically mixed with the financial and interpersonal challenges that shadow such life changes.¹² These “invisible” crimes, unlike street crime offenses, are where the calculus of offenders, victims and opportunities have grown during the pandemic.

All the arrests, citations and orders to appear on the various offenses discussed above ultimately result in an appearance for the offender in criminal court. The courts have taken a mixture of approaches around the nation, based on a variety of factors. Some courts closed completely, other courts were open with

⁹ Neil MacFarquhar and Serge Kovalski, “A Pandemic Bright Spot: In Many Places, Less Crime,” (May 28, 2020); <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/26/us/coronavirus-crime.html>.

¹⁰ Andrew Vaught and Joyce Iwashita, “Police data behind the pandemic response,” (May 19, 2020); <https://www.policeone.com/police-products/software/data-information-sharing-software/articles/police-data-behind-the-pandemic-response-HZfFY3THMdI3hHa7>.

¹¹ Fernando Alfonso III, “The pandemic is causing an exponential rise in the online exploitation of children, experts say,” (May 25, 2020); <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/25/us/child-abuse-online-coronavirus-pandemic-parents-investigations-trnd/index.html>.

¹² Tyler Kingkade, “Police see rise in domestic violence calls amid coronavirus lockdown,” (April 5, 2020); <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/police-see-rise-domestic-violence-calls-amid-coronavirus-lockdown-n1176151>.

limited staff to hear emergency matters only, and other courts opened only by videoconference.

Unlike other government and business operations, there are time limits and rules that apply to criminal cases, dictated by a combination of statutory and constitutional standards and the presumption of innocence. The constitutional right to a speedy trial has been suspended in many states by government decree in recognition of the practical issues of bringing groups of police officers, witnesses, defendants and jurors together in the confined spaces of the courtroom.¹³ For defendants held on high bail or a detainer, these delays have caused harm from loss of work and time with family, and impaired efforts to prepare for court hearings and trial; they are “dead time” of no value to anyone. Many jurisdictions, therefore, have turned to videoconferencing for first appearances, arraignments, bail hearings, motion hearings and even trials.¹⁴

While this approach has provided a level of convenience and reduced costs in some areas, the judicial system has been resistant to remote hearings and trials because of the “unique benefits of physical presence” afforded the parties.¹⁵ Another consideration is the concern that video does not fulfill the requirements of the Sixth Amendment’s Confrontation Clause, which holds, “in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right ... to be confronted with the witnesses against him.”¹⁶

Some criminal courts have opened for limited purposes or under COVID-related restrictions. In Seattle, the federal courts have physically closed but have handled matters by phone or videoconference. The Washington state courts have been open for business with all parties wearing

¹³ Toni Messina, “‘When Will I Get My Trial?’ Being a Criminal Defense Attorney During COVID,” (June 1, 2020); <https://abovethelaw.com/2020/06/when-will-i-get-my-trial-being-a-criminal-defense-attorney-during-covid/>.

¹⁴ Michael Water, “Video-Chat Juries and the Future of Criminal Justice,” (May 21, 2020), <https://www.wired.com/story/video-chat-juries-and-the-future-of-criminal-justice/amp>.

¹⁵ Michael Water, “Video-Chat Juries and the Future of Criminal Justice,” (May 21, 2020), <https://www.wired.com/story/video-chat-juries-and-the-future-of-criminal-justice/amp>.

¹⁶ Legal Information Institute, “Right to confront witness,” (retrieved June 14, 2020), https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/right_to_confront_witness.

masks, the judge sitting behind a partition and some attorneys present through videoconferencing, while those lawyers in attendance sit next to each other. Jury trials have been suspended at least until July 6.¹⁷ Similar closures exist with equally similar stop-gap measures of phone or videoconference hearings in courtrooms across Massachusetts, Florida, Rhode Island,¹⁸ North Carolina,¹⁹ Texas, Virginia, Kentucky, Nevada, and beyond.

The federal government's judiciary response has included an effort to extend the statute of limitations for "one year following the end of the national (COVID) emergency" as blanket language for this and any future national emergency. Proposed, and immediately rejected, was a similar suspension of all statutes and rules of procedure that would have the effect of suspending all mandatory and constitutional obligations, including pre-arrest, post-arrest, pretrial, trial and post-trial procedures. The ill-fated idea would hold in abeyance all habeas corpus, speedy trial, appeal rights, and would allow a judge to order any person arrested held until said emergency has passed. Such a provision flies in the face of any semblance of constitutional criminal procedure or basic concepts of due process.

While no similar provision is known to be proposed or pending in any of the 50 states, this does not mean that the states have scrupulously followed their own statutory or constitutional criminal procedure standards. Attorneys for defendants held on bail, detainees or who have been sentenced are finding their clients are being held, when they are instead due for release, because of miscommunication between courts and jails or inattention to documents for release and more. The attorneys are finding it difficult to get into court and these defendants end up held over for days and weeks until the messes can be resolved.²⁰ Additionally, as is likely

¹⁷ Mike Carter, "How Will Washington's Justice System Return After COVID-19?," (June 2, 2020); <https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/How-Will-Washingtons-Justice-System-Return-After-COVID-19.html>.

¹⁸ Katie Mulvaney, "Justice goes high-tech in R.I. courthouses amid coronavirus restrictions," (May 20, 2020); <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20200519/justice-goes-high-tech-in-ri-courthouses-amid-coronavirus-restrictions>.

¹⁹ Josh Shaffer, "NC again postpones all jury trials, court deadlines extended amid coronavirus pandemic," (May 21, 2020); <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article242891156.html>.

²⁰ Jackson Cote, "'The stress, the fear, the desperation': Coronavirus crisis poses obstacles for Massachusetts public defenders as they represent their clients remotely," (May 15, 2020); <https://www.masslive.com/spring-field/2020/05/the-stress-the-fear-the-desperation-coronavirus-crisis-poses-obstacles-for-massachusetts-public-defenders-as-they-represent-their-clients-remotely.html>.

in other courts and states, there is already a trio of cases consolidated on appeal before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court about the rights of defendants held beyond statutory limits on bail revocations and pending trial while held on detainers unrelated to the conduct of the trial.²¹

Courts that are holding trials have taken one of two tracks during the pandemic. The Wall Street Journal reported in a May 19, 2020, article, “Is Anywhere Safe for a Jury Trial During the Covid-19 Pandemic,” that in Lincoln County, Montana, a local school gymnasium serves as the forum for a jury trial – an unlikely venue in normal times, but one that, under the circumstances, provides adequate space to empanel 12 jurors six feet apart, with similar distancing for witnesses, counsel and gallery. The Journal goes on to note that while Los Angeles County in California announced a plan to reopen its courts in late June with distancing measures in place and sanitizing practices assured, Texas holds videoconference jury trials with nonbinding verdicts.

Many other states are reporting that jury trials remain months off; courts are holding binding criminal jury trials but finding new issues. In Minnesota, the first jury trial since the onset of the pandemic resulted in quarantine for several of the parties as one of the courtroom staff was discovered to be infected shortly after the case was heard.²² In Texas, a juror walked off-camera to take a phone call during jury selection and could not hear the judge call him back to the proceedings.²³ Such issues of inattention or collateral activities are not limited to the jurors. In proceedings before the United States Supreme Court, it has been asserted that one of the justices, hearing the matter from a location other than the courthouse, went to the restroom during arguments, and that a “flush” could be heard. In circumstances that sound an alarm to parties involved in future

²¹ Andrew Zeiberg (attorney) in discussion with the author, June 2020.

²² Rochelle Olson, “First Hennepin County trial since pandemic results in quarantine for judge, staff,” (June 11, 2020); <https://m.startribune.com/first-hennepin-county-jury-trial-since-pandemic-results-in-quarantine-for-judge-and-her-staff/571165002/>.

²³ Angela Morris, “Juror Walks Off To Take Phone Call as Texas Tests First Jury Trial Via Zoom,” (May 18, 2020); <https://www.law.com/texaslawyer/2020/05/18/juror-walks-off-to-take-phone-call-as-texas-tests-first-jury-trial-via-zoom/>.

telephonic court proceedings, one media outlet publicly speculated which justice was the culprit, and in satirical tones provided the evidence for the conclusion reached.²⁴ In contrast to the arguably humorous aspects of the Supreme Court proceedings, on the other side of the world, Singapore has been actively using videoconferencing in serious criminal cases, and recently – during proceedings conducted by videoconferencing – sentenced a high-level drug dealer to death.²⁵

Jails and prisons are places of close confinement for approximately 2.3 million people in America.²⁶ This final stop in the criminal justice system is a line item on a budget that is perennially underfunded. Jails and prisons do not have the required funding to provide top-notch medical care or the necessary cleaning and maintenance care, and even less budget room for soap, PPEs or hygiene products. There are three groups that come into these facilities – prisoners, staff and visitors. All three are vectors for infection. All three groups pass from the outside into the facility with no effective barriers to viral transmission. Prisoners stay inside, but corrections staff leave each day and return with the potential to transmit the virus. Only visitors can be controlled; limited admittance or total exclusion. Unlike police departments and courts, jails and prisons cannot shut down or do their business by computer or videoconference. During the pandemic, they have “shut down” what they can – visitors.

The same challenges have presented – but in many cases have been exaggerated – in managing exposure to COVID-19 in the corrections arena: There have been few or no masks or gloves available to prisoners or guards, social distancing is inherently difficult in such quarters and hand sanitizer supplies and soap²⁷ are considered contraband for prisoners. In short, prisoners have been at a

²⁴ Ashley Feinberg, “Investigation: I Think I Know Which Justice Flushed,” (May 8, 2020); <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/05/toilet-flush-supreme-court-livestream.html>.

²⁵ John Geddie, “Man sentenced to death in Singapore on Zoom call,” (May 20, 2020); <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-singapore-crime/man-sentenced-to-death-in-singapore-via-zoom-call-idUSKBN22WoI6>.

²⁶ Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020,” (March 24, 2020); <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>.

²⁷ Keri Blakinger and Beth Schwartzapel, “Soap and sanitizer can keep coronavirus at bay, but many prisoners can’t get them,” (March 9, 2020); <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2020/03/07/prison-policies-inmates-best-coronavirus-practices/4978412002/>.

disadvantage when it comes to the ability to follow good hygiene practices or have optimum health.²⁸ Additionally, some jails and prisons are historically vulnerable to virus exposure and spread. To add insult to injury, guards have been ordered to report to work regardless of their COVID-19 status.²⁹ Further, rather than working to increase hygiene and cleaning practices, some correctional facilities have suspended showers for inmates suspected of having the coronavirus or who have been in medical quarantine.³⁰ In another instance of the seemingly absurd, one Arizona prison is so short of recommended cleaning supplies, prisoners have been provided shampoo, hand soap and even menstrual pads to clean their living quarters.³¹ In many facilities, more than 80% of the prisoners and many of the staff have tested positive for the COVID virus.³² With the challenges of being unable to practice social distancing, don protective masks and exercise the precautions that have allowed the general population to “flatten the curve” and reduce the spread, prisons and their populations have continued to witness an increase in cases and believe the peak of infection had yet to occur as of April 1.³³

Most jurisdictions have made efforts to reduce their prison head counts and reduce the risk of direct infection, probability of death, costs of healthcare and

²⁸ Kimberly Kindy, Mark Berman, and Julie Tate; “Jails and prisons suspend visitation to keep coronavirus from spreading,” (March 17, 2020); https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/jails-and-prisons-suspend-visitation-to-keep-coronavirus-from-spreading/2020/03/16/0cae4adc-6789-11ea-abef-020f086a3fab_story.html.

²⁹ Samantha Michaels, “Arkansas Told Corrections Officers to Keep Working Even If They’re Infected with COVID-19,” (June 2, 2020); <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2020/06/arkansas-told-corrections-officers-to-keep-working-even-if-theyre-infected-with-covid-19/>.

³⁰ Kelan Lyons, “Connecticut Department of Corrections suspends showers for inmates in quarantine or medical units,” (May 13, 2020); <https://www.courant.com/coronavirus/hc-news-coronavirus-prisons-showers-20200513-utdbny4j4rff5dzzhlvxb572m-story.html>.

³¹ Meg O’Connor, “Cleaning Supplies Are So Scarce At This Arizona Prison, Detainees Are Using Shampoo And Menstrual Pads, Lawsuit Says,” (May 12, 2020); <https://theappeal.org/florence-correctional-complex-lawsuit-arizona-coronavirus/>.

³² Meg O’Connor, “Cleaning Supplies Are So Scarce At This Arizona Prison, Detainees Are Using Shampoo And Menstrual Pads, Lawsuit Says,” (May 12, 2020); <https://theappeal.org/florence-correctional-complex-lawsuit-arizona-coronavirus/>.

³³ Gabrielle Banks and St. John Barned-Smith, “A COVID-19 outbreak at Harris County Jail was the ‘nightmare scenario.’ Then it actually happened,” (May 21, 2020); <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Harris-County-jail-coronavirus-covid-spread-inmate-15283248.php>.

virus transmission to staff.³⁴ From these circumstances emerges a variety of responses: early release of prisoners near the end of their sentences, release to home confinement, release on health or humanitarian grounds, compassionate release and lawsuits seeking either better conditions or release. Despite these efforts, nationwide few prisoners have been released, regardless of the mechanism or conditions, especially from federal facilities.

None of these issues have come as a surprise to correctional facilities. In fact, speculation about the “nightmare” of a viral infection has projected that hundreds of thousands could die, and that the correctional population could spread the virus to surrounding communities.³⁵ Such an outbreak, even if contained within the facility, would rapidly overwhelm internal health systems and this additional venue strain would spill over to local civilian health facilities and further spread an infectious agent.³⁶ Those concerns came to the fore in May in Oregon where one maximum security facility became the state’s single largest viral outbreak center, eclipsing all nursing homes, hospitals or other groups or facilities.³⁷

Across the nation, all aspects of criminal justice, law enforcement, courts and corrections are close-contact activities where people are frequently in physical contact or even chained to each other or immobilized and unable to maintain safe distancing practices. The coronavirus does not recognize lawful from unlawful, offender from police, assailant from victim, in any form. The close quarters position the criminal justice system as an accommodating breeding and transmission environment for COVID-19. Efforts to reduce the flow of people, the

³⁴ Blake Nelson, “N.J. Supreme Court could release more prisoners as coronavirus cases rise behind bars,” (May 27, 2020); <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/05/nj-supreme-court-considers-releasing-more-prisoners-as-coronavirus-cases-rise-behind-bars.html>.

³⁵ German Lopez, “A coronavirus outbreak in jails or prisons could turn into a nightmare,” (March 17, 2020); <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/17/21181515/coronavirus-covid-19-jails-prisons-mass-incarceration>.

³⁶ German Lopez, “A coronavirus outbreak in jails or prisons could turn into a nightmare,” (March 17, 2020); <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/17/21181515/coronavirus-covid-19-jails-prisons-mass-incarceration>.

³⁷ Neil Crombie, “Oregon’s maximum-security prison in Salem now the site of state’s biggest single coronavirus outbreak,” (May 22, 2020); German Lopez, “A coronavirus outbreak in jails or prisons could turn into a nightmare,” (March 17, 2020); <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/17/21181515/coronavirus-covid-19-jails-prisons-mass-incarceration>.

level of close human interaction and the extent of person-to-person contact are required but also defeat the operational charter of public safety agencies, judicial facilities, jails and prisons.

In the absence of herd immunity or the rollout of an effective vaccine to protect people from infection, this virus will continue to easily spread in the criminal justice population, and from there into the rest of America without barriers – crushing the criminal justice system along with the health and economy of the nation.

About the Author

Paul R. Gormley received his Juris Doctor degree from New England Law in Boston in 1996, and his doctorate in law and policy from Northeastern University in 2012. He has previously held faculty positions at North Shore Community College in Danvers, Massachusetts, and the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. He is currently a professor of criminal justice administration and chair of social science at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida.

Gormley opened his own office and practiced law for nearly 20 years, focusing on the representation of indigent criminal defendants, individuals with mental health issues and convicted sex offenders before the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board. Based on his experience in legal practice, his doctoral research focused on defense counsel and issues of effective representation of mentally ill criminal defendants.

Since joining the faculty at Lynn University, Gormley has given numerous presentations at conferences on issues of criminal justice, academic assessment and student writing development. He has provided training sessions on diverse topics, including academic assessment by college faculty, effective representation of sex offenders in classification hearings for defense counsel and supervision of cybercrime offenders by probation officers.