

NEWSBRIEFS

[THE LATEST FROM LABS, MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS]

Training program at California prison turns inmates into technicians

A training program at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, CA, is teaching inmates the art and science of dental technology. Since 1991, inmates have trained and worked at an 8,000-sq.-ft., state-of-the-art laboratory that fabricates mostly denture work for other inmates in the

California prison system and a small number of counties and state hospitals; it's one of a handful of such programs in the U.S.

Working in the laboratory helps the women be productive while serving their sentences, and can assist them in getting back on their feet after release.

"The training not only makes inmates more employable, but gives them a sense of self-esteem," says Frank Losco, Chief, Office of Public Affairs for the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA), the state agency that runs the Chowchilla program and several other vocational rehabili-

tation programs in the state.

Training at the 42-person lab is similar to that of a commercial dental laboratory. Under the guidance of Lab Manager Luther Slack, CDT, inmates learn on the job from skilled technicians and also use the PTC denture training program, which the laboratory

purchased in 2004. Training typically takes between nine months to a year and, as the inmate completes each phase of the PTC training, she receives PTC certification.

While many laboratories in our industry struggle to find candidates interested in a career in dental technology, this program is turning away interested applicants. Inmates are paid between \$.30 and \$.95 an hour—one of the top pay rates for a California prison. Court-ordered restitution/fines are deducted from the inmates' wages and transferred to the Crime Victims' Restitution Fund.



Lab Manager Luther Slack, CDT, oversees the inmate-technicians' work.



Supervisor Frank Roes uses a "shadow board" to control tools in the Prison Industry Authority dental laboratory.