The OSCAR PUBLISHING Services
International Journal of Law And Criminology

VOLUME Vol.06 Issue06 2026
PAGE NO. 72-80
DOI 10.37547/ijlc/Volume06Issue06-15

Modern Legal-Institutional Models of Crime Prevention: A Comparative Legal Analysis

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Received: 04 May 2026; **Accepted:** 02 June 2026; **Published:** 30 June 2026

Abstract: This article develops a legal-institutional typology of contemporary crime-prevention models and clarifies the analytical boundaries between concepts that are often treated as interchangeable in criminological and legal literature. On the basis of comparative legal analysis, international standards, and empirical material from a 2026 legal audit of crime-prevention practice in the Yashnabad District of Tashkent, the study distinguishes seven ideal-type models: control-based, police-centred, social-developmental, community-based, risk-based, evidence-based, and integrated multi-agency prevention. The article argues that these models do not belong to a single classificatory level. Police-centred, social-developmental, community-based, and integrated models primarily describe institutional architecture, whereas control-based, risk-based, and evidence-based approaches describe the logic by which preventive intervention is selected and evaluated. To resolve this conceptual overlap, a two-layer framework is proposed, combining institutional architecture with intervention logic. The framework is then applied to Uzbekistan, where the formal legal structure is multi-agency but the operational core remains substantially police-centred and control-oriented, while social, risk-based, and evidence-based elements are emerging. The study concludes that effective reform should focus not on importing a single foreign model, but on designing a legally coherent hybrid architecture with clear competences, proportional risk assessment, inter-agency coordination, rehabilitation mechanisms, measurable outcomes, and rights safeguards.

Keywords: Crime prevention; legal-institutional model; police-centred prevention; social prevention; community policing; risk-based prevention; evidence-based prevention; multi-agency governance; rehabilitation; Uzbekistan.

Introduction: Crime prevention is no longer reducible to patrol, surveillance, deterrence, or post-offence control. Contemporary prevention systems operate at the intersection of criminal law, administrative law, social policy, public administration, health care, education, local government, probation, data governance, and community participation. This institutional expansion has generated a conceptual problem: the literature uses terms such as “community policing”, “social prevention”, “risk-based prevention”, “evidence-based policing”, “integrated prevention”, and “multi-agency prevention” as though they were competing models of the same order. In reality, some of these concepts identify who governs prevention, others identify whom the system targets, and still others describe how preventive decisions are selected and evaluated.

The problem is not merely terminological. A legal system cannot be assessed or reformed coherently unless the object of comparison is defined at the correct level. A system may be police-centred in institutional terms but evidence-based in its decision-making; it may be community-oriented in local delivery while remaining control-based toward high-risk individuals; and it may formally involve many agencies while operational authority and information remain concentrated in one institution. Treating these characteristics as mutually exclusive “models” obscures the actual distribution of power, responsibility, resources, data, and accountability.

International standards increasingly frame crime prevention as a responsibility extending beyond the criminal justice system. The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime emphasize planned

prevention strategies, social and economic factors, partnerships, knowledge-based approaches, and inter-agency coordination [1]. UNODC has subsequently translated these principles into assessment and implementation tools that treat prevention as a governance system rather than a set of isolated police activities [2, 3]. The OSCE similarly presents community-oriented policing as a strategic complement to traditional law enforcement, grounded in police-public partnership, problem solving, trust, and cooperation with other state bodies and civil society [4].

The central research question of this article is therefore: what constitutes a crime-prevention "model" in legal-institutional terms, and how should the principal contemporary models be differentiated without collapsing institutional architecture, intervention logic, and evaluation methodology into a single category? The article has three objectives. First, it develops a set of legal-institutional criteria for identifying a prevention model. Second, it reconstructs the main contemporary approaches as ideal types and explains their relationships. Third, it tests the analytical usefulness of the framework against empirical evidence from Uzbekistan.

The Uzbek case is particularly suitable for this purpose because its legislation contains both traditional control instruments and an increasingly broad set of social, rehabilitative, community-level, and inter-agency mechanisms. The Law "On the Prevention of Offences" establishes a system of state and non-state actors, general, special, individual, and victimological prevention, as well as social rehabilitation and adaptation mechanisms [14]. More recent regulation has expanded social prevention at the mahalla level and institutionalized digital inter-agency cooperation [15]. At the same time, a 2026 legal audit of the Yashnabad District found a significant gap between the formal multi-actor design and the operational distribution of preventive authority [16]. This tension offers a concrete basis for testing the proposed typology.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

Classical crime-prevention scholarship has usually classified prevention by the object or mechanism of intervention. Tonry and Farrington distinguished major strategic approaches such as law enforcement, developmental, community, and situational prevention [5]. Hope conceptualized community crime prevention as efforts to alter the social conditions that sustain crime in residential communities [6], while Clarke developed situational crime prevention around the reduction of criminal opportunities through manipulation of immediate environments, risks, efforts, and rewards [7]. Later syntheses broadened this field by integrating developmental, community, situational, policing, and correctional strategies within a more comprehensive prevention agenda [8].

A second body of literature focuses on offender assessment and rehabilitation rather than the territorial or community environment. The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model links the intensity of intervention to assessed risk, directs treatment toward criminogenic needs, and requires interventions to be responsive to the characteristics of the individual [9]. Although RNR emerged primarily in correctional and probation contexts, its logic has influenced wider preventive practice because it provides a structured answer to a core governance question: how should limited preventive resources be differentiated across heterogeneous risk groups?

A third strand concerns the epistemic basis of preventive action. Sherman's formulation of evidence-based policing argues that police practices should be selected and evaluated by the best available evidence on outcomes rather than by tradition, intuition, or activity counts [10]. Goldstein's problem-oriented policing had already challenged the tendency to evaluate police organizations by internal processes rather than by their ability to solve substantive public problems [11]. Experimental hot-spots research further demonstrated the potential value of concentrating resources at high-risk places rather than distributing them uniformly [12]. These approaches shifted the debate from the volume of activity toward the quality, targeting, and measurable effects of intervention.

International normative frameworks add a fourth layer. The UN crime-prevention architecture treats prevention as a shared public responsibility requiring central leadership, local delivery, partnerships, social inclusion, knowledge, evaluation, and respect for the rule of law [1–3]. The OSCE's community-policing framework emphasizes durable partnerships between police and communities and recognizes that effective prevention requires support from other public bodies and civil society [4]. The Council of Europe Probation Rules similarly connect public safety with individualized supervision, rehabilitation, and social reintegration [13].

The literature therefore contains several valid but analytically different classifications. Some are based on the institutional centre of the system; some on the social level of intervention; some on the method used to allocate preventive resources; and some on the evidentiary standard governing program selection. This article treats that fragmentation as the main

theoretical problem and uses comparative legal analysis to reconstruct the categories on a common legal-institutional basis.

Research design and analytical criteria

The study uses a qualitative comparative legal method supplemented by institutional analysis and a bounded empirical case study. Primary normative materials include the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, UNODC implementation and assessment tools, OSCE standards on community-oriented policing, the Council of Europe Probation Rules, the legislation of Uzbekistan on crime prevention, and secondary regulation on social prevention [1–4, 13–15]. The doctrinal analysis is complemented by foundational criminological and policing literature on community, situational, developmental, risk-based, problem-oriented, and evidence-based prevention [5–12].

To classify a prevention model, the article applies ten legal-institutional criteria: (1) normative purpose; (2) central or lead institution; (3) distribution of competences; (4) principal object of intervention; (5) trigger for preventive action; (6) repertoire and intensity of interventions; (7) information and data architecture; (8) coordination mechanism; (9) performance and evaluation criteria; and (10) legal safeguards and accountability. A "model" is treated as an ideal type: a coherent configuration of these elements, not a claim that any national system exists in pure form.

The empirical component relies on the 2026 legal audit "Crime Prevention: Yashnabad District", prepared by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The audit used official statistics, legal analysis, direct time-and-motion observation, surveys, structured interviews, and comparative methods [16]. It is used here as a diagnostic case rather than as a statistically representative sample of the entire country. Accordingly, the article does not generalize district-level numerical findings to all of Uzbekistan; it uses them to test whether the proposed conceptual framework can reveal divergences between formal legal design and operational practice.

DISCUSSION

1. The legal-institutional meaning of a prevention model

A legal-institutional model should not be defined by a single intervention, agency, or slogan. It is a structured relationship between purpose, authority, information, resources, preventive instruments, and accountability. The same legal system may contain several preventive techniques, but a technique becomes model-defining only when it shapes the architecture of decision-making and the distribution of institutional responsibility.

This distinction helps separate three analytical levels. The first is institutional architecture: which actors possess legal authority, information, resources, and responsibility for results. The second is intervention logic: how the system identifies problems and selects targets, intensity, and instruments. The third is epistemic and performance logic: how the system determines whether an intervention is justified and whether it works. Many typologies become confused because they place categories from these different levels on a single horizontal list.

For example, "police-centred" describes where institutional authority is concentrated; "risk-based" describes how subjects or places are prioritized; and "evidence-based" describes the standard used to select and evaluate interventions. These characteristics can coexist. A police-centred system can be evidence-based; an integrated system can remain control-oriented; a community-based system can use risk segmentation; and a social-prevention system can operate without rigorous evidence. The analytically sound approach is therefore to treat models as ideal-type configurations while recognizing that some categories function as cross-cutting logics.

2. Seven contemporary ideal types

Control-based prevention. The control-based model conceptualizes crime primarily as a threat requiring early detection, supervision, restriction, deterrence, and monitoring. Its characteristic legal instruments include registration, formal warnings, administrative supervision, surveillance, patrol, compliance checks, restrictions, and sanctions. The model's institutional advantage is clarity of command and rapid capacity to respond to visible risks. Its principal weakness is that it can overproduce surveillance and formal compliance while under-addressing social causes, rehabilitation, trust, and long-term behavioural change. Control-based prevention is best understood as an intervention logic rather than a complete institutional architecture.

Police-centred prevention. The police-centred model places law-enforcement bodies at the operational centre of prevention. Police collect and process risk information, identify target groups, initiate preventive measures, monitor compliance, and often coordinate other institutions. Its strengths are operational capacity, territorial presence, coercive authority, and access to incident data. Its structural risk is functional overload: social, educational, health, family, and employment problems may be absorbed into the police mandate even where police lack the professional tools

to resolve them. This can transform a preventive officer into a universal administrator and shift resources from early prevention to reactive case handling.

Social-developmental prevention. The social-developmental model treats offending as partly rooted in modifiable social conditions and life-course risks. Its central actors are not only police but also education, employment, health, social protection, family services, local government, and probation. Intervention focuses on school attachment, employment, family stability, addiction treatment, social inclusion, psychosocial support, and reintegration. Developmental prevention scholarship emphasizes early intervention and strengthening protective factors [5, 8]. The model's principal legal-institutional challenge is accountability: when outcomes depend on multiple social systems, competences and responsibility for non-performance must be clearly allocated.

Community-based prevention. The community-based model shifts attention from the individual offender to the local social environment and to the relationship between institutions and residents. It relies on local problem identification, police-public partnership, community participation, neighbourhood-level information, and co-production of safety. The OSCE presents community-oriented policing as a strategic approach that complements traditional law enforcement through trust, participation, and joint problem solving [4]. Community-based prevention can improve legitimacy and local knowledge, but without clear procedures it may become symbolic consultation or place excessive informal responsibility on communities.

Risk-based prevention. Risk-based prevention allocates intervention according to differentiated levels of predicted harm or reoffending. The RNR framework is the clearest expression of this logic in offender supervision: higher-risk cases require more intensive intervention, criminogenic needs should shape the content of intervention, and delivery must be responsive to the individual [9]. In broader prevention, risk-based logic can be applied to persons, families, places, institutions, and crime problems. Its benefit is proportional resource allocation. Its legal risks include false positives, stigmatization, opaque scoring, discrimination, indefinite supervision, and overreliance on historical data. For that reason, risk classification requires legal criteria, review mechanisms, data-quality standards, proportionality, and appeal safeguards.

Evidence-based prevention. Evidence-based prevention requires programs and operational tactics to be selected, adapted, and discontinued according to the best available evidence on outcomes. Sherman's evidence-based policing framework directly challenged the assumption that activity itself proves effectiveness [10]. Goldstein's earlier problem-oriented approach similarly demanded a systematic focus on substantive problems and results [11]. Evidence-based prevention therefore changes the legal-administrative meaning of accountability: the relevant question is not simply whether an authority acted, but whether the chosen intervention had a defensible evidence base, was implemented with fidelity, and produced measurable outcomes.

Integrated multi-agency prevention. The integrated model treats crime as a multi-causal phenomenon requiring coordinated interventions across institutional boundaries. Its defining feature is not the mere existence of many statutory actors. Genuine integration requires a lead or case-coordination mechanism, shared or interoperable information, division of tasks, referral procedures, common outcome indicators, escalation rules, and accountability for implementation. UN standards repeatedly emphasize inter-agency coordination and partnerships [1–3]. The main risk is "coordination without responsibility": committees, meetings, and data exchanges may multiply while no institution remains accountable for the final preventive result.

Table 1. Comparative legal-institutional profile of contemporary crime-prevention models

Model	Centre	Target	Tools	Metric	Risk
Control-based	Police/security bodies	Risky persons/behaviour	Monitoring, registration, warnings, restrictions	Compliance and incident suppression	Over-control; formalism
Police-centred	Police	Territory, incidents, target persons	Patrol, preventive casework, enforcement, coordination	Crime/disorder and police outputs	Functional overload; police-centrism

Social-developmental	Social, education, health, employment, probation	Social and life-course risk factors	Support, treatment, education, employment, rehabilitation	Reduced risk factors; reintegration	Diffuse responsibility
Community-based	Police + local community/local government	Neighbourhood problems and local safety	Partnership, local problem solving, co-production	Trust, safety, local problem resolution	Symbolic participation; uneven capacity
Risk-based	Depends on host architecture	High/medium/low-risk persons or places	Risk assessment, differentiated intensity	Risk reduction; recidivism/harm reduction	Bias, opacity, stigmatization
Evidence-based	Depends on host architecture	Programs, tactics, target groups	Research synthesis, pilots, evaluation, adaptation	Outcome and impact evidence	Method fetishism; weak implementation
Integrated multi-agency	Shared governance with lead/case coordinator	Complex persons, families, places, problems	Referral, case management, data sharing, joint plans	Joint outcomes across agencies	Coordination without accountability

3. A two-layer typology: institutional architecture and intervention logic

The comparative analysis suggests that the seven categories should not be treated as seven mutually exclusive national models. Four categories primarily describe institutional architecture: police-centred, social-developmental, community-based, and integrated multi-agency. Three primarily describe intervention or decision logic: control-based, risk-based, and evidence-based. This distinction constitutes the central theoretical result of the article.

The institutional layer answers the question “who governs prevention and through what allocation of legal authority?” The intervention layer answers “how are targets selected, how intensive is the intervention, and on what basis is it justified?” A third evaluative dimension may then ask “how is success measured?” In practical terms, a national system can be mapped as a matrix rather than forced into a single label. Thus, a system may be institutionally integrated, use risk-based targeting for high-risk cases, evidence-based programs for intervention selection, community-based delivery at neighbourhood level, and control-based instruments for narrowly defined high-risk situations.

This matrix approach also explains why wholesale institutional transplantation is rarely successful. The UN Guidelines explicitly recognize that governmental structure, social characteristics, and economic capacity influence the scope and implementation of prevention programs [1]. A model that depends on strong municipal services, interoperable databases, professional probation, or mature civil-society organizations cannot be reproduced by simply copying a statute. Legal transfer must be accompanied by institutional capacity, resource alignment, information governance, professional training, and accountability mechanisms.

4. Rights safeguards as part of the model, not an external limitation

A prevention model is incomplete if it describes only preventive power and not the legal constraints governing that power. The more a system relies on predictive risk, preventive registration, administrative supervision, data integration, or targeted intervention before a new offence occurs, the more important legality, necessity, proportionality, reviewability, data accuracy, non-discrimination, and procedural remedies become.

This is especially important for risk-based and integrated digital prevention. Risk scores may create durable consequences even where the individual has committed no new offence. Multi-agency data sharing may combine health, education, employment, family, and police information. The legal architecture must therefore specify purpose limitation, access rights, correction of inaccurate data, retention periods, human review of automated outputs, and a route to challenge preventive classification. Without such safeguards, a preventive system may become administratively efficient while losing legal legitimacy.

The same principle applies to performance management. If agencies or officers are sanctioned for outcomes substantially outside their control, the system creates incentives to manage indicators rather than risks. Evidence-based and outcome-oriented governance therefore requires a controllability principle: actors should be assessed primarily on outcomes they can reasonably influence, with contextual adjustment for external factors. This principle is essential to avoid converting prevention into metric compliance.

RESULTS

1. A ten-component legal-institutional model

The study finds that a crime-prevention system can be described with sufficient legal precision through ten components: purpose; institutional centre; competence distribution; target object; intervention trigger; intervention repertoire; information architecture; coordination mechanism; performance regime; and rights safeguards. These components allow comparison across jurisdictions without assuming that organizational labels are equivalent.

The framework also provides a diagnostic rule. Where legislation formally distributes preventive powers among multiple institutions but information, target selection, coercive tools, and operational responsibility remain concentrated in the police, the system should be described as formally multi-agency but operationally police-centred. Where risk categories exist but do not alter the intensity or content of intervention, the system contains risk terminology but is not functionally risk-based. Where programs are measured by numbers of meetings, visits, or reports rather than behavioural or safety outcomes, the system is activity-based rather than evidence-based or outcome-oriented.

2. Application to Uzbekistan: a hybrid system in transition

Uzbekistan's formal legal framework has several features of integrated prevention. The Law "On the Prevention of Offences" defines a broad system of participating authorities and institutions and regulates general, special, individual, and victimological prevention, as well as social rehabilitation and adaptation [14]. The legal framework therefore does not conceptualize prevention solely as police enforcement. More recent reforms have strengthened mahalla-level social prevention and inter-agency cooperation, including digital mechanisms for identifying social problems and assigning interventions [15].

The 2026 Yashnabad legal audit nevertheless identifies a substantial difference between formal legal multiplicity and operational centralization. The audit found that the law identifies fourteen bodies directly involved in prevention, but decisive mechanisms such as preventive registration, identification of risky persons, criminogenic analysis, individual prevention, monitoring, and special preventive measures remain concentrated in internal-affairs bodies [16]. This suggests a hybrid architecture: formally multi-agency, but with a police-centred operational core.

The functional evidence reinforces that diagnosis. The audit classified the preventive inspector's duties and found that 58 percent were reactive while only 42 percent were proactive; it also found that 44 percent of functions were close to the competence of other public institutions and therefore required participation by education, health, social protection, probation, migration, or mahalla structures [16]. A direct time-and-motion observation further showed that work on emergency calls, administrative documentation, and citizen applications consumed 68 percent of the observed inspector's working time, with emergency-call handling alone accounting for 30.8 percent [16]. These findings are consistent with a police-centred system in which the preventive officer becomes the default operational absorber of heterogeneous social and administrative tasks.

At the same time, the audit contains evidence of transition toward other models. Social-prevention reforms increasingly connect legal, social, psychological, medical, and educational assistance; the "E-ijtimoiy profilaktika" mechanism enables referral and joint conclusions; and individualized social-adaptation measures point toward integrated and social-developmental governance [16]. Risk-based elements are also emerging in the classification of vulnerable or high-risk groups. However, the audit found that risk differentiation often does not yet produce sufficiently differentiated intervention, and that many resocialization plans remain dominated by standard control measures rather than individualized rehabilitation [16].

The performance regime also remains transitional. The audit's Results/Outcomes Index was 46.35 out of 100, while the Resource and Institutional Capacity Index was 52.80 and the Operational Efficiency Index was 38.07 [16]. These figures should not be read as national scores, because they derive from a district audit and from a specific methodology. Their analytical value lies elsewhere: they show that a system may possess substantial organizational resources while converting them inefficiently into targeted, rehabilitative, and measurable preventive outcomes. In the proposed typology, this is a classic sign of institutional mismatch

between formal integrated design and operational control-oriented practice.

Accordingly, Uzbekistan should not be described by a single model label. The more precise formulation is: a hybrid prevention system with a police-centred and control-based operational core, combined with expanding social-developmental, community-level, integrated, risk-based, and evidence-oriented elements. Such a description is more informative than either "police model" or "multi-agency model" because it identifies the direction of institutional change and the points where legal design and implementation diverge.

Table 2. Diagnostic application of the proposed framework to the Uzbek case

Dimension	Formal legal tendency	Observed operational tendency in Yashnabad audit	Analytical classification
Institutional participation	Broad multi-agency statutory system	Key information, monitoring and individual-prevention tools centred on internal-affairs bodies	Formally integrated; operationally police-centred
Intervention orientation	Legal recognition of social rehabilitation and adaptation	Strong continuing role of registration, monitoring and reactive tasks	Mixed, with control-based predominance
Targeting	Growing use of categories and digital social-prevention tools	Insufficient differentiation of intervention intensity and content	Emerging risk-based logic
Community/local level	Mahalla-level prevention and social support mechanisms	Local participation exists but police remain a central operational actor	Emerging community/integrated elements
Evaluation	Growing attention to results and digital indicators	Operational practice still substantially activity/process-oriented	Transition toward evidence/outcome orientation
Rehabilitation	Express legal basis for rehabilitation and social adaptation	Individual plans often insufficiently individualized	Social-developmental component under institutional development

3. Reform implications derived from the typology

The typology indicates that reform should begin with architecture rather than with isolated new duties. First, statutory competences should distinguish clearly between policing functions and social-service functions. Police should retain core responsibilities for public safety, risk detection, legal intervention, and coordination where legally justified, while employment, health, education, social protection, probation, and local-government bodies should bear enforceable responsibility for interventions within their professional competence.

Second, multi-agency prevention should be converted from participation into case governance. For complex high-risk cases, law should define a lead coordinator, referral triggers, deadlines, minimum content of an individual plan, information-sharing rules, responsibility for non-performance, and a closing or review decision based on outcomes. A committee without a legally structured case-management process is not an integrated model.

Third, risk-based prevention should be operationalized through proportionality. High-risk cases may justify intensive multi-agency intervention; medium-risk cases should receive targeted but less intrusive measures; low-risk cases should not be subjected to the same administrative burden as persistent high-risk cases. Risk classifications should be periodically reviewed and should not operate as permanent labels.

Fourth, evidence-based prevention requires a change in performance law. The principal indicators should include recidivism, victimization, safety perceptions, successful social reintegration, reduction of identified

risk factors, repeat calls for service, and problem resolution, while activity measures should be treated mainly as implementation data. Outcome indicators must nevertheless be context-adjusted so that individual officers are not held responsible for macroeconomic, demographic, or inter-agency factors beyond their control.

Finally, legal safeguards must be built into the preventive architecture. The preventive state acts before or without a new criminal conviction; its legitimacy therefore depends on a higher, not lower, standard of procedural clarity. The more data-driven and risk-oriented the system becomes, the more important transparent criteria, human review, proportionality, data correction, time limits, and accessible complaint mechanisms become.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis demonstrates that contemporary crime prevention cannot be adequately described through a single linear list of models. The principal categories operate at different analytical levels. Police-centred, social-developmental, community-based, and integrated multi-agency approaches primarily describe institutional architecture. Control-based, risk-based, and evidence-based approaches primarily describe the logic of intervention, prioritization, and evaluation. Their combination, rather than their mutual exclusivity, explains the structure of real preventive systems.

The article therefore proposes a two-layer legal-institutional typology supported by ten diagnostic components: normative purpose, institutional centre, distribution of competences, object of intervention, trigger, intervention repertoire, information architecture, coordination, performance regime, and rights safeguards. This framework allows legal systems to be compared by the actual allocation of preventive power and responsibility rather than by formal organizational labels.

Application of the framework to Uzbekistan indicates a hybrid system in transition. The legislation has moved toward multi-agency, social, rehabilitative, community-level, and digitally coordinated prevention. However, evidence from the Yashnabad legal audit shows that operational authority remains substantially concentrated in internal-affairs bodies and that reactive and control-oriented functions continue to absorb a large share of preventive capacity [16]. The most appropriate direction is therefore not the mechanical replacement of a “police model” with a foreign alternative, but the construction of a coherent hybrid architecture in which police, social services, local institutions, probation, health, education, employment bodies, and communities perform legally differentiated but coordinated functions.

The broader implication is that the quality of a prevention system depends less on the number of institutions or preventive measures written into legislation than on the coherence of the institutional chain linking risk identification, lawful intervention, rehabilitation, inter-agency coordination, monitoring, measurable outcomes, and accountability. A modern legal-institutional model should therefore be judged by whether it converts information and authority into proportionate, evidence-informed, rights-respecting, and verifiably effective prevention.

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