The history and development of the discipline of correctional psychology is reviewed. Particular attention is paid to the evolution of psychological practice in the applied correctional context and to the emergence of a thematic/generic model of the role of the correctional psychologist as well as the functions and activities he/she undertakes while performing that role. To position the development of psychology in corrections and the forces which helped shape its development and application properly, a brief overview of the historical antecedents of modern correctional philosophy and practice is provided. Two factors are noted for their direct and indirect influence in this regard: the introduction of the use of confinement as punishment for criminal behaviour and the establishment of penal institutions in order to carry out such punishment.

The paper closes with an examination of practical aspects of the operation and maintenance of a correctional psychology unit, and summarizes further evidence of the growth of the discipline and its unique contribution to the correctional process.