

# Legislative Briefings

January 2001

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has been working on a number of initiatives related to its mission. Some of those continuing efforts include:

## Improving Transition

During the 1999-2001 biennium the department initiated a transition project to reduce the number of offenders who commit new crimes while on parole or post-prison supervision. By fine tuning its processes that reintroduce inmates to society and equips them with pro-social skills, the department hopes to reduce the number of crimes committed by former inmates.

Of the 10,000 inmates in Oregon's prisons, 95 percent will be released to Oregon communities at a rate of approximately 300 per month. Currently, 70 percent are not convicted of a new felony within three years of release. This is one of the best recidivism rates in the nation, but one the department knows can be improved.

Statistics show that offenders are most likely to commit new crimes during the first year following release. To make the greatest impact on improving an inmate's chances of success after incarceration, the department must plan for transition long before release; in fact, the process begins the day an inmate enters DOC's custody.

## *Inmate Incarceration and Transition Plan*

The recently developed Inmate Incarceration and Transition Plan (IITP) matches offenders' deficiencies in treatment, education, and training with DOC's programs.

When inmates enter the prison system, they undergo a series of evaluations. The results are used to create individual plans that specify programs — including work assignments — that should be completed in order to be prepared for release. Every inmate's progress is tracked via computer.

The IITP also bridges the offender's institution and community life. Parole officers use the plan to help integrate the offender into the community and, when possible, match institution progress with community programs.

The Transition Project is working to develop links to the community that allow felons to find and maintain housing, employment, and treatment programs.

## *Children of Incarcerated Parents Project*

To increase the odds that ex-offenders and their children remain crime-free in their communities, the Transition Project is developing a program to focus on the needs of children of incarcerated parents.

Two compelling facts are driving this effort: Children of incarcerated parents are five times more likely to be incarcerated than children of non-incarcerated parents. Also, more than half of all inmates plan to live with their children after release from prison.

Unfortunately, there is no systematic intervention in Oregon that targets these children for crime prevention strategies.

To interrupt the intergenerational cycle of criminality, the Children's Project is developing targeted programs that meet these diverse family needs. In partnership with the Oregon Social Learning Center, the department plans to provide parent education programs and therapeutic visiting to practice learned skills. Monitoring and evaluation of results are also integral components.

OREGON DEPARTMENT  
OF CORRECTIONS

DAVID S. COOK  
DIRECTOR

The mission of the Oregon Department of Corrections is to promote public safety by holding offenders accountable for their actions and reducing the risk of future criminal behavior.

JOHN A. KITZHABER, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



To have a lasting impact, a system must be developed to address these children's needs in the community. The DOC is working closely with a number of government agencies, private non-profits, and community groups to create a continuum of interventions.

## Program Consolidation

In late 2000, the department adopted a new model to manage the delivery of correctional programs and services to inmates from admission through release.

Most Oregon state prisons offered a wide range of programs for their inmate populations. Rather than duplicate these efforts among the 13 prisons, certain programs are being consolidated into specific prisons. For instance, Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario will focus on work and training. Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem will continue to offer a broad range of job preparedness programs as well as work, basic education, treatment services, and transitional services.

These cost efficiencies will begin to be implemented in January 2001. As this model continues to develop, the DOC will maintain its commitment of putting all inmates to work.

## Restructuring Work Programs

In 1999, the people of the State of Oregon created, by ballot referral, a semi-independent state agency, Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE), to engage inmates in work and on-the-job training.

Oregon Corrections Enterprises, continues to operate work programs that are designed to be cost-effective and that will, ultimately, return skilled, motivated and cooperative workers back to the community. The administrator of OCE reports to the director of the Department of Corrections.

OCE comprises several divisions that provide services or make products for government agencies and private businesses. Products include wood furniture, fabricated metal, yurt foundations, office chairs, signs, and more. Services provided include computer aided mapping, web design, telecommunications, office support, mail room and printing.

Outside work crews from minimum custody prisons remain under the authority of DOC prison superintendents. These prisons market their own services and have been remarkably creative in doing so. Inmate crews clean up parks and roadways. They rehab buildings, install playground equipment and perform a variety of other tasks for government and private organizations.

## Creating Security Staffing Standards

The department is evaluating the staffing of its 13 prisons in order to create a baseline to compare the numbers and types of staff across the state.

Security staffing standards take into account similarities and differences among Oregon's prisons. Criteria include prison design, inmate characteristics, and agency-desired outcomes to most efficiently staff our prisons. This process will demonstrate a rationale for staffing that can subsequently be applied to new prisons.

The DOC is first developing standards for the security staff in medium and higher custody prisons. Non security staff and minimum security prison staff will be incorporated into the process at a later date.

## Prison Construction

The prison construction schedule is derived from the prison population forecast prepared every six months by the Department of Administrative Services. Adjustments to the forecast take into account factors that may affect the number of admissions to prison and the average length of stay.

Changes made to any portion of the justice system have an ultimate effect on the DOC. For instance, if the initiative to repeal Measure 11 had passed, the department would have had to scale back the construction schedule, staffing patterns and budget.

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility near Wilsonville will be occupied in the '01 - '03 biennium. Although primarily a women's prison, it will also house men who are newly admitted to prison and going through the intake process.

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