

**SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS TESTIMONY**  
**APRIL 22, 2013**

Good morning, Chairman Sarlo and Committee members.

The mission of the New Jersey Department of Corrections is to protect the public by operating safe, secure, and humane correctional facilities. The mission is realized through effective supervision, proper classification and appropriate treatment of offenders, and by providing services that promote successful reentry into society. The DOC fulfills this mandate in a fiscally responsible manner, with the safety of staff, inmates and the public being our foremost concern.

We continue to employ our management process called CHANGE, an acronym for Challenge Historic Assumptions Nobly Generating Efficiencies, to measure and manage the security, administration, programs and healthcare services in all of our institutions. Under this process, senior staff meets monthly to discuss issues, processes, trends and best practices. We believe that CHANGE has been instrumental in efficiently managing the department. For example, with regards to overtime, the FY 2010 overtime hours worked were slightly over one million, at a cost of \$52.8 million. The FY 2014 budget funds 670,000 hours at a cost of \$35.2 million. This represents a 35% decrease in overtime hours worked and 33% decrease in funding required.

Also with regard to population management, on March 31, there were 180 state inmates in the county jails awaiting transfer to a state facility, quite a dramatic improvement from the 1,552 inmates who were housed in the counties in November 2009, when Governor Christie was elected. This movement not only makes good fiscal sense, but it also allows the department to begin the re-entry process as soon as an offender enters the system. Indeed, successful re-entry is a public safety issue, as the reduction in the recidivism rate translates into less victimization. While our recidivism or re-incarceration rate of 34.8% within 3 years is far lower than the national average, it is, nevertheless, a number we seek to improve.

The reentry process begins by quickly moving the inmate out of the county jail and into our facilities. We recognize that an offender's successful transition into society **commences** as soon as he or she enters prison. Educational level, mental and physical health needs and detection of substance abuse are assessed within days of an inmate's confinement so that proper prison placement and programmatic choices can be facilitated.

I believe that you can be proud of the programming offered by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, as it has been tailored to address the needs of the offender returning to society through programs such as education, drug treatment, anger management, responsible parenting, residential community release and intensive parole supervision.

Of course, an essential part of successful inmate re-entry is education. Without the tools that education offers, an offender is destined to repeat the mistakes of the past.

We serve four primary groups of inmates enrolled in educational programs:

- Those inmates under the age of 21 who do not have a high school diploma or GED.
- Those inmates over 21 who do not have a high school diploma but who are strongly urged to attain a GED.
- The Basic Literacy group who we are legislatively mandated to bring to a ninth-grade reading level.
- Inmates in vocational training.

During 2012, there was an average monthly enrollment of 323 inmates under the age of 21, and 61 high school diplomas were awarded. With regard to GED preparation, during the 2012 calendar year, more than 71 percent of those inmates who tested for a GED – 518 of 721 – received their high school equivalency diploma. These statistics place the NJDOC among the most successful entities in the state, including community colleges and technical schools, in terms of preparing students to obtain a GED.

In February 2011, more than 2,500 inmates were enrolled in mandatory literacy education. Thirty-four percent of those inmates read below a fourth-grade level, 28 percent read at a level ranging from fourth to sixth grade, and 35 percent read at a sixth-to-ninth-grade level. Alarming, just 3 percent of those inmates read at a ninth-grade-or-above level.

Again, that was in 2011. By January 2012, the number of inmates reading at a ninth-grade level or higher had grown to 17 percent, while the percentages in each of the other categories

had dropped. As of February 2013, 20% of inmates enrolled in the literacy program had reached a ninth grade reading level.

In addition, there are 5,711 inmates who are enrolled in vocational programs, and 3,301 certificates of completion were issued in 2012. We thank Commissioner Harold Wirths of Department of Labor and Workforce Development for that agency's continued assistance with our endeavors in this area.

We have made a concerted effort to enlist the help of volunteers to supplement our teaching staff. 3,203 volunteers were approved this year, and an average of 267 volunteers are providing tutoring services on a monthly basis. Students from the College of New Jersey, Rutgers University, Seton Hall University, Rowan University and Princeton University are among those who give up what little free time they have to help us in our education endeavor, and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize the efforts of all of our volunteers.

Over time, good behavior and participation in the above-mentioned programs and educational classes will allow the inmate to attain reduced custody status, allowing them to be considered for placement in a residential community release program (RCRP). Since time at an RCRP occurs near the end of their sentences, the focus is on re-entry preparation, including job training, education and drug treatment.

This program is a successful reentry tool and the Office of Community Programs is continually monitoring and enhancing our oversight of the contracts. In fact, an

additional 16 items recommended by the Comptroller were added to our monitoring tool. After reviewing the Comptroller's audit, we also adopted 34 out of 35 of the recommendations, thereby utilizing this report to strengthen the oversight of RCRPs.

Additionally, the current request for proposal was modified to include a provider accreditation requirement, program evaluation benchmarks, increased security assessments and more robust administrative accountability.

As I mentioned last year, an estimated 43 percent of our offenders have a severe drug and/or alcohol problem. The Department of Corrections' currently has 2,731 secure treatment beds available: 1,332 treatment beds in DOC facilities, 1,399 substance abuse treatment beds in Residential Community Release Programs including the Mutual Agreement Program (MAP) beds allotted for NJDOC drug programs. This is in addition to other programs with a drug or alcohol component, such as the Recovery Oriented Integrated System (ROIS) and Living in Balance.

In addition to the programs that are offered for reentry, inmates are given an opportunity to obtain documents that are necessary for successful transition, such as a copy of their birth certificate, their Social Security card and MVC identification card. Upon discharge from our facilities, offenders also are provided with a summary of their medical record and program participation transcripts.

At this point, let me say a few words about the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's University Correctional Healthcare (UCHC), which provides the healthcare

to the inmate population. Again, I think that we can all be proud of the excellent healthcare that is provided to state inmates. This quality healthcare is a result of strong relationships forged amongst DOC, UCHC and Saint Francis Hospital. In fact, UCHC was presented with the 2013 Excellence in Quality Improvement award from the New Jersey Hospital Association.

Here are just a few examples of the impact of UCHC's quality improvement program:

- Since UCHC began delivering mental health services in 2005, inmate complaints about mental health services decreased by 87 percent.
- Nursing overtime was reduced by about 15 percent in the past two years.
- The development of treatment guidelines and formulary controls have reduced pharmaceutical expenses to 2007 levels.

As with nearly everyone else in the state, the NJDOC had to deal with Superstorm Sandy. And, as we have had to do in the past, we initiated more than 5,500 inmate moves to and from flood-prone areas of the state, without incident. In addition, at the behest of the New Jersey State Police and the Office of Emergency Management, a cadre of our officers patrolled the Bayshore area of the state for weeks after the storm. Working with the Department of Environmental Protection, inmate crews worked for weeks after Sandy to clean Liberty State Park, ensuring this prime tourist attraction was ready for business.

It also should be noted that on any given weekday, we partner with the Department of Transportation and provide inmates who are tasked with maintaining specific areas of roadways as assigned by the DOT. There also are highway details that go out from March to October to pick up trash from various roads throughout the state. In partnership with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, an inmate labor crew cleans and performs maintenance at the William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Arneystown.

I am also happy to announce that all of our facilities are smoke-free, which creates a much healthier environment for staff and inmates alike. Smoking cessation programs helped us to accomplish this, and without incident.

I will now be happy to answer your questions.