

## **BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS**

**APRIL, 2011**

When I was confirmed as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Corrections over a year ago, Governor Christie was clear in his mandate to me: put your fiscal house in order without sacrificing public safety, run the department smarter, cheaper and more efficiently. The budget we present today encompasses all aspects of the Governor's directive, while fulfilling our core mission, which is to protect the public by operating safe, secure, and humane correctional facilities.

Over the past year, non-custodial staff has been reduced, so-called "boutique" inmate housing has been eliminated, the number of state-sentenced inmates housed in county jails has been reduced and the department continues to aggressively manage staffing and overtime usage. As a result, the New Jersey Department of Corrections has reduced expenditures by \$65.9 million in Fiscal Year 2011, eliminated 283 positions while providing better services than before. In the Fiscal Year 2012 budget an additional 101 civilian and custody positions are eliminated without impacting the safe and secure operations of our institutions.

### **OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES**

In last year's testimony, I discussed housing realignments and the closure of several units within the prison system—closures that would allow us to bring State-sentenced inmates

into state prisons where they belong. Plainly stated, housing state inmates in the counties is inefficient and cost prohibitive.

Consider that the NJDOC pays millions of dollars to counties for State inmates housed in county jails, while some state prisons have empty beds. When Governor Christie was elected in November 2009, an average of 1,552 state-sentenced inmates were housed in county jails. As of March 2011, this count has been reduced by over 78% to under 350, resulting in a projected annual saving well in excess of \$20 million. An additional 120 custodial beds have been created over the last year through the judicious use of double-bunking. Additionally, a committee meets weekly to revise and enhance the intake process to ensure the smooth, expeditious and steady movement of state-sentenced inmates from the county, to the state prisons, to the assessment centers, to the halfway houses and then to parole. Monitoring and managing this process is critical to ensuring that we are utilizing our facilities in the most efficient manner.

As I mentioned during my testimony last year, the Special Treatment Unit in Kearny, Hudson County, which housed civilly committed sex offenders, had to be vacated in May, per a court ruling. After a decade of inaction, the 162 residents were moved to the Special Treatment Unit formerly the Administrative Close Supervision Unit (ACSU) at East Jersey State Prison – a stand-alone secure structure on the grounds of East Jersey State Prison -- which has a total of 324 beds. Furthermore, in order to ease overcrowding at the Special Treatment Unit Annex in Avenel, a percentage of that population was moved to this new location at East Jersey as well. The move enabled the State to realize a

savings of approximately \$2.3 million, the amount of money paid annually to Hudson County for the lease of the Kearny Unit.

More efficient housing of inmates has yielded another benefit. Custody staff that was previously working in half-filled housing areas can be reassigned to reduce overtime. In addition, housing area consolidations have allowed us to empty aging modular units so that they may receive a maintenance overhaul and be returned to service in a more efficient and secure manner.

On July 1, 2010, the department implemented a performance based management model called CHANGE - Challenge Historic Assumptions Nobly Generating Efficiencies. The CHANGE process is modeled after the successful NYPD CompStat program and enhances transparency within the NJDOC. CHANGE is a system designed to measure and manage the performance of all NJDOC institutions in four general areas: security, administration, programs and medical/mental health services. Meetings are held monthly and Facility Administrators are called on to discuss their overall performance. The discussion is pointed and focuses on specific issues facing the facility as well as overall goals set forth by the department. Furthermore, CHANGE enables Senior and Executive Staff, as well as administrators and line staff, to closely monitor the performance of an individual facility, and the department as a whole.

## **LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

Public Laws 2009, Chapters 328, 329 and 330, enacted a year ago, impact the NJDOC and our inmates greatly.

It should be noted that the department had implemented many of the provisions of the laws prior to their taking effect, such as providing Social Security cards and full medical records to inmates prior to their release from prison. Other provisions, such as providing inmates with a non-driver ID card to be issued by the Motor Vehicle Commission and a consumer checking account have proved more challenging. Currently, the department has designated dates where NJDOC uniformed staff transport inmates from throughout the prison system who fit the criteria, to a MVC location. To date, 32 inmates have received these ID cards. With respect to inmate consumer checking accounts, a Request for Information has been forwarded to the Purchase Bureau to determine the feasibility of this mandate.

## **TRANSITIONAL SERVICES, DRUG PROGRAMS, INMATE EDUCATION**

An integral part of the department's mission is to ensure offenders who leave our prisons are prepared to meet the challenges presented by being back in society.

From a public safety standpoint, successful reintegration into the community is absolutely essential, and Governor Christie has made offender transition a priority of his administration.

The NJDOC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs that went into effect in September 2008. As part of this agreement every veteran in the Re-Entry Preparation phase of their incarceration, regardless of their length of service or discharge, is afforded the opportunity to have a meeting with the Incarcerated Veterans Outreach Coordinator from the U. S Department of Veterans Affairs. During this meeting, topics such as obtaining military discharge documentation, eligibility for services and benefits and locations of the Veterans Affairs Service offices are discussed. Each veteran inmate is left with a clear understanding of what services are available to them and the resource of having a contact person from Veterans Affairs they can reach out to for further assistance after their release.

The department offers programming to inmates that address the issues that may have contributed to their incarceration. For instance, Cage Your Rage is endorsed by the American Correctional Association as a best practice program designed to help offenders recognize their angry feelings, and deal with them in a responsible way.

The Helping Offenders Parent Effectively (HOPE) program uses the American Correctional Association endorsed curriculum Responsible Fatherhood that encourages offenders to see the importance of accepting responsibility for their children. It is the goal of the programs to help participants become responsible fathers, even while incarcerated and learning to positively influence their own children to live law abiding lives. A companion program for women is offered to the female population. We are particularly proud of a program developed by our Office of Transitional Services, Successful

Transition and Reentry Series, STARS. A 13-week release preparatory program designed to address each major reentry barrier faced by the returning offender, to include employment, housing, transportation, education, family reunification, finances, and other issues.

More than 6,300 inmates enrolled in the programming offered by the department, nearly 2,000 offenders received replacement Social Security cards, and more than 5,500 inmates received voter registration cards, per the Fair Release and Reentry Act 2009.

There is absolutely no doubt that substance abuse plays a huge role in the life of an offender, and it is incumbent on the department to tackle the issue that society, and indeed the addicted inmate, has failed to address. The NJDOC utilizes the research-supported Addiction Severity Index alcohol/drug screening instrument to identify the level of substance involvement of the incoming population, so that the problem is identified, and proper placement in a drug-treatment program is made immediately when such an offender enters our system.

Not surprising, approximately 57% of inmates were found to have a moderate to severe alcohol/drug issue. The NJDOC implements those programs that have been shown by research to have positive outcomes for the correctional client. The main drug/alcohol treatment strategy is the 'continuum of care' - - in-prison primary treatment followed by step-down through community corrections. The evidence-based Therapeutic Community in-prison treatment model has been chosen by the department as its principal treatment

modality to address offender substance use disorder, and represents the first phase in the continuum of care; followed by participation in community corrections.

The Recovery Oriented Integrated System (ROIS) is an offender continuum of care enhancement project that has been piloted under the New Jersey Department of Corrections since late 2006. The ROIS recovery reentry track provides the participating offenders with coordinated case management, with regard to assessments, treatment approaches and peer interaction. In-prison drug treatment through the assessment center and community corrections targets offenders with an addiction history and strives to enhance treatment effects by addressing the threats to addiction recovery that arise during the offender reentry process. While recidivism numbers are preliminary and do not prove definitive success, they do illustrate great potential. A preliminary analysis of offenders who completed the ROIS track versus those who began the ROIS program but did not complete it showed an encouraging difference in re-arrest rates at approximately one year post DOC release. For those that completed the ROIS program, the re-arrest rate was 21%, while those who didn't complete the program had a 30% re-arrest rate. We believe this data, though preliminary, is very promising. The department can and is making a positive reentry impact for those offenders with substance use issues through a managed and supervised recovery reentry continuum.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections continues to utilize the placement of addicted offenders in licensed residential drug treatment facilities under the Mutual Agreement Program (MAP) via cooperative agreement with the Division of Addition Services,

Department of Human Services. MAP facilities are State-licensed residential substance use disorder treatment programs that have met stringent minimum standards and represent an option for further intense substance use disorder treatment. The MAP treatment offender is unique in his/her addiction treatment needs profile.

For those offenders who have too little time to participate or are not eligible for halfway house attendance, the Office of Drug Programs developed The Living in Balance program for persons who abuse or are addicted to alcohol or drugs.

The Substance Abuse Education and Awareness Program is offered by the Office of Drug Programs as a sub-component of the department's Project Inside college education initiative. It is designed to provide a substance abuse program to youthful offenders from an educational and preventive perspective. Emphasis is placed on the link between criminal behavior and eventual incarceration and the sale or use of illegal substances.

The 'Engaging the Family' program, funded through the US Department of Health and Senior Services, Office of Family Assistance recruits the spouse or committed partner and children of offenders under its jurisdiction as allies to end the criminal and addictive lifestyle of their loved ones. It is the family that has the greatest personal stake in the success of the department's rehabilitation mission.

The focus of the program is those who complete their sentence while behind bars. Through family case managers, contact with the participating offender and his/her family



prior to release will occur to establish the treatment plan and goals for the individual. In October 2010, the, Office of Drug Programs, was awarded a grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance to expand and enhance the Engaging the Family Program, to include our female and youthful population.

The department offers both academic and vocational classes. In 2010, 1,102 GED tests were administered, with 711 passing for a 65% passing rate. In addition, 107 high school diplomas were awarded to school age population. Through our CHANGE process we are able to monitor attendance at educational services for each facility and put an emphasis on maximizing the use of the many educational programs provided.

### **COMMUNITY PROVIDER PROGRAMS**

Residential Community Release Programs perform an important role in the criminal justice arena. The purpose of the residential community release program is to reintegrate eligible offenders into the community through a structured process.

There are currently 20 contracted programs, with a total of 2,657 contracted beds. These programs provide a variety of assessment, counseling and employment services to facilitate the inmate's gradual reintegration back into the community.

Specialized halfway houses include those geared to the special needs offender, those with addiction issues and those who are ready for work release. Placement is based upon each inmate's risk and treatment needs.

Earlier I alluded to Governor Christie's mandate to keep our prisons safe. One of the greatest dangers we face in the correctional setting today is the cell phone. In the hands of an inmate that innocuous, 4-ounce phone is as deadly a weapon as a firearm. A murder was ordered here in New Jersey 5 years ago by an inmate in New Jersey State Prison via a smuggled cell phone. A Captain with the South Carolina Department of Corrections, while in his OWN home, was shot 6 times in the chest and abdomen, on orders from an inmate on a smuggled cell phone—from the very prison in which he worked.

A DOC Cell Phone Detection Task Force was convened shortly after my last appearance here. Among the many recommendations was the establishment of a Confidential Tip line which was activated in October, 2010. Additionally, schedules were changed to allow the K-9 Unit, with their cadre of cell phone detection dogs, to be available seven days a week. Each of NJDOC institutions' entry points are also being examined to determine methods by which security can be enhanced.

I mentioned last year that The Safe Prisons Act, which passed unanimously in the United States Senate, had been languishing in the House of Representatives.

Unfortunately, the bill, which would have allowed the Governor to "jam" cell signals, has not been reintroduced during this legislative session. However, I ask your assistance in lobbying New Jersey's Congressional Delegation to reintroduce a version of the Safe Prisons Act during this legislative session. While I am gratified that fewer cell phones

are being introduced into our facilities due to our efforts, I still firmly believe that “jamming” cell phone signals is the cheapest and most efficient method of dealing with this issue, and I thank you in advance for your help.

Thank you for your attention, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.