

Making A Difference



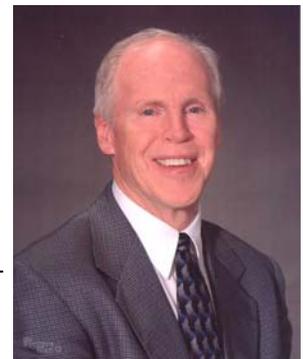
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A Word From the Director...

Recently I issued a memo on the status of Housing Unit Five at the State Penitentiary. A decision was made in the FY2011-2013 budget proposal to lessen Nebraska's reliance on incarceration through re-entry; a trend followed by nearly every state. At that time, we forged an agreement with the Board of Parole to work toward that end. We continue that process today.



The next steps are to close one-and-a-half units at the Penitentiary. These units will not close, however, until our count is below 4,300 and we believe we can stay there for a considerable length of time. When we change operations that affect staff, we give all the notice we possibly can. We will continue our long-standing practice of having a job for each person affected. I realize it is still difficult for staff who will be affected by these closures to plan their careers and to become creators of their own success.

I deeply appreciate the patience and understanding we receive from Penitentiary staff as we continue to move toward what could become a key change in our Department.

The safety of the public, our staff, and inmates is our prime responsibility. Every day I'm briefed on incidents or talk with staff about injuries received on the job, I become even more impressed with your positive esprit de corps. In a conversation not too many months ago, I visited with a staff member who had been injured by an inmate with a mental illness. This staff member spent nearly all the conversation talking about the mental challenges of this inmate and the life experiences that affect the inmate's current behavior. In short, he was concerned about the well-being of the inmate. Although the inmate will be held accountable for his actions, I am certain that our staff will continue to work with this inmate for his betterment and the future safety of our staff members.

Please know that I, along with the Department's Executive Staff, value the contribution each of you makes to keeping Nebraskans safe. Your everyday challenges are tremendous and I am constantly impressed by the positive attitudes and excellent performance I see each and every day.

"The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there."

--John Buchan

Why Re-Entry?

Rex Richard, Re-Entry Coordinator

Why focus on re-entry? And for that matter, what exactly is re-entry? A short definition of re-entry is simply “the act of entering again.” However, when we look at re-entry from the agency standpoint, it is far from simple and the stakes are high.

A recent editorial in the New York Times titled “*Prison Nation*” noted, in part, “After three decades of explosive growth...more than 1 in 100 American adults are behind bars. Nationwide, the prison population hovers at almost 1.6 million. The 50 states last year spent about \$44 billion in tax dollars on corrections, up from nearly \$11 billion in 1987. These statistics underscore the urgent challenge facing the federal government and cash-strapped states to reduce their overreliance on incarceration without sacrificing public safety. The key, as some states are learning, is getting smarter about distinguishing between violent criminals and dangerous repeat offenders who need a prison cell, and low risk offenders who can be handled with effective community supervision, electronic monitoring and mandatory drug treatment programs.”

So what, then, has the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services done to facilitate re-entry efforts? A partial

listing of the efforts would include changes made just in the past year:

- The National Institute of Corrections was brought to Nebraska to provide refinement of the Parole Plan
- Training was provided to Parole Board Members on Assessing Sex Offender Risk using SMART grant monies
- The Work Ethic Camp I McCook created a Western Nebraska Day Reporting Center within the WEC program
- Dr. T. Hank Robinson, NDCS Director of Research, was recruited and appointed to his position, bringing a history of excellence in program research and policy development

Additional changes to behavioral health services – behavioral health staff now office in the community and aligning program recommendations with sentence structure – are highlighted in the article by Dr. Cameron White.

In other words, change is now the new normal as we work to provide lasting public safety to our fellow Nebraskans. ■

Behavioral Health and Re-Entry

Cameron S. White, Ph.D., Behavioral Health Administrator

A core idea that has led to the development of increased Behavioral Health re-entry services is the notion that treatment follows the classification process. In practice, this means that a wider variety of outpatient services are being offered at the day reporting centers in Lincoln and Omaha. The continuum of services includes non-residential substance abuse services, social work services, sex offender services and some mental health services.

In order to provide more treatment services in community settings, a number of positions have been re-assigned to the day reporting centers.

- Four Chemical Dependency Counselors to provide services to RFP and community custody inmates
- Two positions that are a “blend” of two job classifications – Certified Master Social Worker and Parole Officer – to provide social work transition services and parole services.

- Two dually licensed staff – Mental Health Practitioner and Alcohol and Drug Counselor – were transferred to the day reporting centers, which provides more flexibility and ability to provide a wider variety of Behavioral Health services.

Social work is a relatively new addition to Behavioral Health in corrections, but its value and importance to successful re-entry is widely recognized. NDCS now has five social workers, who focus on assisting inmates find treatment providers, secure employment, apply for benefits and a host of other activities that are related to long term success.

Over the last year DCS Behavioral Health has focused on devising and implementing robust re-entry services at the day reporting centers. Innovative ideas such as the utilization of dually licensed staff and social work services are efficient and effective and help ensure the success of the growing number of transitioning inmates. ■

If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit an article

please contact the newsletter editor, Ashley Alloway

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Reinventing Diversity

Dawn-Renee Smith, Legislative Coordinator



(left to right, front to back)
Ricardo Noyola, CM, LCC; Cathy Moss, LMHP, NSP;
Christy Bivens, CW, NCCW; Habib Olomi, Training
Specialist, STA; Marsha Rupert, Club Coordinator, TSCI;
Dawn-Renee Smith, PIO, CO; Estela Finn, Interpreter,
OCC; Chris Jones, CW, CCC-L; Jerry Arellano, CW, NCYF;
Charles West, Warden, CCC-O; Kara Simpson, Lt., LCC;
Mike Edison, UM, NSP; Sumaster Newell, Cpl., TSCI; Brad
Hansen, Org. Dev./EP, CO.

Diversity is not a new concept for the Department of Correctional Services. We have long recognized the need for a focus on diversity and we now recognize we must go beyond diversity and work toward a more inclusive environment – one where individual cultural differences are accepted and valued.

Recently, Director Houston created the new NDCS Inclusion & Diversity Council and appointed staff to champion this initiative. Membership was carefully selected to ensure diversity with regard to race, gender, job classification, and facility with the expectation that council members will represent the department with integrity and respect.

An initial task of the council was to re-write the department's diversity statement. The following has been approved by Director Houston and presented to the Executive Steering Council:

At the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, diversity is imperative and integral to our mission. Our Department is committed to an inclusive environment where differences are accepted, valued, and celebrated to foster teamwork and safety.

Look for council members to be engaging you in conversations about diversity and inclusion and working toward greater awareness. Over the coming months we'll be developing and teaching new diversity curriculum, assisting in recruiting for greater diversity, developing questions for promotion boards involving cultural competence, providing culture-based information to staff, and a host of other activities.

Money Talk

Christina Peters, Agency Budget Analyst

The wardens and program administrators have been busy with budget requests for the 2013-2015 budget cycle. They have brought their facility and program requests to the NDCS budget committee for consideration, discussing staffing, equipment and construction project needs. The budget committee will review all requests and submit the Department's final requests to the State Budget Office by September 15, 2012. It will then require review and approval from the Legislature and the Governor before our final budget is approved during the 2013 legislative session.

It is not easy to forecast what the budgetary needs will be

18-30 months into the future. Many variables, such as inmate population and infrastructure conditions, can change. The structuring of the budget intends to give flexibility to the changing needs, yet requires overall spending to stay within the set boundaries of our Legislative appropriation. For this reason, several parties, including business managers, accounting, and budget staff, review and monitor spending on a monthly, if not more frequent, basis.

So be assured that while we cannot always submit every item requested, our priority continues to be to insure the security and safety of the public, our staff, and those placed in our custody.

Organizational Development Leadership Program

Brad Hansen, Staff & Partnership Development Coordinator

The Leadership Program was started in 2006. It is a process that provides staff with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in order to prepare them for increasingly challenging leadership positions within the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services. The Leadership Program focuses on the development of the following competencies: diversity of work experience, effective communication, conflict resolution, ethics, cultural competency and leadership skills. To develop these skills the participants will participate in activities that involve job shadowing, selected work challenges, personal development courses, college level courses and varied job experiences.

If you're wondering why you should be involved in the Leadership Program, here are three distinct reasons: personal mastery – improving yourself; developing your leadership skills that will help you stand out when applying for promotions within our Department; and to participate as a mentor for new supervisors and be able to teach the Organizational Development Leadership courses. If you want to "Make a Difference" this would be an excellent opportunity for you.

If you are interested in the program please call Brad Hansen, 402-479-5617 or send an email and Brad will send you a brochure that explains the application process.

The Re-Entry Furlough Program

Coordination is Key

Charles West, Warden & James Foster, AAILI

Coordination:
the
harmonious
functioning of
parts for
effective results
MerriamWebster.com

The Re-Entry Furlough Program (RFP) provides opportunity and incentive to prepare inmates for parole or discharge prior to the completion of their sentence. The intent of RFP is to enhance public safety by preparing inmates for successful reintegration back into the community.

Coordination between the Community Centers and Adult Parole Administration is a key component in providing guidance to RFP participants. While in RFP, inmate supervision

is provided by both the transition manager (Parole Officer) and the community corrections center staff.

All furloughs are restricted to within the state of Nebraska and will be approved by the Director, or designee, and the Board of Parole. RFP is very structured and provides dual supervision and random drug testing. The re-entry parole officer or the community corrections case manager will ensure the following occur:

- Interview the furlough sponsor, if applicable, and explain

the conditions of the furlough agreement

- Ensure the inmate has essential identification or documentation necessary for transition
- Prepare and review the conditions of the RFP agreement with the inmate
- Coordinate the placement date with community center and parole officer
- Inmate submits their weekly activities itinerary for approval
- Inmate submits weekly payroll check to the accounting department

An RFP participant's supervision level may be adjusted as they progress. Inmates are held accountable by using graduated sanctions with input from both Adult Parole and Community Center staff. The warden, or designee, has the authority to remove an inmate from the program.

As of April 3, 2012, the Community Corrections Center-Omaha (CCC-O) had 32 inmates on RFP and an additional 10 inmates scheduled to be released within the next seven days. The RFP count at the Community Corrections Center - Lincoln (CCC-L) was 98. Since November 2010, 144 inmates from CCC-O and 144 from CCC-L have paroled or discharged from the RFP program.

New Equipment Makes for a Safer Environment for All

Brad Hansen, Staff & Partnership Development Coordinator

The Department is on track for completing the goal of having staff who are required to take PPCT level three and work inside a secure institution issued duty belts and an MK-4. While it may seem to be taking a long time to accomplish, the process was reviewed and changed in order to make a more smooth transition. The hold up for many was the purchasing of the duty belts. It was decided in December 2011 that the duty belts would be put out on contract so that everyone would receive the same style belt. This was an excellent decision on the part of Purchasing and thanks to them the order of belts are in and are now being issued. It is also interesting to note that new hires will receive the duty belt as part of their standard issue so that they can become used to wearing while in the initial 5-week training.

The decision by the administration to issue MK-4s to staff and handcuffs to all security and housing staff was a popular decision as well as one that has proved to be a major step toward increased safety for staff and inmates. There are too many examples to list of inmates stopping their aggressive activity either because of the warning to use OC or because of the use of OC. The addition of this use of force option has accomplished its intended effect.

It is always the number one mission of the Department to provide a safe and humane environment, and this decision has definitely contributed to that mission.

