

Media Release

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NDCS, CSG Release Justice Program Assessment Results, Recommendations

Lincoln – The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, in association with the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, June 21, 2106, released the results of a comprehensive assessment of Nebraska’s correctional programs to evaluate current programming allocations and ensure that programming is targeted to maximize the likelihood of reducing recidivism.

“The purpose of our prisons is to protect the safety of the people of Nebraska,” Governor Pete Ricketts said. “As we work toward this goal, our prison system must more effectively reduce recidivism. To this end, we must deter offenders that have served their time from committing new crimes as they reenter society,” Ricketts said.

The assessment of Nebraska’s correctional programs, referred to as the Justice Program Assessment or JPA, evaluated the extent to which the state is making investments in programs for prisoners and parolees that will likely reduce recidivism by adhering to data-driven principles.

The assessment specifically examined how effectively NDCS programming is 1) targeting people who are most likely to reoffend, 2) using practices rooted in the latest research on what works to reduce recidivism, and 3) regularly reviewing program quality and evaluating how closely the program adheres to its established model.

“NDCS is committed to improving recidivism-reduction interventions in our prisons and increasing our capacity to provide quality programming, which is why I requested this assessment,” Scott Frakes, NDCS director said. “The improvements we make to our programming based on these recommendations will ensure people return to our neighborhoods having had the opportunity to make positive change. Our mission is described in three words; Keep people safe. Programming is how we transform lives and keep our prisons and communities safe,” the director said.

Findings from the CSG Justice Center’s report include:

- NDCS misses opportunities to identify risk and needs and has not been able to target program resources to individuals most likely to reoffend.

- NDCS uses state-of-the-art risk reducing programs but is not able to serve everyone who needs programming.
- NDCS does not have policies and procedures in place to determine if it is delivering quality programming.

Drawing on these and other findings, the CSG Justice Center delivered a package of recommendations for the state's consideration, which include:

- Use risk and needs information and streamlined assessment and referral processes to direct appropriate individuals into programs upon admission to prison;
- Expand program capacity by adding to the array of core risk reducing programs, including increasing cognitive behavioral interventions that address criminal thinking, and increase how often programs are provided by dedicating some staff to solely run programming
- Develop a system to monitor program delivery and outcomes over time.

The CSG's full report can be found [here](#).