

Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System

Follow-up Report
February 2012

Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho Legislature



Report 12-06F

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2011–2012 Joint Legislative Oversight Committee

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Acknowledgements

We appreciate the assistance we received from the Department of Correction and Bob Thomas of Robert C. Thomas & Associates and Senior Principal Management Auditor at the King County Auditor’s Office, Seattle, Washington.

Lance McCleve and Maureen Brewer of the office conducted the follow-up review, and Margaret Campbell copy edited and desktop published the report.

Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System

Follow-up Report

Overview of Initial Evaluation

In January 2010, we released an evaluation report on the operational efficiencies of Idaho's nine prisons. We conducted our evaluation during a period of significant statewide budget reductions and, given economic constraints, we directed our findings and conclusions to help the Department of Correction focus their strategic planning efforts for future years. Our recommendations focused on two areas: modernizing prisons and securing adequate staffing to maintain continuous observation of inmates.

Our evaluation report explained that besides custody level, other factors such as facility design and layout, housing unit capacity, and facility condition are also cost drivers. Our initial analysis of each of the nine prison facilities revealed that many prisons in Idaho have obsolete or ad hoc designs, small housing units, and high maintenance needs. We suggested that the state could save money and enhance safety and security by replacing some of Idaho's most inefficient housing units.

According to the American Correctional Association, a standard necessary for maintaining safety and security is the continuous observation of offenders. We found that most prisons in Idaho struggled to provide continuous observation because facilities were poorly designed and lacked adequate staffing. In 2010, the department did not have enough staff to continuously observe offenders in every housing unit. We found that the state could lessen the need to employ additional staff and save dollars by replacing inefficient housing units in combination with implementing a standardized staffing model. The exhibit on the next page ranks the efficiency of state-operated prisons at the time of our 2010 evaluation report release. Our initial report also ranked the efficiency of individual housing units within the prisons, identifying several units whose replacement would save dollars over the long term.

EXHIBIT 2010 RANK ORDER OF IDAHO'S STATE-OPERATED PRISONS FROM LEAST TO MOST EFFICIENT

	Rank	Retain to Replace Ratio ^a (%)
Pocatello Women's Correction Center	1	118
Idaho Correctional Institution, Orofino	2	92
Idaho Maximum Security Institution	2	91
Idaho State Correctional Institution	4	90
South Idaho Correctional Institution	5	86
North Idaho Correctional Institution	6	84
St. Anthony's Work Camp	6	84
South Boise Women's Correctional Center	8	82

Source: Information from the Office of Performance Evaluations, *Cost Allocation Model*, December 2009.

^a Ratios are calculated by the cost to retain each prison divided by the cost to replace it. Ratios greater than 100% mean that the prison is a candidate for replacement because the facility is costing the state more to retain than to replace.

Recommendations Update

Since our initial evaluation, the department continues to face the same challenges we identified in our 2010 report: population growth resulting in diminished bed capacity, an aging prison facility infrastructure, and limited staffing. To address these challenges, we made the following four recommendations to the Department of Correction and the Legislature:

1. Develop a statewide standardized staffing model
2. Implement a standardized staffing model
3. Effectively use the shift relief factor tool
4. Begin planning for the replacement of inefficient prisons or housing units

The State Still Needs to Plan for Prison Modernization

The Department of Correction has no current plans to ask for the Legislature's support to modernize the state's prison facilities. Building a secure mental health facility remains the department's priority after plans to begin this project were put on hold during the state's budget crisis.

However, as in 2010, Idaho's prison facilities are operating at or near capacity. The department estimates that available bed space will be short by 588 beds in

2012 and more than 1,200 beds by 2015, which will force the department to turn to county jails, out-of-state placements, or to build new beds. The analysis from our initial evaluation identifies both short-term and long-term opportunities for achieving savings that can be applied toward meeting standards and offsetting the costs of new beds if the state decides to make the necessary capital investment. As indicated in our evaluation report, the financing of new capacity could be structured in a way to mitigate potential cash flow problems by using savings to pay for debt service.

Idaho could realize even more benefits by taking advantage of economies of scale. Taking into account the growing inmate population, the state could plan to add more beds than are needed strictly to accommodate inmate population growth, and then use the additional capacity to house inmates who would be displaced by the closure of the inefficient facilities.

Forecasted growth exceeds available bed space.

The Department Has Updated Staffing Plans

As outlined by Director Reinke in his letter of January 24, 2012 (see appendix), each prison facility updated its staffing plan in 2011. Prison facility leadership was asked to prioritize staffing posts and consider which were mandatory. This exercise proved especially key for the maximum security prison located south of Boise because the offender population at that prison has continued to harden. The department converted all cells in the maximum security prison to restrictive housing beds. By department policy and the American Correctional Association standards, cell checks on these more restrictive beds are required every 30 minutes, necessitating additional staff.

Department officials told us the updated staffing plans for each prison facility were also part of an effort undertaken by the department to limit overtime needs by verifying which posts were essential in the event of a staff shortage. Commendably, the department has been able to eliminate the use of furloughs which were not only a major driver of correctional staff overtime but also a reason behind increased turnover.

Department officials told us that they will look to see whether a reallocation of prison staff resources is needed as a part of its mandate to implement zero-based budgeting. Shifts in the make up of the prison population may affect staffing patterns. As a result, the department plans to conduct a gap analysis to identify whether any prison facilities have mandatory posts that regularly remain unstaffed. According to officials, the resulting staffing model will help determine whether reallocating or requesting new resources is necessary.

Moving Forward

After experiencing modest population growth from fiscal years 2009 to 2012 (7,283 to 7,798 offenders), the number of incarcerated offenders is expected to grow faster in the next few years. As in 2010, policymakers remain in a position where they will have to make decisions on how to expand prison capacity and plan for the increased spending associated with prison population growth.

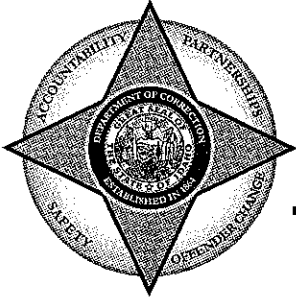
The prison system continues to face challenges, and our initial evaluation report outlines opportunities for policymakers to help the Department of Correction address these challenges. The department has worked with its available resources to provide continuous observation in the state's most high-risk housing units. The department, however, lacks sufficient staffing for continuous observation in all housing units. In addition, the staffing resources required to provide continuous observation in every housing unit is cost prohibitive.

Therefore, especially given the outdated design of many housing units, the money-saving opportunity for policymakers lies in initiating a planning process to replace inefficient facilities with modernized designs that will help the department meet its capacity needs into the future. This process will require a long-term plan and will, realistically, necessitate multiple phases of implementation. Although the department has continued to maintain the safety of offenders, staff, and the public within the tight budget of the past few years, it will need additional support from policymakers to successfully manage forecasted growth.

By modernizing the state's prison infrastructure, the department will be better equipped to provide continuous observation and minimize the risks associated with housing the state's prison population. Without strategic, long-term plans for housing the state's prison population, policymakers may find themselves left with only the costliest of options.

Appendix

Update of Implementation Efforts



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

*"Protecting Idaho through Safety, Accountability, Partnerships,
and Opportunities for Offender Change"*

C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor

BRENT D. REINKE
Director

January 24, 2012

Mr. Rakesh Mohan, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0055

Dear Director Mohan:

RE: Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System

Thank you for the opportunity to update members of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on progress to date of the Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System. I wish this were a letter describing great advancement toward achieving the recommendations. It is not, it is a status update that acknowledges the value in the OPE evaluation, and updates current status of the recommendations within the confinement of serious budget and staffing limitations.

The Office of Performance Evaluations report **Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System** correctly identified the Department's effort "to manage a complex prison system with limited resources." The report states that "furloughs and other emergency money-saving efforts at state-operation prisons are not sustainable if the state is to continue to appropriately manage inmates."

The most encouraging news to report in this 2012 update is that **furloughs have been eliminated and staffing levels stabilized**. Closing less efficient facilities and improving staffing levels have not been realistic short-term goals, but remain on the horizon as we continue to work on systems for the future.

Here is the current status of recommendations and corresponding strategic actions.

- 1. Develop a statewide standardized staff model.**
- 2. Implement a statewide standardized staff model.**
- 3. Use shift relief factor tool effectively.**

Staffing levels remain a concern at Idaho prisons. The report underscores an important truth in corrections: "If proper staffing isn't provided, safety decreases."

Prison facilities statewide updated staffing models in 2011 to evaluate mandatory and essential posts as defined by American Correctional Association Standards. Facility managers used a standardized staffing tool. Facilities were asked to use existing funded staff as a baseline. Each facility determined which posts were mandatory and identified posts that could be closed when staffing shortages occur. The goal was to build a staffing model that reduces the need for staff overtime.

The shift relief factor was part of the staffing model calculation. The focus was on maximizing current staffing levels and identifying mandatory positions.

The agency identified officer shortages at the maximum security prison (IMSI) that limit required cell checks for the administrative segregation population housed at the facility. The IMSI staffing model developed this past year identified the need for ten additional officers for required safety checks. The IMSI staffing model was created based on an emergency need within the facility because of the changing population and changing mission to all administrative segregation beds.

In the 2010 report to the Office of Performance Evaluations, the Department stated zero-based budgeting would be used as the first step to evaluate staffing needs. The Prisons Bureau will undertake the ZBB analysis during 2012. The plan for zero-based budgeting within the agency's largest bureau has been in development since this fall. The process will begin, as scheduled, this spring. Development of a staffing model will be one product from that evaluation.

4. Begin planning for the replacement of inefficient prisons and housing units.

The Department phased out three less efficient units in 2010. One unit was reopened to house inmate workers at the maximum security prison as more administrative segregation beds were needed to manage violent inmates.

In August 2011, the agency closed a community work center. The closure of the old, leased building is an example of phasing out a housing unit that was older and less efficient. It was made possible by the immediate cost avoidance associated with eliminating the leased space.

There are no immediate plans to take any older facilities out of service, but the OPE recommendations will be factored in as new opportunities emerge. Current planning efforts are focused on building a Secure Mental Health Facility. The development of the facility was tabled because of the fiscal crisis.

An internal planning group is working to revise the Master Plan, but with new programs changing population dynamics trends are not yet established to determine future populations effectively. The implementation of the Correctional Alternative Placement Program (CAPP) and the 365-day retained jurisdiction therapeutic community are changing the population dynamics.

During the Great Recession, the Department focused efforts on finding efficiencies in existing facilities and reducing inmate growth. These priorities helped the state avoid millions of dollars

Mr. Rakesh Mohan, Director

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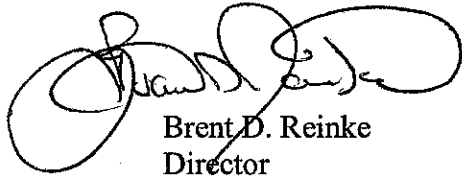
January 24, 2012

in costs associated with growth. The immediate issue facing the Department this year is the resumption of growth within the inmate population. After three years of no growth and controlled growth, the agency is experiencing a 4.5% growth rate this fiscal year. This reality leaves the agency facing a bed shortage in a time when cuts haven't yet been restored.

As a result of the work on the prisons report, the Department requested assistance from the Office of Professional Evaluations to develop a relationship with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to initiate an outcome study on the three identified alternatives to incarceration. This dialogue occurred and Idaho was recommended as a state to participate in the "Results First Project" sponsored by Pew Center on the States. The project utilizes a database developed by WSIPP that is populated with Idaho data to perform cost benefit analysis of programs. This project is being housed and supported by the Department and managed by a subcommittee of the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission.

Thank you again for your work to support the agency's goal to become more efficient and proactive in planning.

Sincerely,



Brent D. Reinke
Director

BDR:tj

CC: Olivia Craven, Parole Commission Director,
Matt Orem, Division of Financial Management
Board of Correction

Office of Performance Evaluations Reports, 2009–Present

Publication numbers ending with “F” are follow-up reports of previous evaluations. Publication numbers ending with three letters are federal mandate reviews—the letters indicate the legislative committee that requested the report.

Pub. #	Report Title	Date Released
09-01	Public Education Funding in Idaho	January 2009
09-02F	Higher Education Residency Requirements	January 2009
09-03	Idaho Transportation Department Performance Audit	January 2009
09-04	Feasibility of School District Services Consolidation	February 2009
09-05F	School District Administration and Oversight	February 2009
09-06F	Use of Average Daily Attendance in Public Education Funding	February 2009
09-07F	Child Welfare Caseload Management	February 2009
09-08F	Public Education Technology Initiatives	February 2009
09-09F	Management in the Department of Health and Welfare	March 2009
09-10F	Governance of Information Technology and Public Safety Communications	April 2009
10-01	Operational Efficiencies in Idaho’s Prison System	January 2010
10-02	Increasing Efficiencies in Idaho's Parole Process	February 2010
10-03F	Use of Average Daily Attendance in Public Education	March 2010
10-04	Governance of EMS Agencies in Idaho	November 2010
10-05F	Governance of Information Technology and Public Safety Communications	November 2010
11-01	Distribution and Sale of Liquor in Idaho	January 2011
11-02	Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho	February 2011
11-03F	Increasing Efficiencies in Idaho’s Parole Process	February 2011
11-04F	Idaho Transportation Department Performance Audit	March 2011
11-05	Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing	March 2011
11-06	Higher Education Funding Equity	November 2011
11-07	End-Stage Renal Disease Program	November 2011
11-08F	Distribution and Sale of Liquor in Idaho	November 2011
12-01	Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education	January 2012
12-02F	Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing	January 2012
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