Cabinet and Governor Appointed Agencies' Performance Audit Action Item(s) & Status

Improving Staff Safety in Washington's Prisons

(See also cabinet agency response for full context to Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) report, March 2016)

The Department of Corrections (DOC) was audited for this performance audit.

SAO Conclusion: The department's staff safety initiatives are innovative and unique.

SAO Issues Summary:
1. Staff feedback points to need to improve communication.
2. There are opportunities to improve implementation of staff safety initiatives.
3. Gaps exist between correctional leading practices and those used by the department.
4. The department needs more specific performance goals and measures to improve the effectiveness of its staff safety initiatives.

SAO Recommendations (Rec) Summary:
1. Address the issues with implementation of the staff safety initiatives the SAO's experts identified, including clarifying policies and procedures related to staff accountability, radios for non-custody staff, duress alarm testing, cameras, security specialists, place safety musters, and the local security advisory committees.
2. Address the gaps identified by our experts between the department's safety related policies, procedures and practices and correctional leading practices. Specifically:
   a. Develop policies, procedures and practices to conduct staff searches
   b. Evaluate and update the staffing model to ensure staffing levels are adequate and appropriately utilized to meet all the requirements placed on staff
   c. Develop a more focused approach to monitor and audit the implementation of the staff safety initiatives to provide feedback on how well staff understand and are following relevant policies and procedures
   d. Evaluate whether making further changes to department policies, procedures and practices to address additional identified gaps would be beneficial, including cell searches, issues with visibility, searching people entering facilities and access to facility control centers
3. Enhance approach to assessing the effectiveness of staff safety initiatives and implementation to provide additional opportunities for improvement. To do so:
   a. Develop specific performance goals and measure progress toward meeting those goals.
   b. Conduct periodic, anonymous staff surveys and focus groups to gather staff input on the effectiveness of the safety initiatives and whether they have improved how safe staff feel.
4. Improve staff communication about safety issues. To do so:
   a. Provide additional guidance and training to facilitators to improve the effectiveness of the place safety musters, and local and statewide safety advisory committees.
   b. Evaluate whether the benefit of re-establishing shift musters, which allow staff the opportunity to communicate about potential safety concerns before beginning their shift, outweigh the additional staff time and expense it would incur.
   c. Provide more specific guidance for the role of security specialist to ensure good communication occurs on staff safety issues at the facilities, including ensuring staff receive feedback on the status of their staff safety suggestions.

The table below shows the current status of action items the agency initiated to address issues identified in the performance audit report. Please see the _cabinet agency response_ for additional context and any additional steps already taken.

For an explanation of the columns below, see the legend.

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 1	In progress	Conduct a focused review of policies pertaining to the specific security issues (staff accountability, *radios for non-custody staff, duress alarm testing, duties of security specialists, place safety musters and local security advisory committees in advance of regularly scheduled policy review periods, and clarify policy expectations as needed	DOC	7/16 12/17	*N = Radios for non-custody staff	*Y = Radios for non-custody	N	• A focus group was conducted to gather feedback and recommended changes to the staff accountability process. FACT (facility Access Control Tracking), an electronic staff accountability program was piloted successfully at Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) reducing average time to account for all SCCC staff from one hour to about 17 minutes. Recently FACT was approved as the enterprise wide staff accountability solution and is currently in implementation phase at Monroe Correctional Complex.
	Completed							• Focus group review of DOC 420.160 Staff Accountability and DOC 420.010 Place Safety Muster completed in advance of scheduled policy review.
								• Security specialist position descriptions revised statewide to ensure a security focus and consistency in the work assigned locally.
	Completed							• Review of duress alarm procedures completed June 13, 2017. Alarms

	Deferred						work and testing has been incorporated into pre-scheduled drills. • *Funds for radio purchases were requested in the 2017-19 and 2019-21 budget requests to OFM, but was not funded. This request will be resubmitted in the 20 2021-23 operating budget request. Budget requests have not been approved.

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
	Completed							
	Completed							• Place Safety Muster original implementation occurred in 2011 with a matured version implemented in 2012. Place Safety Muster 2.0 training is being implemented. Implementation includes a place holder in Supervision and Leadership (July of 2018) for New supervisors and a SharePoint Library (made live 7.6.18) for new and seasoned Supervisors. • Expanded the availability of OC spray to certain non-custody staff who volunteer and qualify to receive additional training.
Rec 1	Completed	Ensure inclusion of these specific security issues in its regular auditing process to ensure consistency in application and practice	DOC	7/18	Y	N	N	• Inclusion of security issues noted in SAO report incorporated into audit cycle in the 2017-18 cycle and will continue in subsequent cycles.
Rec 2	Completed	Evaluate the need to expand the random search procedures conducted at some high	DOC	12/16 9/17	Y	N	N	• A process to search all employees, volunteers and contractors was implemented December 1, 2016 in all facilities.

Last updated: August 2020

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
	Completed	security prisons to other facilities						• Allowable Items and Employee Searches Policy was published 2019.
Rec 2	Completed Completed	Submit a decision package to OFM for funding of an external evaluation of its custody staffing model	DOC	9/16	N	Y	Y	• The request was advanced to OFM for consideration in the 17-19 budget cycle and funding was provided for FY 2019. • Staffing Model final draft report is due June 30, 2019.
Rec 2	Completed	Ensure inclusion of the specific security items (cell searches, issues with visibility) in their regular auditing process to ensure consistency in application and practice	DOC	7/18	Y	N	N	• Inclusion of security issues noted in SAO report incorporated into audit cycle in the 2017-18 cycle and will continue in subsequent cycles.

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Rec 2	Completed On Going Completed Completed	Evaluate the need for changes to policies, procedures and practices for cell searches, issues with visibility, searches of people entering the facilities and access to facility control centers	DOC	7/16 9/17	Y	N	N	• To increase visibility and accountability, DOC has added additional camera equipment based on recommendations from a legislative mandated camera assessment. The DOC has received $30 million so far from the Legislature for camera upgrades in facilities and there are currently multiple camera upgrade projects in progress. As of this date, funding for has been exhausted. • In conjunction with camera upgrade projects, federal PREA requirements direct placement of cameras and mirrors to ensure optimal visibility in prisons. To date Washington prisons have received 100% compliance in all PREA audits which included full inspection of visibility in prisons and resulted in no requirement for corrections. This a continual process with a review every 2 years to ensure adequate coverage for safety concerns and to meet PREA standards. • Control Center policy published in 2019. • DOC 420.320 Searches of Facilities was updated to include cell searc timeline expectations and procedures on 03/14/2019.

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								and was submitted to the policy August 2016. but will need to publish simultaneously along with Allowable Items and Staff Searches Policy and Searches of Facilities Policy as they work together to provide direction.
Rec 3	Completed	Explore additional performance measures specific to the staff safety initiatives for inclusion in its performance measurement system.	DOC	On Going	Y	N	N	• Performance measures specific to staff safety are monitored through Results DOC in alignment with Results Washington, and include a goal council for Safer Operations. • Continual improvement efforts are ongoing as agency key goals and outcomes are measured. • Increasing granular, facility specific measurements are being used to engage and inform Appointing Authorities in meeting safety goals.
Rec 3	Completed Completed	Explore opportunities to use results from the staff safety questions in the annual employee survey to enhance the staff safety initiatives.	DOC	On going	Y	N	N	• Employees are engaged annually with specific questions about staff safety and continuous communication occurs through security bulletins and alerts and training to educate staff of potential situations that may impact staff safety or facility security. • Annual in-service prison safety curriculum is revised each yearly training cycle and includes 3 hours of educating staff about security issues and policies associated with routines that enhance staff safety and facility security. Annual in-service

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 4	Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed	Explore ways to improve communication structures such as place safety musters, as well as local and statewide security advisory committees.	DOC	On going	Y	N	N	• Facilitate work groups to inform training and policy changes. • Included place safety muster facilitator training in supervision and leadership class (required for all new prison supervisors) as of July 2018. • Developed job aides to assist with facilitating prison safety conversations. • Implemented conference calls and quarterly meetings with Security Specialists to share best practices and lessons learned. • Added automatic updates to security suggestions. Strengthened expectations of face to face interaction for Local Security Advisory Committee communication with employees who submit suggestions ensuring staff receive status updates pertaining to their security concern. • Develop real-time Security Alerts and Bulletins that enhance workplace security and mitigate risk.

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 4	Completed	Conduct a fiscal analysis of the costs associated with re-establishing shift musters	DOC	5/16	N	Y	Y	• Analysis of costs were conducted, and financial impacts were approximately $8.5 million per fiscal year and over $17 million biennially. • The request was advanced to OFM for consideration in the 17-19 budget cycle but was not funded.
Rec 4	Completed	Re-affirm the role of the security specialist in alignment with the position description and related policies	DOC	12/16	Y	N	N	• Position descriptions and associated duties of Security Specialists were completed and were reaffirmed through conversations with Captains and Superintendents, September 2016.

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