

JANUARY 16, 2014

DIRECTOR'S NEWS UPDATE



Safety, Security, Efficiency - Putting It Into Practice

I recently sent an update expressing my sincere appreciation for your commitment and dedication to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) as we struggle with shrinking resources and shortages of staff. You are the reason we are able to be one of the most progressive agencies in the country even while enduring these difficult times. The accomplishments listed below will hopefully show the steps and initiatives taken to ensure the safety and security of our staff as well as increasing the efficiency of the agency's processes.

Safety:

- Transition of Oklahoma State Penitentiary and other modifications for safety reasons.
- Transition of Oklahoma State Reformatory and removal of minimum offenders' access to the medium yard.
- Provided Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray to staff for safety reasons.
- Instituting escorted movement during volatile times between the Indian Brotherhood and Hispanic security threat group members.
- Installation of new locks at Dick Conner Correctional Center and approval for the same at Lexington Assessment & Reception Center; previous locks were worn and posed a safety hazard to staff and offenders.
- Expanding perimeter fencing to encompass and remove administration buildings as a part of the secure perimeter.
- Implemented a new non-competitive hiring process at several pilot facilities around the state. This process allows interested individuals to make application via computer, and they are not required to travel to any Human Capital Management (HCM), formerly known as Office of Personnel Management testing site. The non-competitive process will be available to additional facilities soon and will be beneficial to both the applicant and the agency in expediting the hiring process. (This enhancement is also under Staff Enhancements/Legislative Initiatives)
- Installation of additional cameras and video systems at minimum, medium and maximum security facilities.
- Camera systems were installed at all work centers to help monitor offenders.
- Puncture resistant safety gloves were purchased for correctional officers to help prevent needle sticks and cuts.
- Ordered new vehicles during FY 2014 for work centers to ensure vehicle safety on transports and attending training classes, etc.
- Purchased uniforms/polo shirts for all probation and parole officers to identify them both in the office and field duty.
- Purchased new bulletproof vests and ensured all probation and parole officers had an updated vest (one that had not expired).

- Purchased safety equipment for probation and parole officers: weapons, holsters, OC spray, cuffs, keys, duty belts, batons, duty bags, badge cases and flashlights. This was done to ensure all officers had the necessary equipment for their duty belt.
- Purchased 33 vehicles to replace vehicles for probation and parole officers to ensure vehicle safety for officers conducting home visits, attending training classes, etc.
- Updated furniture and computers in probation and parole sub-offices.
- Automated fingerprint systems were installed at each probation and parole office/district office to capture sex offenders and violent offenders' prints to provide better technology and more efficient time management.

Increased Job Efficiency (benefitting staff and agency):

- Approval of 12-hour shifts to ensure officers were able to have days off and provide better staff coverage at the facility.
- Approved additional staff when requested.
- Renovation and increase to the number of safe cells at Joseph Harp Correctional Center which improves the management of the offender population with mental health needs.
- Expanded tele-psychiatry services, and implementation of tele-health technology. This creates a continuum of care, improves quality of care and reduces transport risks. Also allows clinicians to interact directly with specialists, creating an excellent medical learning experience.
- Continued implementation and refinement of the electronic offender health record, allowing for more efficient performance of nursing duties and more time devoted to medical needs.
- Implemented digital medical and dental X-Rays and statewide ultrasound service. This eliminates some transport risks and allows for rapid access to radiology reports.
- Contracted with subject matter expert on suicide prevention. Implemented suicide prevention advisory group and developed a multi-tiered suicide prevention curriculum for training of staff.
- Reorganization and centralization of agency training academy for increased efficiency.
- Scanners were placed at all work centers and community corrections centers for more efficient submission of paperwork, i.e., parole certificates.

- Oklahoma Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (OLETS) machines have been installed at all districts, allowing a more efficient retrieval process for criminal records checks by probation and parole officers.

- The administration building upgraded the digital video recorder (DVR) from a 1-terra bite, 16-channel to an 8-terra bite, 64-channel for increased technology efficiency.

Staff Enhancements / Legislative Initiatives:

- Recommended and effected change to statute which now allows employees in facilities to eat on site at no cost. This is beneficial for staff and security:
 - Easier for employees to plan/bring items that meet security requirements and allows staff to eat at no cost;
 - Increases staff presence by allowing more staff to remain at the facility; and
 - Reduces the number of searches, both of staff and bags/items being brought into the facility.
- Agency officials expanded the partnership with Redlands Community College by acquiring reduced tuition from the school for ODOC employees.
- Newly-hired eligible Registered Nurses receive a \$5000 bonus and Licensed Practical Nurses receive \$3000 (one-half on the first paycheck, the remaining half after 5 months of employment).
- Funds raised through volunteer participation in the PRIDE Day program may be presented to an employee or a member of his/her immediate family, in the event of a catastrophic situation resulting in unforeseeable extreme hardship, crisis or personal disaster. Monetary assistance awards are generally in the amount of \$500 and employees or immediate family members are eligible once every twelve months for a monetary assistance award payment.

- The agency maintains a web page of employees who are in need of receiving donated/shared leave. E-mail announcements are also distributed as employees become eligible for a need of shared leave.
- After ODOC proposed to HCM a simplified hiring process for correctional officer cadets, the agency began using a new non-competitive hiring process at several pilot facilities around the state. This process allows interested individuals to make application via computer, and they are not required to travel to any HCM testing site. The non-competitive process will be available to additional facilities soon and will be beneficial to both the applicant and the agency in expediting the hiring process. (This enhancement is also under Safety)
- OK Health: Employees enrolled in the OK Health program received up to 3 payments totaling \$500 for their continued participation. The program began in early 2007 and final payments were made in June 2010.

Recent Legislative Initiatives Requested by ODOC but not passed:

- Requested a legislative initiative for a \$100 uniform allowance.
- Requested a legislative initiative for a 5% pay increase for all classified staff and increase to hiring rate for correctional officers.

FORMER PROGRAMS (Discontinued Due to Budget Shortfalls) – All but OK Health were ODOC sponsored initiatives/programs:

- Continuous Service Incentive (CSI) Pay for Correctional Officers I-III: Eligible officers received payments of \$1250 when reaching 6, 12, 18, and 24 months of service. The program began on July 1, 2008 and was discontinued for new hires beginning May 1, 2009; however, officers already employed and participating in the program continued to receive payments until May 2011.
- Tuition Assistance: This program, which provided for tuition reimbursement to eligible employees, began in late 2004 and ended in December 2008.
- Financial Reimbursement for Educational Expenses (FREE): This program, which ran from January – July 2008, allowed the Department to pay up to \$5,000 worth of qualified college expenses per employee; in return they were required to work for the agency for two years after the date of payment.
- Connect and Collect: This employee referral incentive program provided payments to current eligible DOC employees for referring applicants who were later hired by the Department. Referring employees could receive up to 3 payments totaling \$600 if all program criteria were met. Payments began in early 2006 and ended in late 2009.