



Staff Safety

2020 Annual Report to the Legislature

As required by RCW 72.09.680

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This report is the tenth annual report to the Legislature as directed by Engrossed Senate Bill 5907 (2011) and contains information on employee safety concerns and mitigation strategies completed by the Department of Corrections.

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Foreword

“It is the intent of the legislature to promote safe state correctional facilities. Following the tragic murder of Officer Jayme Biendl, the Governor and Department of Corrections requested the National Institute of Corrections to review safety procedures at the Monroe Reformatory. While the report found that Monroe Reformatory is a safe institution, it recommends changes that would enhance safety.

The legislature recognized that operating safe institutions requires ongoing efforts to address areas where improvements can be made to enhance the safety of state correctional facilities. This act addresses ways to increase safety at state correctional facilities and implements changes recommended in the report of the National Institute of Corrections.”

Legislative Declaration, RCW 72.09.680 [2011 c 252 §1]

Executive Summary

Background

Following the murder of Officer Jayme Biendl in 2011, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) was asked to review systems, policies, and procedures and submit recommendations to mitigate safety and security vulnerabilities at the Washington State Reformatory (a unit of the Monroe Correctional Complex).

The NIC findings and recommendations led to the introduction of Engrossed Senate Bill 5907 (ESB 5907), at the request of Governor Gregoire, with the intent to promote safer prisons. ESB 5907 was signed into law (RCW 72.09) on May 5, 2011.

Report Overview

The Department of Corrections (DOC) promotes a culture that inspires each employee to take personal responsibility for all employees' safety and facility/office security, both foundational elements of a public safety mission. In addition, the Department encourages all employees to take the initiative to actively address security and safety concerns and deficiencies as well as continual monitoring for safety and security improvements in all work areas, practices, procedures, policies and physical plant layout.

In this tenth annual report to the Legislature, the Department communicates the implementation status of legislative mandates to incorporate the recommendations made and its dedication to the safety of all employees, incarcerated individuals, and members of the public.

Commitment to Safety

All citizens expect to be safe and protected in their communities and Governor Inslee has made this a priority as recognized in Results Washington Goal 4: *Healthy and Safe Communities*. The Department's mission is to improve public safety by positively changing lives and the Department values people's safety. The Department (through Results DOC) maintains a key goal to enhance safer operations and measures improvements with outcome-based management practices that include employee safety and safety of all individuals under the Department's jurisdiction, providing basic needs, ensuring safe environments, and managing emergencies. The Department promotes a culture of employee safety and facility/office security and remains deeply committed to, and actively engaged in, improving employee, individual, and community safety.

Prison Safety

Security Advisory Committees

The Security Advisory Committees are comprised of local and statewide committees that support and encourage employee to take the initiative in identifying and reporting employee safety concerns and facility security gaps as well as furnish an avenue to address them.

Department employees continue to suggest innovative solutions to everyday challenges and actively engage in the process to increase their own safety as well as the safety of others. The success of this approach can be attributed to the support received from all levels of the Department. By incorporating multidisciplinary employees from all job classifications, the submittals are broad and diverse, the work is progressive and impactful, and the resolutions highly successful.

Table 1 provides a summary of the suggestions submitted to date.

Table 1. Security Concerns & Suggestions *

Year	Total Received	Completed at Local Level	Referred Statewide	Completed Statewide
2011	548	266	33	19
2012	714	619	14	18
2013	755	764	10	15
2014	501	498	12	9
2015	397	390	10	10
2016	455	357	39	15
2017	383	258	16	21
2018	350	394	23	26
2019	360	301	17	12
2020**	113	89	5	7
Total	4,576	4,105	182	155

* Due to increased data fidelity, numerical values may not match prior reports in some columns

** As of October 31, 2020

Local Security Advisory Committees

Local Security Advisory Committees are active in all 12 prisons and meet regularly. These committees are chaired by the senior custody employee (Captains or Lieutenants) and include employees from a variety of disciplines who review and discuss security concerns and suggestions that have been submitted at the local level.

When a local security suggestion is submitted by an employee to the facility's Security Specialist, the suggestion is then queued for review by the Local Security Advisory Committee. Using a facility-wide, multidisciplinary approach, local committees examine and discuss each suggestion focusing on how the suggestion enhances (directly or indirectly) employee safety and security while also considering any unintended consequences on other areas of the facility/office and/or the possibility of statewide impacts (positive and negative).

Each local committee's work has proven to be extremely effective. This forum for reviewing employee initiated security suggestions emphasizes the strong local commitment to safety and security through the exchange of ideas, involvement of all employee and program areas, and facilitates a greater understanding of how all employees contribute to safer operations of the facility/office and public safety overall.

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, local security advisory committees were suspended from meeting in person. However, facility leadership and advisory committee members continue to discuss with employees the importance of reporting security concerns and offering safety and security suggestions. Safety and security concerns and suggestions are still being managed locally as well as elevated to the statewide committee for consideration and action.

Statewide Security Advisory Committee

In some cases, a Local Security Advisory Committee determines a security suggestion may have statewide impact, requires a change to Department policy, or the costs to implement the suggestion are beyond facility budget capacity. In these circumstances, the suggestion is forwarded to the Statewide Security Advisory Committee for review and consideration.

As required by RCW 72.09.680, the Statewide Security Advisory Committee meets to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions forwarded from local committees that may affect Department policy or require legislative approval and funding. Committee work includes evaluating suggestions, making recommendations, and taking action on safety and security concerns affecting statewide policies and practices. In addition, the Statewide Security Advisory Committee assists in the development of safety curriculum presented to employee as part of Annual In-Service training for the Prisons Division.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on meeting and gatherings, in 2020 the Statewide Security Advisory Committee met virtually to continue the work of reviewing and taking action on statewide safety and security concerns.

Staff Safety Performance Audit

In March of 2016, the Washington State Auditor's Office concluded a Performance Audit on Prisons Safety and Security that assessed whether the Department could do more to ensure the safety and security of employees and facilities. The State Auditor's Office published a [final report](#) which is available for public review.

After receiving the final report, the Department began taking action to review each recommendation and formulate an improvement plan to address 13 areas identified for improvement. Many of the recommendations involved correcting gaps in policies and/or procedures and the majority of those have been completed. However, two of the recommendations (additional radios for non-custody employees and public access staffing) require legislative funding to implement as recommended.

The Department did not receive funding in the 2020-2021 biennium to implement these two remaining corrective actions.

Prisons Division Training

Prison Safety Series Curriculum

The Department promotes a culture that encourages personal responsibility for safety and security in prisons and has invested in extensive employee training programs. The Department is charged with developing training curriculum regarding employee safety issues at the Department's total confinement correctional facilities. The content, discussions, and activities delivered through annual in-service training target strategies for improving personal safety, the safety of others, and the safety and security of the work place as required by RCW 72.09.684. At a minimum, the training is expected to address the following issues: security routines, physical plant layout, individual movement and program area coverage, and situational awareness and de-escalation techniques.

In 2020, staff safety annual in-service training focused on increasing safety and security through improved detection and deterrence of contraband and narcotics from entering facilities as well as safe handling techniques. In addition, improved response to narcotics/unknown substances and individuals suspected to be under the influence were explored to increase employee knowledge and the safety of all individuals. In addition, refresher training on de-escalation techniques was provided.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person staff safety was suspended. Some classes, including staff safety training, were moved to an online format for employees to complete.

The Department considers the input of both the Statewide Security Advisory Committee and Local Security Advisory Committees in developing annual in-service staff safety curriculum. The curriculum for this series was developed by a multidisciplinary team, reviewed by the Statewide Security Advisory Committee, and is being delivered to all Prison Division employees.

Community Corrections Safety

The Community Corrections Division (CCD) continues to update policies and procedures aligned with the CCD evidence based supervision model. The ongoing review and implementation of changes is done with a focus on employee safety and office security while maintaining accountability of those individuals supervised in the community.

Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee

The Statewide Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee continues to meet quarterly to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions that may affect department policy, budget, and workload. The committee is co-chaired by the CCD Program Administrator and staff representatives of the Washington Federation of State Employees. The committee membership is comprised of CCD Security Specialists and CCD employees from around the Department with a variety of job classifications. The committee recently amended the bylaws to extend committee membership from two to three years. This will assist in the elimination of constant turnover of committee members and provide stability to the committee. The charge of the committee is to review and develop recommendations, propose solutions, and evaluate best practices related to employee safety and office security within CCD. Additionally, the Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee assists in the development of employee safety and office/operational security curriculum presented to employee as part of the annual in-service training for employees in the Community Corrections Division.

Community Corrections Division Training

Training in community corrections continues with an emphasis on skill enhancement which increases positive engagement with supervised individuals. The ability to engage individuals, and how to intervene in high-risk behaviors, promotes both employee and community safety.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person community corrections staff safety was suspended. Some classes were moved to an online format for employees to complete.