



Staff Safety

2021 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 Washington 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 the Monroe reformatory is a safe institution, it recommends changes that would enhance safety.

The legislature recognizes 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' initiative to actively discover and 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: *Healthy and Safe Communities*. The Department is committed to operating a safe and humane corrections system with a mission of improving public safety by positively changing lives. Further, the Department values people's safety. The Department maintains a key goal to enhance safer operations and measures improvements with outcome-based management practices that include employee safety and the 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.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Similar to other agencies, organizations and businesses in Washington State, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted DOC operations ability to maintain the health and safety of staff and incarcerated individuals in our care. The pandemic has led to increased use of mandatory overtime, staff burnout and turnover, which were further compounded by subsequent necessary mandates.

The Department of Corrections began supporting Department of Health (DOH) response to COVID-19 on February 9, 2020, by providing members of Correction's Department Incident Management Team. An

advanced contingency planning team launched on February 28, 2020 to stand up the agency emergency response. The department officially opened its Emergency Operations Center at Headquarters in response to COVID-19, including representatives from health services staff, on March 2, 2020.

Detailed information regarding the departments robust COVID-19 response, Screening, Testing and Infection Control Guidelines, and the Safe Start Corrections plan can be found on the [DOC website](#).

Prison Safety

Security Advisory Committees

The Security Advisory Committees are comprised of local and statewide committees that support and encourage employees 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 the 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	300	21	23
2018	350	398	25	27
2019	360	305	17	14
2020	122	113	5	7
2021**	70	91	5	2
Total	4,655	4,101	191	159

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

** As of October 17, 2021

Local Security Advisory Committees

Local Security Advisory Committees are active in all 12 correctional facilities 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 to the facility's security specialist by an employee, 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. The 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.

Since 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 continued to meet through electronic means to reinforce the importance of reporting security concerns and offering safety and security suggestions. Even with lingering restrictions on in-person meetings, 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 departmental 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 departmental policy or require legislative approval and funding. Committee work includes evaluating suggestions, making recommendations, and acting 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 employees as part of annual in-service training for the Prisons Division.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on meeting and gatherings, the Statewide Security Advisory Committee met virtually in 2021 to continue the work of reviewing and acting on statewide safety and security concerns.

Staff Safety Performance Audit

In March 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.

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 safety and security training programs. The Department is charged with developing training curricula regarding employee safety and security for all employees of the Department's total confinement correctional facilities. The content, discussions and activities delivered through new employee and annual in-service training target strategies for improving personal safety, the safety of others, and the safety and security of the workplace 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*.

The Department considers the input of both the Statewide Security Advisory Committee and Local Security Advisory Committees in developing annual in-service staff safety curricula. The curriculum for this year's series was developed by a multidisciplinary team, reviewed by the Statewide Security Advisory Committee, and is being delivered to all Prisons Division employees. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person training was suspended for the most part. Some classes, including staff safety training, were moved to an online format for employees to complete.

Over the last year, Prisons Division employee safety and security annual in-service training provided employees with an introduction to the concept of "dynamic security" as an enhancement to traditional methods of correctional operations security. Dynamic security is a concept prioritizing humanity in interactions and investing in positive relationships with incarcerated individuals as an additional layer of safety and security to improve overall individual health and wellbeing as well as mitigate violence.

Compassionate interactions paired with solid ethical boundaries provides employees the ability to better understand individuals and analyze and assess risk associated with problematic behavior. The implementation of the concepts of dynamic security provides early detection of security related risks and development of timely interventions to prevent negative outcomes.

The training advanced the notion of positive coaching as a form of communication that not only provides the opportunity to act quickly to address negative behavior but enhances the opportunity to recognize incarcerated individual achievements and progress in programming, education and reentry. Additionally, the training provided specific examples of how professionalism and adherence to the agency's core values and strategic anchors help shape a safer environment.

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

In 2021, the Statewide Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee continued to meet quarterly to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions that may affect department policy, budget and workload. Due to COVID-19 requirements, these meetings were conducted virtually. The committee is co-chaired by the CCD program administrator and a representative of the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE). The committee membership is comprised of CCD security specialists and CCD employees from each of the community corrections sections, representing a variety of job classifications. The primary task of the committee is to review and develop recommendations, propose solutions and evaluate best practices related to employee safety and office security in community corrections. Additionally, the committee assists in the development of employee safety and office security related curriculum presented to employees as part of the annual in-service training for employees in CCD.

Community Corrections Division Training

Training for community corrections has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with the inability for employees to be in close contact with one another, causing most in-person training to be suspended in 2020-21. That which could be successfully delivered virtually was accomplished, including limited employee safety and security refresher training.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, community corrections was in the midst of conducting training in arrest, planning and implementation (API 2.0), which includes topics such as making an entry, clearing a structure for safety, and safe arrest techniques. API 2.0 is an example of the training that community corrections employees attend which places a high emphasis on skill enhancement to increase positive engagements with supervised individuals. The ability to successfully engage individuals and positively intervene in high-risk behaviors, promotes both employee and community safety.