



Staff Safety

2022 Annual Report to the Legislature

As required by RCW 72.09.680

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

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2022 Annual Report to the Legislature

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' 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 eleventh 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 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 values people's safety. The Department maintains a key goal to enhance safer operations and measures improvements with outcome-based management practices including employee safety and the safety of all individuals under the Department's jurisdiction, operating humane facilities, 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 employees to take the initiative in identifying and reporting employee safety concerns and facility security gaps as well as provide ideas to address them.

Department employees continue to suggest 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 successful.

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

Table 1. Security Concerns & Suggestions*

Type	Total	Total Completed	Total Pending	Denied/Dismissed**
Concerns & Suggestions Received (statewide + local)	4,829	2,965	156	1,708
Local Concerns	4,562	2,874	127	1,561
Statewide Concerns	267	91	29	147

* As of October 10, 2022

** Includes concerns and suggestions transferred to safety committees

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 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(s), 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.

Although following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, and subsequent restrictions on in-person meeting, local and statewide security advisory committees were suspended from meeting in person. However, facility leadership and advisory committee members continued to meet virtually to reinforce the importance of reporting security concerns and offering safety and security suggestions. As the pandemic has shifted towards epidemic management, both statewide and local security advisory committees are again meeting in-person and continuing to play important role in increasing staff safety by reviewing security concerns and suggestions 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 DOC 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.

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 DOC 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) required legislative funding to implement as recommended. As funding and radios upgrades have occurred DOC has purchased additional radios to allow for non-custody staff.

The department considers the improvement plan developed following the Performance Audit on Prisons Safety and Security closed with no further action being taken.

Prisons Division Training

Prison Safety Series Curriculum

The DOC 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 curriculum regarding employee safety and security for all employees working in 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.*

Over the next year, prisons' employee safety and security annual in-service training will provide employees with training emphasizing 'back to the basics'. While operating under federal and state pandemic guidelines which limited certain core correctional practices in order increase the health and safety of both employees and incarcerated individuals by mitigating the spread of COVID-19, there is a need to provide refresher training to employees on performing basic core correctional practices such as searches, movement, out-counts, offsite work crew processing, etc.

In addition, DOC's partnership with [AMEND](#), a program at the University of California San Francisco, works to bring a health-focused approach to providing correctional staff with additional tools and resources with an emphasis on staff safety and wellness, while working to prepare incarcerated individuals and residents to become better neighbors and community members when they return to society. One of the concepts utilized within the AMEND program is the concept of "dynamic security", which prioritizes humanity in interactions and invests in positive relationships with incarcerated individuals as an additional layer of safety and security. This concept, along with other principles of AMEND have started to be trained to and used in some DOC facilities and there are plans for expansion based on measurable success and funding provided.

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.

This work advances 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 associated provides staff with specific examples of how professionalism and adherence to the agency's core values and strategic anchors help shape a safer environment.

The Department considers the input of 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 prisons' employees through mandatory online training.

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.

During the 2021 Washington State Legislative Session, the Department of Corrections was appropriated funding for the development and implementation of a coaching model of supervision. A multi-disciplinary project team was convened to begin implementation planning for Individualized Community Oriented Accountability Collaborative Help (expressed with a small i and big C or iCoach). iCoach is an overarching approach to supervision. iCoach will be the delivery of supervision, programming, and services for individuals under the Department's supervision and includes a requirement of the Community Corrections Officer (CCO) to coach supervised individuals throughout the course of supervision.

iCoach will provide a transition for Community Corrections Staff to shift from a traditional surveil, detect and notify model to a model that includes coaching and focusing on transitional needs of individuals releasing to our communities. The iCoach model will identify risk and needs prior to release to the community and allow for an opportunity to frontload resources, services and other transitional needs to support successful reentry. This will allow Community Corrections Officers (CCO's) to tailor supervision and support functions to the supervised individual's needs upon release.

The coaching model will include enhancement and training of CCO's skills that will enhance overall staff, supervised individual and community safety. The coaching model will incorporate the following strategies:

- Setting meaningful, achievable, pro-social goals.
- Improving decision making and problem-solving skills
- Exploring fears and risky thinking errors
- Identifying resistance to change and overcoming resistance
- Building and replacing negative habits/behaviors with those that lead to pro-social changes
- Acknowledging consequences and harm done to themselves and others
- Enhancing feedback and learning

- Instilling personal accountability
- Developing and encouraging personal strengths and talents

CCO's have also been trained in Trauma Informed services, Risk Needs Responsivity and other behavior identification strategies that will allow them to identify the root cause of the behavior and intervene using a coaching model, prior to returning an individual to confinement. Ongoing training will be provided around motivational interviewing, coaching,

The enhancement of these skills, and the ongoing training to the coaching model and philosophy of supervision provide for increased officer safety.

In 2022, CCD established an Officer Safety Workgroup to review the tools, knowledge, and skills employees need to perform their work in a safe and effective manner. This workgroup will review and offer changes to policy, practice, and procedures in the following areas:

- Pre-Employment Screening
- Use of Force
- Use of Force Training
- Use of Force Legal Implications
- Arming Process
- Proper Professional Attire
- Incident Response
- Peer Support
- Firearm Review Board and Return to Work

Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee

In 2022, the Statewide Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee continues to meet 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 a representative of the Washington Federation of State Employees. 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.