



Staff Safety

2024 Annual Report to the Legislature

[As required by RCW 72.09.680](#)

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This report is the thirteenth 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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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.

RCW 72.09.680(5): The department shall report back to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature by November 1, 2011, and annually thereafter. The report shall include:

- (a) Recommendations raised by both the statewide and local security advisory committees;
- (b) Recommendations, if any, for improving the ability of nonsupervisory classified employees to provide input on safety concerns including labor and industries mandated safety committees and the inclusion of safety issues in collective bargaining;
- (c) Actions taken by the department as a result of recommendations by the statewide and local security advisory committees; and
- (d) Recommendations for additional resources or legislation to address security concerns in total confinement correctional facilities.

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 thirteenth annual report to the Legislature, the Department communicates the implementation status of legislative mandates to incorporate the recommendations made and our 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 a core value is dedicated to all 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 sincerely 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.

Local Security Advisory Committees

Local Security Advisory Committees (LSAC) are active in all 11 prisons and have implemented 3091 security concerns since 2011. These committees are chaired by the captain, 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 facility level.

When a local security suggestion is submitted by an employee to the facility's security specialist(s), the suggestion is queued for review by the LSAC. Using a 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 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 and public safety overall.

Figure 1: Local Security Concerns by Outcome

Completed local security concerns by outcome, as determined by consensus vote by LSAC

LSAC Security Concern Status	Number of Security Concerns
Suggestion Implemented	3091
Denied by Committee or Facility Leadership	1857
Referred to SSAC	221
Pending	142
Total	5311

Statewide Security Advisory Committee

In some cases, LSAC 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 (SSAC) for review and consideration.

As required by RCW 72.09.680, SSAC 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 acting on safety and security concerns impacting statewide policies and practices. In addition, SSAC assists in the development of safety curriculum presented to employees as part of Annual In-Service training for the Prison Divisions.

Figure 2: Statewide Security Concerns

Completed statewide security concerns by outcome, as determined by consensus vote by SSAC.

Statewide Security Concerns	Number of Security Concerns
Approved - No Further Action Necessary	114
Denied	94
Referred to Risk Management	1
Total	209

**Total does not reflect all security concerns sent to SSAC. Pending concerns not included in this data set.*

Figure 3: Security Concerns By Category

Concerns must be entered with one of the four following category designations: Physical Plant, Policy/Operational Memorandum/Procedure, Staffing, or Technology.

Concern Type	Number of Concerns
Physical Plant	1753
Policy/Procedure	1965
Staff	784
Technology	809
Total	5311

Recommendations

The analysis of open SSAC concerns and the categorization of security concerns over time enables the Department to pinpoint areas needing support to implement safety and security measures across all prison facilities. As of this report, the SSAC has identified security concerns that have been approved for implementation but are currently awaiting funding. These concerns fall into specific themes.

1. Digital Staff Accountability System:

- **Request:** Four concerns relate to establishing and operating a digital accountability system for department employees using Department ID badges.
- **Objective:** The implementation of a digital staff accountability system is designed to ensure only authorized individuals are permitted entry and exit from the secure perimeters of prison facilities. This system aims to enhance the accountability of staff by digitally verifying the safety and well-being of identification cardholders (employees, contract staff, visitors, and volunteers) through reconciliation of individuals within the prison. Anyone entering a prison is required to scan their identification card upon entry and exit.

In the event of an emergency, the shift commander has the ability to access a census of all identification cardholders present within the facility. During such events, the shift commander can initiate an accountability event, requiring all identification cardholders to report to designated accountability stations, where their identification cards are scanned to confirm their presence and well-being. This system not only bolsters security measures but also ensures a streamlined and efficient approach to managing staff accountability in critical situations. This system has successfully been implemented at several facilities including Stafford Creek Corrections Center, Cedar Creek Corrections Center, Monroe Correctional Complex Twin Rivers Unit, and Washington Corrections Center for Women.

2. Digital Mail System:

- **Request:** Three concerns pertain to transitioning to an all-digital mail system for incoming mail in prison facilities.
- **Objective:** These concerns address the significant rise in narcotic-infused papers entering undetected through US and legal mail. The Department has legal guidance that scanning or photocopying mail is permissible, but implementation is challenging due to a lack of resources. To ensure incarcerated individuals do not face unnecessary delays or infringement on their rights to mail and legal services the department is seeking digital mail solution. Companies now offer services where all incoming mail is sent to a centralized mail processing hub. Here, the mail is scanned and digitized. The digital copies are then securely transmitted to incarcerated individuals to view on their media tablets.

3. Body Scanners:

- **Request:** One security concern is related to the need for additional body scanners.
- **Objective:** The implementation of body scanners aims to enhance the detection of contraband items such as drugs, weapons, and other prohibited materials on individuals entering prison facilities. This measure seeks to improve the overall safety and security of the facilities by reducing the risk of contraband smuggling. The Department needs to invest in body scanners and trained personnel to operate them effectively.

4. Canines:

- **Request:** SSAC supports the expansion of drug detection canine teams.
- **Objective:** The use of canine teams has proven to be a highly effective method in detecting contraband, including drugs and cell phones, within correctional facilities. Canine teams offer a unique advantage with their superior sense of smell capabilities, speed, and reliability, which complements the technological methods of body scanners and mail scanning.

Prison Divisions' 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, the annual in-service training required for Prison Safety will provide employees training focused on learning skills to improve their personal responsibility and personal safety, enhance the safety of others, and develop ways to reduce human errors that may contribute to or lead to safety risks. Employees will participate in an exercise discussing how organizational culture can impact safety. Employees will also participate in a series of activities including problem solving, mitigating conflict through behavior management, and by demonstrating strategies that enhance staff accountability within our prisons.

The Department considers the input of the Statewide Security Advisory Committee 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 will be delivered to all prisons' employees through mandatory training.

Reentry Center Safety

The department has made important strides to enhance the safety and security of our Reentry Centers including the 2023 addition of a specific Security Management Specialist assigned to the Reentry Division.

The Security Management Specialist has been instrumental in helping the administration improve security at reentry centers in the following areas:

- ✓ Initial security visits of all reentry centers have been conducted. These visits have helped to identify and address possible security vulnerabilities.
- ✓ Security Assessments of Reentry Centers were conducted during the multi-disciplinary audit process. These assessments helped to ensure security standards are being met. They have also identified some potential problem areas which are being addressed through policy improvements and employee training and coaching.
- ✓ A monthly security meeting was established with Reentry Center Leadership to address needs and follow up using a coordinated approach to increased security statewide.
- ✓ Helped create a Sergeant/Contract Program Manager meeting for custody leadership in reentry centers. This meeting has helped to improve communication and coordination between custody employees and program managers. This resulted in a more consistent approach to staff safety at reentry centers as well as sergeants receiving leadership training through the Statewide Sergeants Academy,
- ✓ Assisted reentry centers in meeting their Corrective Action Plans from an Unexpected Fatality Report (UFR). by assisting in sourcing and deploying Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and facilitating training. This also included a rollout of employees carrying Narcan. This has helped to improve the ability of reentry centers to respond to medical emergencies.
- ✓ Increasing crisis mitigation/management options including OC or “pepper” spray and the WRAP Restraint System have been made available to employees and included direction through updated policies and procedures. These additions improve crisis management and prioritize the well-being of employees and residents.

The Reentry Center Security Management Specialist also participates in the Community and Reentry Security Advisory Committee and has assisted with implementation of many field and reentry center staff safety and security initiatives.

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.

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. Throughout 2024, this workgroup continued to review and offer changes to policy, practice, and procedures in the following areas:

- Arrest and Search
- Use of Restraints
- Field Work Protocols
- Evidence Management
- Firearms Program

Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee

In 2024, the Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee continued to meet to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions. 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, CCD employees from each of the community corrections sections representing a variety of job classifications, and the Reentry Center Security Specialist.

The primary task of the committee is to 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 that is presented as part of the annual in-service training for CCD employees.

In 2024, the Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee worked towards implementation of several officer/office safety and security enhancements, including:

- Equipping field offices with metal detectors
- Additional WRAP restraint systems
- Developed standardized vehicle safety equipment
- All-weather vehicle tires for areas with foul weather conditions
- Equipped all field offices with Narcan
- Presumptive drug testing kits issued to officers/offices
- Developed a proposal for disability transport vehicles for use in the field
- Continuing to increase the number of use agreements with local law enforcement jurisdictions for radio/dispatch purposes.