



FACT SHEET

Date: September 8, 2009

Report: 2009-107.1

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

It Fails to Track and Use Data That Would Allow It to More Effectively Monitor and Manage Its Operations

BACKGROUND

With annual expenditures at nearly \$10 billion—10 percent of the State's General Fund—the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Corrections) is responsible for nearly 168,000 inmates, 111,000 parolees, and more than 1,600 juvenile wards of the State. Corrections oversees 33 adult correctional institutions, conservation camps, community correctional facilities, and contracts to house inmates in out-of-state facilities. Further, Corrections provides health care to inmates at each adult facility and through external contractors. The inmate health care function transitioned to a federal court-appointed receiver and is now known as California Prison Health Care Services (Health Care Services). Corrections is also responsible for implementing rehabilitative strategies to successfully reintegrate offenders into communities.

KEY FINDINGS

During our evaluation of the effect of California's prison population on the State's budget and review of Corrections' operations, we noted the following:

- While inmate population decreased by 1 percent in the last three years, Corrections' expenditures increased by almost 32 percent during the same time period.
- Corrections lacks the data necessary to determine how factors such as overcrowding, the transition of the inmate health care function, escalating overtime, or aging inmates impact the cost of its operations.
- The cost per inmate varied significantly among institutions. For example, although the average cost per inmate was \$49,300 in fiscal year 2007-08, for two institutions having additional medical and mental health units the per-inmate cost exceeded \$80,000.
- Nearly 25 percent of the inmate population is incarcerated under the three strikes law—which requires individuals to serve longer terms. We estimate the cost to the State of the increase in sentence length for these inmates will total \$19.2 billion over the duration of their sentences.
- Overtime for custody staff—correctional officers, sergeants, and lieutenants—totaled \$431 million in fiscal year 2007-08 largely due to vacant positions and increases in custody staff salaries. Overtime was so prevalent that we identified more than 8,400 correctional officers whose total pay for fiscal year 2007-08 exceeded the top pay rate of supervisors two levels above them.
- Hiring a new correctional officer costs slightly more than paying overtime to existing staff because of the training they receive and the increases in the cost of the State's contribution for the retirement benefits of correctional officers.
- Although Corrections' budget for academic and vocational programs totaled more than \$208 million for fiscal year 2008-09, it is unable to assess the success of these programs in reducing inmate recidivism.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To be more cost-effective and improve its management, we recommended that Corrections collect and use data associated with factors that affect the cost of its operations. We also recommended that Corrections develop a staffing plan allocating teacher and instructor positions for its education and vocational programs at each institution based on inmates' needs and to track and use historical inmate program assignment and waiting list data to measure program success. Additionally, we recommended that Corrections encourage the Department of Personnel Administration to exclude provisions in bargaining unit agreements that would permit any type of leave to be counted as time worked for the purpose of computing overtime compensation and negotiate a reduction in the amount of voluntary overtime correctional officers are allowed to work.

