



CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR

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FACT SHEET

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The California State Auditor released the following report today:

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

The Benefits of Its Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions Program Are Uncertain

BACKGROUND

Charged with overseeing an estimated 163,000 inmates and 107,000 parolees, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Corrections) intends to use the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) software to identify factors that cause inmates to commit crimes so they can participate in rehabilitative programs such as substance abuse treatment or vocational education programs. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, thereby reducing overcrowding in the State's prisons and lowering its recidivism rates. There are two assessments—a core assessment that identifies the needs of inmates entering prison and the reentry assessment evaluates inmates who are about to reenter society on parole.

KEY FINDINGS

During our review of Corrections' use of COMPAS we determined the following:

- It is uncertain whether COMPAS will help Corrections ultimately reduce prison overcrowding and lower its recidivism rates.
 - ✓ Although Corrections began using COMPAS assessments at all of its 12 reception centers in 2008, eight centers indicated that these assessments do not play a significant role when deciding where inmates should be housed, and by extension, the rehabilitative programs inmates might access at those facilities.
 - ✓ Corrections lacks rehabilitative programs that address all five COMPAS-identified needs—it currently has rehabilitative programs that only address two—academic/vocational education and substance abuse treatment.
 - ✓ Its academic/vocational programs have more than five times the program capacity compared to substance abuse even though substance abuse is the need most often cited by COMPAS.
 - ✓ Inmates are not consistently compelled to follow their COMPAS case plan as a condition of parole and parole agents do not routinely use the information to develop case plans or supervise parolees.
 - ✓ Corrections has not issued the required regulations on COMPAS nor provided training to some staff on how to use the tool.
- COMPAS assessments do not seem to be a key factor in determining whether an inmate gets into the in-prison substance abuse program—only 800 of the 2,600 inmates that had a moderate to high substance abuse treatment need identified by COMPAS and are housed in the institutions that offer this program were assigned to the program. A larger number of inmates in the program either did not receive an assessment or were assessed as a low substance abuse need.
- A significant number of inmates—73.5 percent—incarcerated between July 1, 2010 and February 20, 2011, had not received a COMPAS core assessment.
- Corrections does not have records that show how much it cost to deploy and administer COMPAS to its parole units and reception centers and did not establish an accounting system to track such costs. Further, it has reported a total of \$14.6 million in actual COMPAS costs that it could not explain.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We make many recommendations including that Corrections suspend its use of COMPAS assessments until it has issued regulations and updated its operations manual for using COMPAS. We also recommend that Corrections develop a plan to measure and report COMPAS's effect on reducing recidivism and that once it resumes its use of COMPAS, provide ongoing training to staff that administer assessments. Additionally, Corrections should disclose its lack of tracking the costs for COMPAS and develop policies to ensure appropriate tracking and reporting of the costs of future information technology projects.

