
Government of the District of Columbia



Department of Corrections

Testimony of
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Director

***“Department of Corrections
Performance Oversight Hearing”***

Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary
Phil Mendelson, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
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Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary.

I am Devon Brown, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections. I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on the performance of the Department of Corrections. Joining me at the table is my Deputy Director, Patricia Britton.

Chairman Mendelson, I would be remiss to not first acknowledge and express my gratitude for the support and assistance that the Administration and the entire Council have extended to the Department of Corrections in its unwavering pursuit to become a model among municipal detention systems. The endorsement of the governmental leadership of this City and other stakeholders contributes to the overall development, implementation, and effective operation of the agency's services and initiatives. The achievement of these objectives greatly supports our role as public servants and the protectors of our communities. The Department of Corrections is charged with ensuring public safety, one of the most important responsibilities of government. That this duty constitutes our highest priority is a reality that can never be exaggerated, and as such, solid partnerships with external

entities are imperative in order for the agency to experience continued progress in meeting the city's mandate in this charge.

Chairman Mendelson and Committee members, the Department of Corrections plays a major role in the government's mission to admirably serve the people of the District of Columbia. Its presence and impact transcend jail walls, an observation that deserves emphasizing within this forum.

The District of Columbia Department of Corrections is one of the largest detention systems in the nation. Our offender population consists of pretrial detainees, sentenced misdemeanants, and felons, as well as those awaiting parole violation hearings. The average daily inmate population under the custody of the Department was 3,274 during fiscal year 2007.

The vast majority of the individuals committed to the Department are confined at the Central Detention Facility, also referred to as the DC Jail. The DC Jail serves as the District's principal adult correctional institution and represents the primary point of entry for everyone ordered to incarceration by our Courts. The Executive Administration established a

population capacity at the jail during the beginning of this fiscal year. The 2,164 inmate restriction is within the range recommended by two consultants hired independently by the City Council and the Department's past leadership during 2004. This number also supports the Department's compliance with the Jail Improvement Act of 2003.

Only adult and juvenile males adjudicated as adults are housed at the DC Jail as the female inmates were transferred to the Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF) in September 2007. The CTF is a privately managed detention facility under exclusive contract to the Department, and houses a number of adult male inmates in addition to all females committed to the custody of the DOC. The Department also has contracts with four halfway houses throughout the city.

The Department processed more than 18,000 intakes and releases through the DC Jail in fiscal year 2007, with an average daily inmate population of 3,274. It is apparent by the number of those referred to our auspices, that the DC Department of Corrections is a highly complex operation with demands and challenges that far exceed those experienced by the majority of our sister detention systems.

The Department of Corrections' operating budget for fiscal year 2007 was \$148 million with a workforce consisting of 923 full time staff. The operating budget for fiscal year 2008 is \$154 million and 945 authorized full time employees.

The Department of Corrections continues to work diligently to reshape and align its goals with the District's objectives for public safety. The Department has demonstrated steady progress in this duty, and is effectively addressing a number of priorities. The monumental achievements experienced to date reflect firm determination and steadfast tenacity to become the nation's premier correctional system.

The Department of Corrections has directed heightened attention to the following major priorities:

- Security and Safety Enhancements
- ACA Accreditation,
- Expansion of Inmate Programs/Services and Re-entry Initiatives,
- Major Overtime Reduction,
- Staff Recruitment, and
- Continued Modernization of Records Management

I would like to highlight some of the accomplishments in each of these areas.

Security and Safety Enhancements

The Department accomplished a number of safety and security advancements:

- Last June, the Department completed a year of weekly testing of its community notification system to better ensure the effective operation of these mechanisms. These tests also serve to assure nearby neighbors that the Department of Corrections takes seriously its responsibility for accountability to the community, especially during emergencies that impact public safety.
- Correctional Officers were equipped with stab and ballistic resistant vests that are worn as part of their official uniform. This initiative represents a major safety investment for security personnel who have ongoing and direct contact with inmates.
- The Department received a \$440,000 grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance to implement the first phase of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) in specific areas of the Central Detention Facility. This highly sophisticated technology will significantly improve order, safety and security within the facility by allowing correctional staff to track all movement throughout the facility in real time, reduce response time to emergency occurrences, and provide

significant improvement in inmate accountability. Additionally, the electronic record generated by the system will prove invaluable in post-incident investigations because of the information it captures, including who was present at the scene during the commission of the incident.

- Additional security cameras have been strategically placed throughout the jail. These cameras allow real-time monitoring of the facility, provide crucial assistance in investigative proceedings, and allow greater surveillance of the activity within the facility.
- The Department expanded its K-9 unit and assigned three newly purchased patrol dogs to protect the perimeter of the facility. Complementing this unit are three search and drug detection dogs that better inhibit contraband from entering the DC Jail. The dog handlers and their dogs have completed required certification courses.
- Additional security fencing with razor ribbon and enhanced exterior lighting has been added to better protect the perimeter.

ACA Accreditation

The Department is actively pursuing American Correctional Association (ACA) Accreditation at the DC Jail. To enhance our efforts toward achieving full accreditation by early next year, the Department hired an Accreditation Manager to provide leadership and guidance in the

accreditation process. As part of the preparatory stage, the Department is currently reviewing and making appropriate updates to internal policies, of which 95 percent have been completed. Also critical to the preparatory process is ensuring the Department's compliance with mandatory standards, processes and documentation, and the formal reinstatement of in-service staff training. The Department expects to officially submit application to the ACA this week with the goal of achieving full accreditation by this body during February 2009.

Expansion of Inmate Programs/Services and Re-entry Initiatives

The Department of Corrections is intent upon offering programs and services that will provide incarcerated individuals with opportunities to become more constructively oriented and to facilitate their successful adjustment in the community. The Department is exceedingly pleased that the leading officials of this government have assumed a commanding role in this ardent yet extremely important undertaking. In this regard, Mayor Fenty has visited the Department of Corrections four times during his first year as the City's Commander in Chief. In doing so, he has held town hall meetings with the inmates on two of these visits with a third such forum for juveniles scheduled for this week. These meetings have provided an opportunity for

constructive dialog, with both male and female offenders openly expressing their concerns as well as opinions about how our correctional system could be improved and their lives in the community made better. Additional town halls with the inmates have been led by the Department's management staff. The Mayor also attended a graduation ceremony for correctional officer recruits, offering them his encouragement and support as they begin their careers as proud members of the City's public safety profession. The Department is also grateful for your many visits to the jail, Chairman Mendelson, which allowed you to objectively assess our operational strengths and areas of needed improvement. Please know that we are highly appreciative of your ongoing support. Collectively, these actions by our government's highest leaders are clear indications of their recognition of the critically important role that our profession plays as a major guardian of the public's safety.

A significant focus has been placed on our juvenile population and the programs offered to them. As you are aware, the Department reconfigured the housing and programming structure for its juvenile population. This restructuring better controls inmate movement throughout the facility and promotes a more orderly, safe, and secure correctional environment. Staff

assigned to the unit have completed a three-day training program which focused on the management, behavioral tendencies, and care of adolescent offenders. As juveniles are now housed in a self-contained unit which allows more space, the Department has significantly enhanced the number and types of programs offered to this population. These programs include:

- **Education** is provided by both the DC Public Schools and the DC Department of Corrections through a collaborative partnership. General Education is provided to those who are seeking a high school diploma or a GED.
- **Peaceholics** is a juvenile mentoring program that focuses on incarcerated youth from economically distressed areas. Individual and group counseling is utilized to intervene in gang and neighborhood rivalries.
- **Formal Chess Instruction** provides structured recreation to inmates by providing a full program of chess instruction, tournament preparation, and academic activities to enhance cognitive skills, self-esteem, self-discipline, and socialization abilities. The model of problem-solving behavior learned through chess is utilized as a simulation of human problem-solving behavior. Inmates learn how to choose moves in chess competition as an exercise in the application of logic in the obtainment of positive outcome--not only in the game, but in life itself.
- **Free Minds Book Club** introduces juveniles at the DC Jail to the transformative power of books and creative writing.
- **Moral Reconciliation Therapy** provides a systematic treatment strategy designed to enhance social, moral and positive behavioral growth in a progressive, systematic fashion. This treatment modality is specifically designed for offender populations and is based upon the assumption that fully

functioning, reasonably content, individuals have a better sense of identity and that their behavior and relationships will be based upon relatively high levels of moral judgment. The objective is to reeducate clients socially, morally and behaviorally and to instill appropriate goals and values.

- **Art Therapy** helps juveniles address their psycho-social issues through drawings, tracings and painting. During these sessions, they are encouraged to talk freely about their lives, goals, and challenges.
- **Indoor and Outdoor Recreation** affords inmates the means to constructively engage in leisure activity. This resource is particularly important for those segments of the inmate population who possess high energy levels.
- **Religious Services** are available to those who desire to attend worship services. Juveniles are provided an opportunity to find a service that will assist them in their spirituality.
- **DVD Program** is a television-based educational initiative where video programming is shown throughout the housing units and in the infirmary. The material selected for viewing features a myriad of educationally enriching subjects such as health, history, law, economics and biographies of prominent national figures.
- **The Institute for Behavioral Change and Research (Stress Management)** teaches juveniles work ethics and how to successfully perform and conduct themselves during their employment.
- **Restorative Justice Training Anger Management Program** is designed to create a positive impact in the lives of juvenile offenders within the criminal justice system. In addition, the program assists juveniles to acknowledge responsibility for their misconduct and unacceptable behavior.

The Department has also expanded its programming opportunities to the adult inmate population in such areas as GED preparation, mentoring, parenting, job training, education and life-skills.

Health Care Services

The Department of Corrections completed its first year in October 2007 in the application of a community-oriented model of health care for inmates. Unity Healthcare, Inc., became the sole provider of an extensive and comprehensive health care continuum for the District's inmates. One of the most notable successes to date has been in the discharge planning process. As a component of this initiative, the Department provides a 30-day supply of medication, as appropriate, to District inmates upon transfer to the Bureau of Prisons, placement in a halfway house, assignment to a drug treatment program or release to the community.

The Department of Corrections remains committed to the City's efforts to abate the proliferation of HIV/AIDS. As such, a major milestone was reached last month in that 19,776 were screened for HIV at intake between June 2006 and January 2008 as an outgrowth of our HIV testing program. The inmates screened by DOC constitute about a third of all cases tested

since the District announced its city-wide initiative to test all individuals 14 to 84 years of age for HIV. The Department continues to receive national applause for its pioneering efforts in addressing this devastating disease. In this regard, last December, the D.C. Appleseed Center for Law and Justice rated the Department an “A” on that organization’s third “report card” for responding to the city’s HIV/AIDS epidemic. Over the past two years, the Department has consistently received the highest evaluations rendered by this organization for our efforts in combating this illness. The success of the Department’s HIV program was highlighted in presentations at the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Regional Re-Entry Conference held last December. Our Health Services Administrator has been selected to serve as a member of the Advisory Board of the Evaluation and Support Center of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. Moreover, the American Correctional Association has invited the Department to present its outstanding HIV program during the 138th ACA Annual Congress of Correction this summer. In further acknowledgement of the acclaim that the program has received throughout the Corrections profession, it has been selected to be featured in the June 2008 issue of Corrections Today Magazine.

Reentry Program

The Department continues to expand its reentry services through collaboration with numerous public and private partnerships. The Reentry Program complements the general release programs for inmates. Presently, each inmate returning to the community receives a release package that includes a temporary ID card, tokens and/or a fare card, a pamphlet identifying available community and government resources and condoms. Through partnerships with other District and federal agencies and the faith-based Linking Institutions, Neighborhoods, and Community Services Together (LINCS) program, the Department provides a number of services to inmates including assistance with job placement, housing, and clothing.

Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program

The Department recently implemented a residential drug treatment program at the jail and CTF. The 90-day program, entitled, “Progress Toward Empowerment (PTE) Modified Therapeutic Community,” is comprised of 60 beds (40 males, 20 females). As of February 15, 2008, there were 35 males and 14 females enrolled in the program with ongoing assessment and evaluation of current referrals for admission to the available

slots. The Department's goal is to provide substance abuse services for up to 500 inmates annually.

The Department interfaces with a number of agencies in the delivery of programs and services including:

- **Unity Health Care, Inc.** provides comprehensive medical and mental health services for DOC inmates. Unity has detailed a Project Toward Empowerment (PTE) liaison to the agency who facilitates the mental health screening and clearance for program participants. Unity has also provided discharge planners who are an integral part of the program and help to ensure continuity of services upon release.
- **Addictions Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA)** has provided technical support through assistance in certification of the therapeutic model and training for PTE program staff on the Addictions Severity Index (ASI) assessment tool. In addition, APRA has provided one (1) FTE substance abuse clinician that will be stationed half-time at the courts (to conduct the ASI and make referrals directly from the courts to the PTE program) and half time on site at CDF/CTF (to assist with programming and aftercare).
- **The Department of Mental Health (DMH)** liaisons assigned to the jail and CTF interview inmates to connect them to their respective Core Service Agencies and community mental health providers upon release.

- **The Department of Health and the Office of Property Management** have assisted in providing more meaningful job details and increasing the number of work-release details through city agencies and private employers.
- **The Department of Human Services (DHS) Income Maintenance Administration (IMA)** has provided a discharge planner on site at the CDF to identify and assist inmates with applications and enrollment for food stamps, Medicaid and Alliance.
- **Department of Employment Services** will offer job readiness training and apprenticeship programs and establish a presence within the jail to help inmates find jobs upon release.
- **DC Public Schools** has helped the Department to increase subject offerings to the juvenile population.
- **Office of the State Superintendent of Education** will provide adult educational programs.

Overtime Reduction

Following a comprehensive review of overtime dollars spent, the DOC has implemented several measures to better manage and reduce overtime expenditures. Recent measures implemented include:

- Decreased the number of supervisory staff that is authorized to approve overtime,

- Conducted bi-weekly payroll audits and tracking documents to ensure accuracy and compliance by managers,
- Redeployed staff to various shifts, post assignments and days off,
- Exploring 10-hour shifts for supervisory staff to enhance oversight of shift operations and staff compliance with the Department's Affirmative Attendance policy.

As a result of these strategies, our overtime has been reduced by 60 percent since its height of 11,866 hours for the two pay periods in June 2007.

Staff Recruitment

The Department of Corrections continues to demonstrate progress in its campaign to recruit and hire qualified staff for critical staff vacancies, particularly correctional officers. Key features of our recruitment efforts include:

- The issuing of recruitment advertisements (“postcards”) in various community venues including Metro, barbershops, grocery stores, laundromats and other frequently visited locations.
- Establishing an on-site recruitment help desk that operates Monday-Friday, 9:00 to 5:30 for applicants, centralizing

processing of submitted applications to streamline the Department's Human Resources pre-employment process to ensure all requisites are met for document submissions.

- Establishing a central repository/pick-up station within the Department's Headquarters for perspective applicants to retrieve application packages as well as a secured drop box for submission of completed application on a 24/7 basis.
- Participating in various job fairs to recruit qualified staff, in diverse settings including community-based events, city-wide fairs, military bases and college campuses.
- Conducted regular orientations.

One hundred and ninety-nine (199) correctional officers have been hired since the campaign began in September 2006.

The Department of Corrections recognizes that the quality of our operations is profoundly dependant upon the proficiency of our staff. In observation of this reality, all Correctional Officers completed sensitivity training. In addition, the Department recently hired a new Warden at the Central Detention Facility, who has extensive correctional management experience and professional credentials. In observation of the important role of staff proficiency in changing our organizational culture, our correctional supervisory and managerial staffs are currently participating in the ACA

Professional Certification Program and are scheduled to be tested for course completion this week. The Department's goal is to have all correctional officers possess credentials which meet or exceed national standards.

Continued Modernization of Records Management

The Records Office is a vital jail function and with this in mind, the Department of Corrections is determined to effect improvement in this aspect of its operation. As previously stated Chairman Mendelson, you have played a significant role in bringing about substantial progress in this area. The Department hired 26 new employees and reorganized the supervisory structure within the Records Office in fiscal year 2007. Staff in the unit continues to undergo a series of intense trainings, which included a mandatory 40-hour course in inmate records procedures.

The Department has made significant progress in reducing both delayed and erroneous releases. Delayed releases have been reduced by 52 percent during the first quarter of fiscal year 2008 as compared to the same time period in fiscal year 2007. Erroneous releases have also decreased significantly taking into account the same time period for both

fiscal years. Much of this improved operational efficiency is attributed to the increased staffing and rigorous training directed to this area last fiscal year. The Department assumed management of the CTF Records Office operation in late December in an effort to streamline records processing and establish more effective accountability.

Additional Accomplishments

- Increased federal reimbursements for felons in our custody. The Department has collected approximately \$120 million in the past five (5) years. In fiscal year 2007, we successfully negotiated an increase in federal payments for this population. The Department of Corrections now receives \$106.62 per individual. This rate represents a 26 percent (\$22) increase above the previous per diem rate of \$84.39. These funds significantly contribute to the economic vibrancy of the District.
- The Department transferred its entire female population to the CTF. This initiative allows mothers and their children to bond through contact visits and also promotes opportunities for increased educational and vocational programming that is not currently feasible at the DC Jail due to space limitations.
- The Department automated inmate account deposits, thereby allowing money to be swiftly sent to inmates through Western Union. Through

this initiative, money may now be sent online, by telephone, or by walk-in to a Western Union site. Funds are generally deposited into the inmate's account with 24 hours.

- The Department implemented the “Inside Out Dad” project, which encourages incarcerated fathers to become more responsible and committed to improving the quality of life for their children.

- The Department continued to collaborate with other District and federal agencies to further advance its re-entry services including the U.S. Veterans Affairs Administration, Department of Employment Services, and the Public Defenders Service.

- The Department held three meetings with its Citizens' Advisory Committee members. This body is comprised of private citizen volunteers representing a cross section of the community including religious, academic, business, District Ward residents and advocacy groups, who serve as the Department's link to the community. Through the Committee, community awareness, interest and involvement in Department of Corrections' programs are encouraged and Department staff is advised about pertinent community needs, concerns and developments.

In addition to our accomplishments, future goals include:

- Establishing a Corrections Surveillance Center;
- Implementing RFID

- Implementing court release processing; and
- Implementing design work on the inmate processing center.

Chairman Mendelson, the Department of Corrections is committed to ongoing, progressive, and sustained growth leading to the formulation of a premier detention system in the District of Columbia, one that meets and exceeds the public safety needs of its citizens. We do so with the full recognition that the safety of the community is the greatest and most fundamental goal of the Fenty Administration and the government as a whole. We seek your continued support as we advance toward fulfilling this objective.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you have at this time.