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**Report to  
The Vermont Legislature**

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**Act 85 Sec 335.1:  
Plan to provide secure transitional housing for inmates reentering  
the community**

**Submitted to:** Joint Justice Oversight Committee

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## Introduction

Act 85 Sec 355.1 instructs the Department of Corrections (DOC) to develop a plan to repurpose the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor, VT to operate as a secure transitional housing program for inmates reentering the community. The legislature intends that the facility serve the following populations:

- Inmates on Lack of Housing List (b1)
- Moderate to high risk inmates who are either past their minimum release date or within 90 days of their release date
- Inmates who are eligible for reintegration furlough
- Inmates who have served a significant sentence and are within 6 months of their release date

Additionally, the Legislature intends for the facility to offer the following service prior to an inmate's release:

Services:

- Acquisition of identification
- Housing identification
- Employment readiness and retention
- Planning to address transportation barriers
- Money management
- Transition and reentry case planning
- Substance abuse treatment
- Work release
- Information technology skills development

This report will cover five main topics:

1. The population
2. The program
3. Changes to the buildings/facility and capital purchases
4. Proposed budget
5. Other potential uses for the facility

## **1. Population**

A priority population for the facility are inmates who are held past their minimum release date, due to a lack of housing. On average, 145 men and 9 women are held each month for lack of housing.

Currently, 42% (472) of incarcerated inmates are past their minimum release date and 58% (664) of offenders were held pre-minimum release. Inmates held past their minimum sentence for lack of housing comprise 11% (131) of the sentenced population. Based on the capacity of the facility, DOC estimates that 50-70 of these inmates could participate in the SESCOF program at one time.

In addition to the Vermont population, the facility may serve as a Residential Reentry Center (RRC) for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The BOP is interested in housing 20-30 federal inmates who are residents of Vermont and are reentering the community. These offenders spend the last 6 months of their sentences at a RRC prior to release. A contract with BOP could provide approximately \$1 million to offset the cost of operating the facility.

## **2. Program**

### **Eligibility guidelines for offenders to reside in the proposed secure transitional facilities**

To participate in the program individuals must be:

- On the Lack of Housing List
- Moderate to high risk inmates who are either past their minimum release date or within 90 days of their release date
- Eligible for reintegration furlough
- Inmates who have served a significant sentence and are within 6 months of their release date

The Department will use the eligibility criteria already established in directive #371.26: Reintegration Furlough and #371.15: Conditional Reentry to develop a pool of offenders who meet the reintegration furlough requirement.

The Department will determine risk scores based on its current risk assessment tools:

1. ORAS Community Supervision Tool - general risk to recidivate scores
2. SOTIPS – specific tool for sex offenders
3. DVI-SR – specific tool for domestic violence offense offenders.

Offenders will complete an application for participation in the program. The application will assess the inmate's willingness and readiness to participate in the program. Applications will be reviewed by a Program Review Team which will make the final decision about placement in the program. Offenders who have not completed their mandatory program requirements will not be eligible to enter the facility even if they fall into one of the target groups.

The Department will also consider requesting statutory changes that will allow for “presumptive parole” for certain offenders. Parole is a less restrictive status which would allow inmate more freedom to travel for work and other appointments. Furlough is the most common mechanism for releasing inmates to the community; however, this status has some shortcomings that may limit the success of a reentry program. Specifically, the ability to move across state lines as furlough is not recognized by the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS). Since the program is operating near the Vermont/New Hampshire border, it is anticipated that some participants will seek employment out of state. Parole status provides greater flexibility as the status is recognized through the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS) and allows, with approval, the travel of offenders across state lines.

## **Proposed Secure Transitional Housing Facility Program and Services**

### **Program Planning**

During an offender’s first six weeks, the caseworker and the offender will meet weekly to discuss reentry issues, focusing on family, employment, housing, and treatment. The offender, working with DOC staff, will develop a transition and reentry plan as outlined in department directive #371.02 Case Management. This plan considers an offenders risk and needs and establishes clear and specific goals for the offender to meet within achievable timeframes. After the plan is developed, the caseworker and offender will meet bi-weekly to review and update the plan.

### **Employment**

Employment service will be offered through a variety of options based on the offender’s skills and readiness. All inmates will be offered assistance with job placement resources to include the Department of Labor’s (DOL) One-Stop System or career centers located in Springfield and White River Junction. DOL and DOC will work together to identify the inmates eligible for the various programs offered through DOL funding. DOL will also work to identify employers that will hire the offender population through work based on-the-job training program. These employers receive resources and support from DOL when hiring certain target populations. DOL will also provide regular sessions at the facility to assist inmates with interview preparation, job searches, and employment counseling.

Option 1- Work Crew: The SESCO provided work services to the Town of Windsor and surrounding area. The town has expressed interest in continuing these contracts if workers are available. Work crew provide the participants with structured work under the supervision of DOC staff. Participants in work crew could be inmates with little to no work experience or inmates who are higher risk. The standard work crew consists of 10 inmates and one Community Service Team Leader. Crews typically work 6 hours a day in the community, 5 days a week. The number of crews will dictate the number of staff needed to support this phase. Offenders can also take on administrative functions of managing the work crews. This will provide opportunities to develop new skills that can be translated to a work environment.

A variation on this option is to turn work crew into an agency placement option. This is a restorative placement/work training opportunity that is supervised by the agency requesting the work. Inmates report to the location and work for the day. This option would require more conversation and coordination with the existing work crew partners to arrange.

Option 2-Facility Employment: Inmates will also have jobs in the facility to support the kitchen, cleaning, and grounds maintenance. Offenders can also take on other administrative jobs in the facility such as filing, ordering food, menu planning, and answering phones as appropriate.

Option 3-On-site training: Working with the Town of Windsor, the Department of Labor, and local businesses, the DOC will develop an on-site training program. Inmates in this program, will be trained by and work for the employer. The facility has ample space to operate this type of program, though some construction may be needed dependent on the program needs. Details and contracts would need to be developed with local employers. There could also be opportunities with the Department of Buildings and General Service to place offenders in apprenticeship programs.

The Department of Labor can assist with a labor market analysis to understand the types of jobs that are needed with outreach to employers to recruit to the program.

Option 4- Community work: In this phase, inmates are released to work at jobs in the community.

These inmates would likely be granted presumptive parole (as discussed above) to allow more freedom of movement to and from work and school. These inmates would be released each day to participate in work and/or treatment and would return to the facility at the end of the scheduled day. Inmates will not have direct supervision by the DOC while they are at work or receiving treatment. In this model, the inmate would be required to provide a daily schedule of times and locations they will be at throughout the day, and correctional staff may periodically check on them to ensure they are complying with their schedule.

## **Education**

If the case plan determines the offender needs education services, the offender will be connected to Vermont Adult Learning in Springfield VT. Offenders may also participate in the Community High School of VT program at the Springfield Probation and Parole office.

Participants seeking college level or trade level class can be connected to the Community College of Vermont in Springfield, VT or other trades training. Options include partnerships with the electricians and carpentry unions for apprenticeship programs.

Shuttle services to these programs will be provided by DOC.

## **Other programming**

On site programming at SESCOF will be minimal, volunteers or staff will provide groups on coping skills, Alcoholic Anonymous and other volunteer substance abuse groups, job retention, and parenting. Inmates with mental health or substance abuse needs will be referred to local community providers. Assessments and treatment will take place outside of the facility.

## **Transportation**

Due to the location of the facility, the DOC will operate a shuttle service to bring offenders to and from larger communities where services and employment can be found. Transportation will be offered 7 days a week and would operate no less than 16-hours a day to accommodate for travel time and varying work schedules. DOC can also partner with the local Southeast Vermont Transit organization to offer transportation from the facility to specific locations through a voucher system. The system also has a volunteer service which may be used for some transportation needs.

An offender may be authorized to drive a motor vehicle but must provide valid proof of insurance, a driver's license, vehicle licensing, and registration. Offenders, who are authorized, may operate motor vehicle for employment, education or treatment services. If the vehicle being used is the property of a person other than the offender, the offender must produce signed authorization (either notarized or witnessed by DOC staff) to use the vehicle obtained from the legal owner.

## **Offender Financial Responsibility**

Offender's with financial obligations will develop, with staff assistance, a financial plan to meet those obligations. These plans will be monitored to ensure satisfactory progress is being made.

To promote financial responsibility, all offenders working in the community will pay a maintenance fee as well as establish a savings plan. The maintenance fee is percentage of the daily cost to house the offender applied to the wages the offender earns.

## **Health Care**

The Department will need on-site presence of qualified health care professionals to manage any health issues that arise for the individuals within the transitional facility.

As offenders are not directly supervised while in the community, there is potential for exposure to drug use while in the community and introduction to the facility. DOC will issue NARCAN to all staff and inmates for use in the event of an overdose. Randomized drug testing will also take place per DOC policy.

As offenders approach their release date, the DOC will assess if they are suitable for induction on Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT) or Vivitrol.

## **Security**

DOC will establish a comprehensive offender accountability program that ensures every offender is accounted for while in the community and the facility. The program will control the introduction of contraband; insure the facility's safety, security, and good order; prevent escapes; maintain sanitary standards; and eliminate fire and safety hazards

DOC will be able to locate and verify the whereabouts of offenders at all times. DOC will randomly contact the offender either telephonically or in-person at work, home, or at authorized destinations to maintain accountability. This service can be operated from the main dispatch center in Burlington set up to monitor offenders on home detention. Community Corrections Officers will carry out this responsibility.

DOC will monitor offender movement in and out of the facility. The monitoring of offender movement, particularly during the evening and night hours, serves to protect offenders, staff, and the public. All offenders will be placed on electronic monitoring for this purpose.

DOC will authorize an offender to leave the facility through sign-out procedures only for an approved program activity.

### 3. Estimate of state capital funding needs

DOC and the Department of Buildings and General Services, reviewed the existing living and administrative units of the facility. The physical structure presents challenges to operating a reentry facility. The photos in Attachment A show some of the issues with the physical structure. The renovations are necessary given the need to reduce staffing and to comply with the standards of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The attached pictures show the blind spots that require additional staffing. The current administrative area has limited access for persons with handicaps. The plan includes renovating the education building into the new administrative area for greater accessibility and function.

Due to the timing of this report, it was not possible to develop a complete estimate for the work that needs to be completed. BGS quoted a cost of \$125.00 per square foot to cover the cost of most renovations to these spaces. Below is the square footage for the dorm wings, not including the restrooms in A and B wings, dining hall, kitchen, basement rooms, and stair towers. The Education building has also been divided by the upper classroom space and the lower shop space.

|                             |                        |                       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| A wing                      | 2,363 SQ FT x \$125.00 | \$295,375.00          |
| B wing                      | 1,238 SQ FT x \$125.00 | \$154,750.00          |
| C wing                      | 1,390 SQ FT x \$125.00 | \$173,750.00          |
| Education Classroom         | 3,088 SQ FT x \$125.00 | \$386,000.00          |
| Education Shop              | 2,320 SQ FT x \$125.00 | \$290,000.00          |
| <b>Total Estimated Cost</b> |                        | <b>\$1,299,875.00</b> |

BGS was also asked to estimate the cost to demolish all the buildings on the site in the event the property is put up for sale. The estimated cost to the State would be approximately \$1,400,000.

#### **4. Budget**

The budget (Attachment B: Proposed Budget) assumes that all building retrofitting is completed at the estimated costs shown in *Section 3: Estimate of state capital funding needs*. The staff estimates are based on physical structure renovations which would enable the facility to be staffed more minimally than the current design allows. Staffing the facility will represent a significant portion of the annual expenses, even with a reduced number of positions. The 35 positions that are listed equate to a projected cost of \$3,303,273 annually.

There are operating expenses to consider as well, such as fee for space, meals, supplies, services, utilities, etc. We reviewed current annual costs at SESCOF and have estimated that these costs would be \$1,173,850 for a repurposed facility. This estimate includes costs for food, clothing, all utilities, office equipment and supplies, IT equipment and services such as internet access, other general supplies, transportation (state vehicles at facility, but this doesn't include any contracted transportation service, which would be an additional expense), and work crew operational costs. If the facility is being utilized at capacity (approximately 100 beds), the operating costs will be similar to the historical costs for these categories.

The total annual costs (not including any contracted services) for this facility are estimated to be \$4,477,123. This excludes the one-time costs of \$1,299,875 needed for capital costs. The \$4,477,123 estimate also does not contain any costs for contracted medical (services, pharmaceuticals, supplies), or for program services, vocational opportunities within the facility, and/or other costs that are factored into the facility per capita data. Using an average for the facility over the past few years, those costs would be an additional \$1,357,825 for basic services, and bring the total anticipated cost of this facility to \$5,834,948. This equates to a per capita cost of \$58,350. The cost would include all staffing, operations costs, and select contracted services (including medical, program services, transportation). Even after considering the costs as described above, it is important to note that this represents a conservative estimate for various costs and includes only a nominal amount for programming. These estimates do not include costs for facility maintenance. While the capital funding needs detailed in the previous section may help to address some of the maintenance needs, the estimated 5-year scheduled maintenance and deferred maintenance costs of this facility were nearly \$3 million.



## 5. Other Uses for the Facility

Through the course of planning, several ideas emerged for alternative uses for the facility which would require further exploration.

- a. Move the DOC Corrections Academy from Lyndonville to the location. *DOC estimates indicate that this option would result in increased costs to operate the Corrections Academy.*
- b. Establish the forensic unit/facility at the location/Expansion of the State Hospital
- c. Use as a program site for inmate at the Southern State Correctional Facility (this assumes that onsite job training and vocational programs are developed)
- d. Use as a residential substance use treatment facility (not operated by DOC)
- e. Turn into recreation area under private ownership
- f. Turn into an agricultural campus operated by not-for-profit organizations
- g. Use as facility to house people using Act 248 beds – DAIL
- h. Demolish the buildings and prepare the site for sale: The town of Windsor has actively participated in the repurposing plan. The main concern of the town is that that facility not remain empty without being fully decommissioned. If the facility does not reopen as a secure transitional reentry facility, the Town Manager suggested that all the building be demolished to make the property more appealing to a potential buyer. None of the buildings on the property have an historical designation limiting their destruction.
- i. Donna Sweeney, as a board member of UVM, suggested that the Board consider adding Windsor to UVM as a teaching farm. Dean Fogelman would want to see the property first. However, they are interested in the idea. She has spoken to Representative Emmons about this and her next step is going to be contacting Senator Nitka.

**Attachment A: Photos of current facility limitations**

Photo 1: Stairs to nowhere. These stairs were sealed off to prevent inmates from moving between units. The alcove under the stairs is also a safety issue and inmates are often found in this area.



Photo 2: Blind spots between living units



Photo 3: Bad site lines into units; door at the end of the hall, no window on door.





Estimated Annual Costs for Windsor (repurposed as Secure Transitional Housing for inmates reentering the community)

**Personal Services**

| Position   | Pay Grade | Hourly Salary (minimum and maximum) |         | Total Benefits (minimum and maximum) |        | FTE's needed | Annual Cost for Position(s) (min and max) |                  |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------|---|------------------|
| District Manager or Superintendent   | 28        | 64,605                              | 101,878 | 38,763                               | 50,939 | 1            | 103,368                                   | 152,818          |
| Social Services/Outreach Coordinator   | 24        | 50,814                              | 79,435  | 30,489                               | 39,718 | 1            | 81,303                                    | 119,153          |
| Corrections Living Unit Supervisor   | 24        | 50,814                              | 79,435  | 30,489                               | 39,718 | 1            | 81,303                                    | 119,153          |
| Corrections Services Specialist 1 or II (or equivalent)  | 23        | 47,923                              | 74,838  | 28,754                               | 37,419 | 3            | 230,031                                   | 336,773          |
| Corrections Officer I or II (or equivalent) - includes control room and 2 posts, plus SRF          | 20        | 36,587                              | 63,045  | 21,952                               | 31,522 | 20           | 1,170,790                                 | 1,891,344        |
| Administrative Services Coordinator IV   | 24        | 50,814                              | 79,435  | 30,489                               | 39,718 | 1            | 81,303                                    | 119,153          |
| Administrative Services Coordinator I  | 21        | 42,848                              | 66,726  | 25,709                               | 33,363 | 1            | 68,557                                    | 100,090          |
| Corrections Food Services Supervisor I   | 18        | 36,587                              | 56,555  | 21,952                               | 28,278 | 1            | 58,540                                    | 84,833           |
| Work Crew Leader   | 20        | 36,587                              | 63,045  | 21,952                               | 31,522 | 2            | 117,079                                   | 189,134          |
| Health Care Professional (Registered Nurse?)   | 24        | 50,814                              | 79,435  | 30,489                               | 39,718 | 4            | 325,212                                   | 476,611          |
| Other salary/wage expenses (OT, stipend, shift. Etc.)  |           |                                     |         |                                      |        |              | 350,000                                   | 350,000          |
| <b>Personal Services Total, which includes all salary and benefit expenses for state positions</b> |           |                                     |         |                                      |        | <b>35</b>    | <b>2,667,486</b>                          | <b>3,939,061</b> |
|  |           |                                     |         |                                      |        |              | <b>Averaged cost - \$3,303,273</b>        |                  |

**Operating Expenses**

| Category  | Estimated Annual Total | Notes/Details   |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Cable   | 2,500                  | basic television services   |
| Clothing, Hygiene, Linens   | 25,000                 | assumes all basic supplies will be provided   |
| Fee for Space   | 592,000                | current facility cost as billed by BGS  |
| Food  | 142,350                | assumes 3 meals/day, 100 inmates, \$1.30 per meal   |
| Fuel (used for transport vehicles)  | 18,000                 | assumes slight increase in utilization  |
| IT equipment  | 6,000                  | this will likely be more each year if additional computers are being provided for job searches, etc.              |
| IT Services (internet)  | 6,000                  | this assumes \$500/month for this service   |
| Kitchen supplies  | 6,000                  | dining supplies and other kitchen needs   |
| Supplies  | 320,000                | safety supplies, equipment supplies, tools, general supplies, cleaning supplies, medical supplies, paper products |
| Office and other Equipment (includes maintenance)                             | 12,500                 | assumes continued replacement/maintenance costs of furniture and equipment  |
| Other purchased services  | 16,000                 | Includes insurance, printing, postage, rubbish removal, laundry   |
| Other travel  | 4,000                  | current facility cost related to staff trainings, meetings, and other costs for travel                            |
| Other costs - work crew   | 45,000                 | includes equipment and maintenance needs  |
| Recreational equipment and services   | 10,000                 | television and other rec items  |
| Telecom Services  | 10,000                 | reduction in currently required lines   |
| Transport vehicles  | 32,000                 | to provide transportation for offenders   |
| Utilities   | 211,000                | assumes current costs - electric, heat, water, sewer  |
| <b>Operating Total - assumes costs are relatively similar to current</b>      |                        | <b>1,458,350</b>  |
| <b>Operating Total - assumes reductions to current costs in several areas</b> |                        | <b>889,350</b>  |

Averaged cost - \$1,173,850 : this is a midline estimate based on all expense categories detailed in the above section

**SUMMARY**

| Total Costs and Per Capitas   | Lower Estimates | Mid-range Projections | Higher Estimates | Per Diem Ranges |        |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Facility Expenses (direct costs - staff/operating as detailed above)  | 3,556,836       | 4,477,123             | 5,397,411        | 4,477,123       |        |
| Facility Expenses (contracted service costs - medical, program services, transportation and/or other service needs) | 1,357,825       | 1,357,825             | 1,357,825        | 1,357,825       |        |
| Total Projected Annual Expenses   | 4,914,661       | 5,834,948             | 6,755,236        | 5,834,948       |        |
| 50 offenders  | 98,293          | 116,698.96            | 135,104.72       | \$ 269          | \$ 370 |
| 100 offenders   | 49,147          | 58,349.48             | 67,552.36        | \$ 135          | \$ 185 |