
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

**Report on
Creation of Correctional Office I Positions in the Department of
Corrections**

**In accordance with Act 72 of 2019: An act relating to making appropriations for the
support of government**

and

**In accordance with Act 88 of 2020: An act relating to fiscal year 2020 budget
adjustments**

Submitted to: Legislative Joint Justice Oversight Committee
Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee

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AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
Department of Corrections

Background

Act 72 of 2019 authorized the creation of 30 new Correctional Officer I positions:

Sec. 5. CREATION OF NEW CORRECTIONAL OFFICER POSITIONS On or before June 30, 2020, the Secretary of Administration shall create 30 new Correctional Officer I positions in the Department of Corrections, which shall be funded within existing departmental appropriations.

(a) The establishment of the following permanent classified positions is authorized in fiscal year 2020:

(1) In the Department of Corrections – thirty (30) Correctional Officer I.

(b) The Agency of Human Services and the Department of Corrections shall report to the Legislative Joint Justice Oversight and Joint Fiscal Committees at their respective meetings in November 2020 on the status of correctional facility staff recruitment, retention and reduction in the use of overtime, and the status of initial and ongoing training for correctional facility staff. The Department shall also report on the transfer and conversion on any positions within the Department and into or out of the Department.

Report on Current Status

Act 72 of 2019 authorized the creation of 30 new Correctional Officer I positions for the Department of Corrections, which were to be funded within the existing departmental appropriations. Act 88 established that these positions would be created in fiscal year 2020. These 30 positions were created and first came online in January 2020, just weeks prior to state government and most other areas moving toward remote work, distancing, and the many other measures that were quickly taken in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Department of Corrections was asked to provide information related to the status of these positions, and the efforts for recruitment, retention, and the reduction of overtime. Unfortunately though, due to the pandemic, the Department has not been able to fill these newly created positions. At this time, there are currently 73 vacant Correctional Officer positions (out of a total of 376). The Department has been making changes to recruitment and retention efforts, which now includes two full-time positions dedicated to these efforts. However, the inability to actively recruit in-person has delayed this initiative during the pandemic. Similarly, the Correctional Academy has been conducting much smaller classes for the past several months in order to safely train new staff while maintaining proper distancing and following all COVID-related protocol. For these reasons, vacancy rate in the Correctional Officer positions has remained above ordinary levels. The Department is optimistic it will be able to effectively recruit and retain staff in the months going forward, but may not be able to fill the 30 newly created positions at this time. This will likely require working in a post-pandemic environment.

Due to the high rate of vacancies, staff absences related to quarantine, COVID-19 mitigation and response efforts, and other operational needs within the Department, overtime has not reduced since these positions were created. Despite the current vacancies and other aforementioned

items, the amount of overtime has remained consistent with previous years and has not increased significantly during this time.

The Department certainly anticipates reductions in overtime going forward, as these positions are able to be recruited and filled.