

Proposed Corrections Committee Bill

This bill supports and challenges the Vermont Department of Corrections in its development over the next 10 years as a Center of Excellence for measured success in rehabilitation of offenders and other objectives. Successful operational policies and programs should become standard operating procedure (SOP) and resilient to staff turnover at all levels.

1: Statutory Review

- A. Review Title 28 for any areas where previous changes in corrections law have, or have not, been utilized effectively. Propose removal, update, or clarification of outdated statute, and improvements to effective statute.
- B. Review statutory definitions for all correctional roles including “corrections,” “incarcerated persons,” and “correctional officer” and report whether updates to these terms and definitions, and any other terms and definitions, are recommended to reflect state-of-the-art correctional philosophy and operations.
- C. Review classification of Correctional Officer positions re: salary level.
- D. Develop and promulgate a re-entry philosophy that begins on an individual’s first day of incarceration.

2: Programming:

- A. All correctional officers will be considered likely eligible for mental health services based on workplace-related stress. Staffing and scheduling policies and offering of services will be targeted to work with the long hours often worked by correctional officers, minimizing any additional disruption to their schedule. EAP resources will be deployed to facilities proactively, with “walk-in” services offered during a paid shift.
- B. The Department will review and develop its educational and therapeutic programming, and training and staffing procedures, to be able to operate a new correctional facility effectively from the first day of opening it.
- C. All incarcerated persons will be considered likely eligible for mental health services, and offered trauma-informed and gender-informed healthcare.
- D. It is the Legislature’s intent that increasing offerings to incarcerated persons of educational and therapeutic programming, and re-entry programming in concert with the community, should be a Department priority.

3: Accountability and Compensation:

- A. State Auditor to audit new grievance system 6 months after launch. Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for successful operation of a grievance system.
- B. Conduct an analysis of staffing and shift data per each facility and identify KPIs for healthy staffing patterns, accounting for factors including number of vacant/filled positions by type, number of hours worked per employee, number of overtime hours worked per employee, number of standby hours worked per employee, and any other data points meeting the intent of the bill.
- C. Study offering a facility-wide incentive for measured staff retention.
- D. Study offering more financial and programmatic resources to P&P officers with demonstrated success in the field.