



Department of Corrections

H.294

Existing Communications Services



Communication Types

- Phone/voice calls
 - Attorney/client lines are free
- Tablet messages
- Tablet video calls
- Tablet voice messaging

Contract:

- Vermont contracts with ICSolutions to provide and manage tablet infrastructure
- Contract term: February 2025-February 2029 with two optional one-year extensions
- ICSolutions provides each incarcerated individual two free calls per week
- Tablets include educational and streaming materials, some for pay and some at no cost

Current Costs

- Calls: \$0.028/minute (additional for international)
- Tablet messages: \$0.25/message
- Tablet video calls: \$0.16/minute
- Voice messaging: \$0.25/minute

Call Volume and Cost Estimate to Absorb Fees



Call Volume

- From November 1, to January 31, 2026 (roughly a quarter) incarcerated Vermonters made:
 - 161,633 phone calls
 - 1741946 minutes
 - Cost: \$82,383
 - 13,572 video calls
 - 141148 minutes
 - Cost: \$18,937

Cost for DOC to Absorb Call Fees

- Calculating costs based on the quarter (total of \$101,321), it would cost the Department \$405,284 to cover phone and video calls annually
 - Volume likely to increase with the option for unlimited free calls
 - Calls more than doubled in Massachusetts after the first year of implementing free phone calls

Commissary



Commissary Contract:

- Keefe Commissary Network
- Contract dates: February 1, 2025 - January 31, 2033
- Services: Commissary, banking, and deposits
- Products:
 - Hygiene products, batteries, coffee, snack food (three meals provided by DOC each day at no cost)

Recent Changes to Commissary:

- Addition of vending machines with more nutritious options and over-the-counter products like Tylenol, Advil, etc
- Partnership with Chicago Beyond to provide more culturally expansive products
 - Worked with Chicago Beyond and Women on the Rise to review and add commissary and standard-issue hygiene items to ensure correct products for people of color

Commissary Revenue/Recreation Fund



Commissary Revenue (goes toward the Recreation Fund):

- FY2025 Commissary Revenue: \$713, 997
- FY2026 Commissary Revenue: \$344, 201

Recreation Fund

- The Recreation Fund largely supports the salary for each facility's recreation coordinator
- Each facility has a Rec. Fund committee that develops an annual budget and submits to the Superintendent for review
- Budgets typically include funds for gym equipment, newspaper subscriptions, repairs, special events, etc.

Facility Work Programs



Fiscal Implications of paying state of Vermont minimum wage to facility workers:

- \$12-16M in pure wages
 - \$12M for 60-hr work week, \$16M for 80-hr work week
 - Pay is currently per day, most individuals do not have 60-80hr work weeks
- Other Considerations
 - Overtime
 - Benefits
 - Employer's taxes
 - Wage garnishments (child support)
 - W2s
 - Worker's Comp
 - Additional staff for payroll

Security Concerns

- DOC does not have enough employment opportunities for the ~1,600 individuals in custody
 - Creating this many jobs would require major physical and IT infrastructural upgrades to programming space, wi-fi, etc.
- Disparate employment opportunities/wages can result in security concerns, such as coercion and threats from other incarcerated individuals

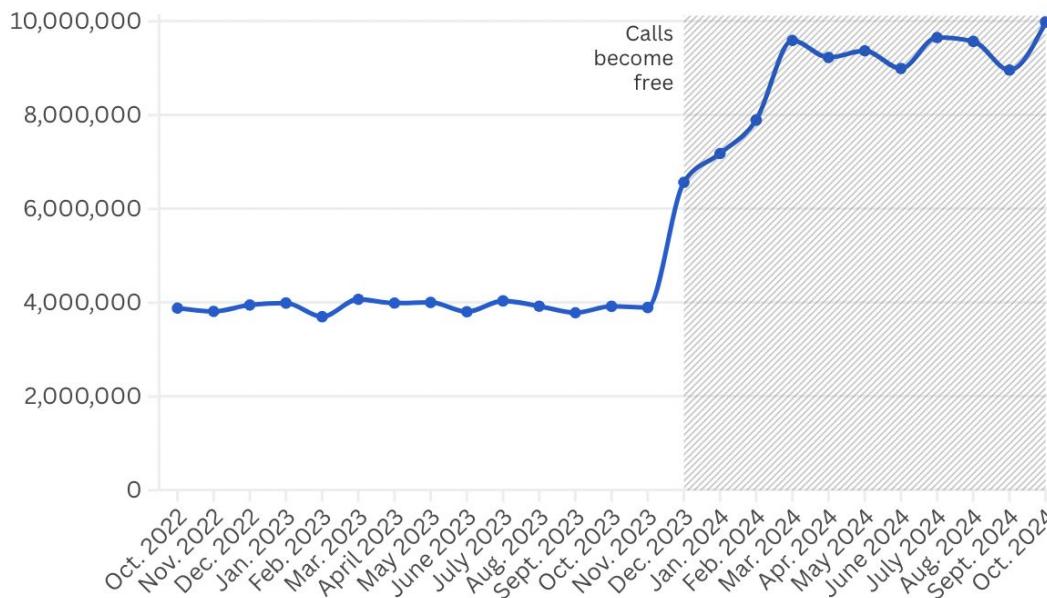


Other States

Calls and minutes skyrocketed after calls were made free in Massachusetts prisons

In October, prisoners in Massachusetts state facilities spent nearly 10 million minutes on the phone.

Minutes on the phone



Source: WGBH ([link](#))

Massachusetts prison and jail calls doubled in first year of free calls



A woman in a Connecticut prison makes a phone call.

John Moore/Getty Images / Getty Images North America



By [Sarah Betancourt](#)

December 04, 2024

“Calls more than doubled in the state prison system over the prior year, according to [Mass.] DOC data from the first 11 months of the new program.

*In its first year, the **program has cost roughly \$20 million**, between \$8.1 million so far for state facilities, according to the Department of Correction, and more than \$12 million for counties.*

*For the current fiscal year, **just \$10 million was allocated** to cover the program’s costs. **Gov. Maura Healey had included \$35 million in her initial budget proposal.**”*



Questions?



Contact

Haley Sommer

Director of Communications & Legislative Affairs

(802) 793-9075 • haley.sommer@vermont.gov

Constituent Services

ahs.docconstituentmanagement@vermont.gov