

Analysis
Department of Corrections
Corrections Health Care Costs Report

Analyst: Linda Gilbert

Request: Acknowledge receipt of a report on Corrections Health Care Costs.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Analysis: SB 843 (2013) established a work group on corrections health care costs to recommend legislation to be introduced in the 2014 legislative session to establish appropriate mechanisms to lower health care costs of the Department of Corrections. The work group was also required to submit its recommendations to an interim legislative committee by January 1, 2014. The bill ended the work group's service on the first day of the 2014 legislative session.

The Department of Corrections (Department) is responsible for providing medical care to over 14,600 inmates across the state, incarcerated at 14 prisons. State and federal laws have established that inmates are entitled to health care during incarceration comparable to the level of care provided in the community. This means that all types and levels of health care be provided in a clinically appropriate manner by properly credentialed professionals in settings equipped and designed for the delivery of health care. Health care includes medical, dental, and psychiatric/mental health services.

The work group met four times. They reviewed current practices, legal requirements, a PEW report on correctional health care costs, early parole (compassionate) leave, inmate transition health care planning, and Medicaid benefits. The group was unable to provide a report to an interim legislative committee by January 1, 2014. The final report includes some recommendations, but the group did not have sufficient time to develop legislative proposals. The final report is unspecific on actual or potential savings.

The work group recommends continuing after the 2014 legislative session to review legislative actions, if any, and provide opportunity for implementation, review, and adjustments. To do so would require legislation to reconstitute the work group.

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends acknowledging receipt of the report, with instructions. If language is included in a 2014 program change or other bill that extends the time period for the group to work, the work group should continue its endeavors, include more specific data and cost or savings information in the report, and determine if legislation should be developed for the 2015 legislative session.