



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Oregon Department of Corrections

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March 18, 2015

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Representative Jennifer Williamson, Co-Chair
900 Court St. NE, H-372
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Senator Jackie Winters
900 Court St. NE, S-301
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Senator Alan Bates
900 Court St. NE, S-211
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Representative Jeff Barker
900 Court St. NE, H-480
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Representative Gene Whisnant
900 Court St. NE, H-383
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Representative Chris Gorsek
900 Court St. NE, H-486
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Representative Wayne Krieger
900 Court St. NE, H-381
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Responses to questions asked during Ways and Means presentation on March 17, 2015

Dear Ways & Means Public Safety Subcommittee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information related to the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). Below are responses to the questions asked during our presentation to the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee on Tuesday, March 17, 2015.

1. What is encompassed in release planning, and how quickly are offenders seen and receive access to services post-release?

While our philosophy is that transition begins on day one in prison, our *concerted* release planning begins four-to-eight months prior to an individual's projected release date (PRD) from prison. With an eye on public safety concerns, DOC release counselors collaborate with releasing adults in custody, county community corrections agencies, the Parole Board, DOC's medical and mental health professionals, other state and federal agencies, and private providers to develop a plan designed to help individuals successfully reintegrate into their communities, meet basic needs such as housing, employment, connections to support systems, and to ensure continuity of medical and/or mental health care post-release. In general, DOC release planning includes the following components.

4-8 months to PRD

- DOC Release Counselors facilitate a "Pre-Release Class" at the facility. The class is offered each month to those approximately 6 months from their PRD, and the class is mandatory

for all adults in custody approaching release. This Pre-Release Class covers topics including how county of release is determined, transportation at release, how detainers (holds by other jurisdictions) may impact release location or supervision start dates, Oregon Trail Cards (trust account funds are loaded onto these cards at release), and strategies for success in working with Parole Officers (POs).

- Several primary releasing facilities offer a transition program for individuals with six or fewer months to release. Participation is voluntary and the program is designed to meet individual needs. The curriculum includes:
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Understanding Basic Money Management
 - Obtaining Credit and Loans
 - Working Effectively with POs
 - Your Family and Your Release
- For adults in custody with moderate-to-severe mental health needs, DOC's Behavioral Health Services Case Specialists prepare a brief summary containing mental health diagnosis, observed behavioral issues, as well as recommendations regarding continuing care in the community and possible pursuit of SSI and Presumptive Medicaid benefits.
- As part of an agreement between DOC, the Oregon Association of Community Corrections Directors, and the Association of Oregon County Mental Health Directors, additional efforts are made by all three entities to increase the successful re-entry of offenders with serious mental illness, as they return to their communities.

4-6 months to PRD

- DOC Release Counselors begin working with each adult in custody on his/her individual release plan. The Release Counselor meets individually with each releasing adult in custody to discuss his/her proposed plan for transition back to the community. Topics discussed include housing, release transportation, employment history and skills, potential conditions of supervision, and any other questions or concerns from the individual or his/her family.
- The Release Counselor writes a release plan, which is forwarded to the County of Residence. The PO then begins a field investigation to check on the appropriateness of proposed housing, as well as confirming they agree with the recommended conditions of supervision, and if not, they can submit additional recommendations as well. They are allotted 45 days to complete this investigation.

75 days and less to PRD

- A "reach-in" interview between the PO, adult in custody, and the Release Counselor can be completed to discuss conditions of supervision, expectations, and needs. Often times, the individual's family members will join the reach-in.
- At 30 days to release, if the releasing individual is 64 or younger, the Re-entry Benefits Coordinator meets with them to assist in applying for Medicaid.

Post-Release

- As stated yesterday, what happens post-release will vary by offender and by county; however, there is some structure.
 - Offenders are required to report to their Parole Officer (PO) within 24 hours or by the next business day.
 - During the first 30 to 60 days of supervision, POs utilize risk assessments, conduct interviews, and make home visits to determine what risks and needs will be prioritized.
 - Referrals to treatment, housing resources, employment resources, and other pro-social activities are provided during this time. The date of actual service delivery is dependent on the availability of resources in that particular community, and the order in which the PO and other community partners have determined an offender's needs should be addressed. Some counties have long waitlists for in-patient treatment or subsidized housing, which impacts how quickly an offender can be stabilized in the community.

2. What training is provided to inmate fire crews, and what is the process for the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to determine when to dispatch inmate fire crews?

DOC adults in custody who work on fire crews (in partnership with ODF) receive the same training as their civilian counterparts. This is a 40-hour course on wildland firefighter training and an introduction to wildland fire behavior. Depending on the type of work being performed, adults in custody may receive additional training.

ODF balances many factors, including cost, availability, and efficiency when dispatching fire crews. The department relies on contractors as partners in a broad network of resources available to wildfire-fighting agencies in the region. Contractors typically outnumber inmates on fires. At the peak of the Douglas complex fire outside Glendale in 2013, for instance, inmates accounted for about 240 of approximately 3,000 people assigned. This may have been the largest inmate fire deployment ever.

Particularly in busy seasons, contract crews may be re-assigned when a firefighting effort has passed its peak, and inmate crews can be tasked in these instances with completing the mop-up phase. It is noteworthy that, while contract crews are available to all states in the Northwest, Oregon inmate crews are restricted to use in Oregon. With other duties such as re-forestation and trail maintenance, inmates are available year-round, so can be dispatched to fires outside the regular fire season, as we have seen in the past two years. In this sense, the inmate crews provide assurance that some capacity remains on-hand throughout the year, and during high-demand periods when contract crews may be fully deployed in Oregon or other states.

3. Is there a waiting list for Behavioral Health Services beds?

I have confirmed there are no wait times for mental health beds in the DOC system. We typically operate with a 1-2 percent vacancy rate in the general population mental health units (Day Treatment and Mental Health Units), which is managed by our Office of Population

Management. For those mental health units for the more severely mentally ill, we do not wait-list people, but instead would simply look for the next highest level of care and place them there temporarily. With the number of units we have, we are able to ebb and flow as beds become available to accommodate everyone that needs care.

In addition, I would like to address one question from March 16 that I was remiss in responding to in our response document that was posted yesterday. The question was: How do the race demographics from county jail inmates compare to DOC's race demographics? This may be a difficult question to answer because there is not a centralized data sharing mechanism for all the county jails combined. However, we have reached out to the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association (OSSA) to see if there is any comprehensive data available. We will get back to the committee once we have connected with OSSA.

I would also like to correct an incorrect statistic we presented yesterday regarding Passover meals. We stated we are preparing 130 Passover meals (which come at a higher cost than our regular meals). We misspoke; this year we are scheduled to make 70 Passover meals.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to respond to your questions. I look forward to our continued testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Colette S. Peters
Director