



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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January 12, 2022

The Honorable Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
The Honorable Janeen Sollman, Co-Chair
Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Responses to questions related to recruitment

Dear Co-Chairpersons,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information related to the Oregon Department of Corrections' (DOC) overtime expenditures. This letter is being sent in response to the following questions about recruitment. Issues surrounding retention will be addressed in a future presentation.

It appears DOC has some policies in place to fast-track applications and onboard recruits yet fail to retain candidates and continue to lose staff.

- 1. Are these policies effectively being utilized? If not, why?**
- 2. Are there internal hurdles to recruitment and retention in DOC that need to be addressed?**

Recruiting, hiring, and retaining corrections professionals, especially correctional officers (COs) and nurses, is DOC's highest priority. Today, I would like to convey two items: what we know about this work and what we think will solve the current problems.

What we know

Locally and nationally, job seekers have their choice of positions and attracting good candidates is extremely competitive, especially for those interested in public safety. The timeline to hire a DOC employee takes too long and we lose employees to other organizations because of it. Why does it take 120 days to hire a CO? The following table outlines the application process for COs.

Steps	Driver	Length of Time	Solution
1. Applicants are required to apply online through Workday.			
2. Applicants are required to take the National Testing Network (NTN) Corrections Test.		Generally, four days to three weeks	As of November 13, 2021, DOC provides a free testing voucher code, saving the candidate \$41

<p>3. An initial Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS)/National Crime Information Center (NCIC) query is reviewed for disqualifying activity</p>	<p>Department of Public Safety Standards & Training (DPSST) requirement</p>	<p>One to five days</p>	<p>Dedicated employee to access LEDS</p>
<p>4. Qualifying candidates are placed in Electronic Statement of Personal History (eSOPH). See below for details.</p>	<p>DPSST requirement</p>	<p>Candidate is provided 14 days to complete eSOPH, along with two 7-day extensions, more if needed</p>	<p>Dedicated staff to enter candidate into eSOPH and a dedicated person to navigate the candidate through the process.</p>
<p>5. Prescreening: applicants are interviewed by the statewide interview panel and scored using a standardized rubric.</p>		<p>One day up to a month, recruitment holds virtual interviews monthly; institutions can interview more often if they like</p>	
<p>6. Background investigations are conducted focusing on credibility, communication skills, and applicant demeanor. Investigators have 20 working days to complete the investigation and submit it to hiring manager(s). Commencement of the background process is contingent on the applicant's submission of required items (see below for details).</p>	<p>DPSST requirement</p>		<p>Add additional background investigator</p>
<p>7. Background summary submitted to hiring managers for review</p>		<p>Generally, one day</p>	
<p>8. Conditional offer, required physical examination, and drug test</p>	<p>DPSST requirement</p>	<p>Dependent on doctor office schedule</p>	
<p>9. Pay equity</p>		<p>Generally, within a week and some Health Services pay equity is taking three to four weeks for nurses.</p>	<p>Add additional Classification/Compensation staff member</p>
<p>10. Start date: applicants who pass physical examination are given a start date and can provide two-week notice to their previous employer.</p>		<p>Two-week notice</p>	

eSOPH Requirements

Minimally Required Documents per OAR 259-008-0015:	Questionnaires:
Birth Certificate	Personal Information
Proof of Selective Service (if male)	Relatives (immediate)
DD214 (if military)	Education (high school/college)
Military records request (if military)	Residences- Landlord if rentals (last five years or 18 th birthday, whichever is shorter)
Driver's License/ID card	Employment-HR, Supervisor, 2 Coworkers (last five years or 18 th birthday, whichever is shorter)
Social Security Card	References (minimum of 8)
Last 4 or 2 months of paystubs	LE Agencies Applied To (Previously)
Official Sealed Transcripts (Sent to Salem office)	Military
High school/college diploma(s)	Legal
Name change (if applicable)	Drug Use
Citizenship Document (if applicable)	Motor Vehicles
Court/DHS/SCF Documents (if applicable)	Other
Professional License (if applicable)	

Once hired, new employees must attend several weeks of training before they are able to work independently inside an institution. The following outlines the onboarding process for security and nurses.

- Security onboarding:
 - COs initially attend two weeks of training at the facility, to prepare for Basic Corrections Course (BCC).
 - Following this initial onboarding, the CO spends six weeks in the BCC.
 - Once they return from BCC, they spend two weeks job shadowing senior staff, applying what they've learned in the previous eight weeks.
 - Following all this training (10 weeks,) the CO is available to work a shift on their own.
- Nurse onboarding:
 - Require six weeks of on-the-job training;
 - One week of correctional nurse orientation;
 - One week of BCC; and
 - Some nurses ask for more orientation time.

DOC is conducting hiring campaigns in-state and out-of-state and the success rate is low. Word of mouth has always been a huge draw for applications. In some small Oregon communities, entire families work for DOC. If retention suffers, so does the effectiveness of word of mouth.

Health Services faces additional obstacles, some of which include:

- There is a shortage of nursing staff nationally. DOC is also impacted by this lack of nurses. There are 1,000 nurse job openings in the Portland area and DOC is competing with hospitals, which can offer perks such as loan repayment, flexible schedules, and signing bonuses.
- Many DOC institutions are in rural Oregon and there is a shortage of nurses in those local communities. In the Willamette Valley, there are extensive nursing opportunities and applicants have their choice of employment.
- Nurses must be trained to provide healthcare in an institution for eight weeks prior to being allowed to work independently.
- DOC has one pay equity employee working on Health Services applicants. This slows down the hiring unless or until a second pay equity employee can assist with the backlog.
- The agency has an image and branding problem. Unfortunately, Hollywood perpetuates a view of COs as abusive guards and prisons as an employer of last resort. To help with this, DOC is:
 - Updating recruitment materials to reflect a changing corrections system. A system that focuses on reformation and the Oregon Way; and
 - Expanding the ways in which we interact with candidates through:
 - Use of third-party public relations/marketing; and
 - Other recruitment and networking platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, etc.

What we think - possibilities and opportunities

While we know certain things, we also suspect certain elements are influencing our challenges. Below are issues we believe to be impactful and are in the process of confirming.

- [HB 2936](#) (2021) requires psychological background checks for police and now, COs. This will hamper DOC's ability to make background checks quick or efficient.
- Several decades ago, persons 18 years old or older could apply to be a CO. That age was changed to 21 and is now a DPSST requirement. If the age requirement was reverted, the pool would greatly increase, and DOC would have the ability to recruit in high schools.
- Background investigation requirement could be modified to reduce the overall timeline. DOC could move to a LEADS/NCIC check only. This would reduce the timeline by half and DOC would only check the candidates background for criminal history.
- Another DPSST requirement is the NTN which screens the candidates. This could be removed and reduce the timeline further.
- Like many organizations facing hiring crises, DOC recognizes we do not have granular data on how well each hiring initiative is working. The department would like data on several factors regarding hiring: exit reasons, staffing levels, demographics, etc.

- DOC wants to determine what is working and what is not working, which requires facts and data. If DOC can develop a way to compile data, it will reveal information to allow DOC to be more focused in our approach.

Proposals

I have shared with you what we know and some of the things we think we know. As we begin to confirm these findings, we will develop proposals which will have an immediate impact. This is not months away, but instead we will begin to present concepts the next time we meet.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. If you wish to further discuss the information above, we would be happy to schedule a time to meet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Colette S. Peters
Director