

ANALYSIS

Item 43: Department of Corrections Substance Use Disorder Pilot

Analyst: John Terpening

Request: Acknowledge receipt of a report on the status of implementation of a substance use disorder pilot program, operation of two K-9 units, and wastewater testing in corrections institutions.

Analysis: The Department of Corrections (DOC) has submitted a second report pursuant to a budget note approved in the budget report for SB 5504 (2023). The first report was provided to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee during the 2024 session. However, many of the programs involved, including the substance use disorder pilot (SUD), K-9 units, and wastewater testing, were not yet operational, so a follow-up report was required.

The Department's report indicates that the necessary facility space for the SUD program at the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP) and the Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) have been identified and that a program manager is in place in both facilities. At OSP, four treatment counselors have been hired and 15 peer mentors trained. At SRCI, the 12 treatment counselor positions are unfilled despite recruitment efforts, although nine peer mentors have been trained. The Department is looking to expand recruitment efforts throughout the Ontario region where SRCI is located. DOC notes that a professional counselor can treat about 25-30 adults-in-custody, and that peer mentors will usually have about 10-12 adults-in-custody they are mentoring.

The K-9 program has two trained dogs, but has only had one fully staffed unit, as the Department had to re-recruit for a new second handler. The K-9's search four days a week, typically onsite for about 10 hours per day, and search all common areas, visiting areas, industrial work areas, dedicated work zones, and targeted cells. The units conduct different routes each day and are certified to detect various narcotics. The Department is still compiling data on total searches, positive searches, and types of contraband detected. As a small sample size example, DOC had 62 total searches, with 49 positive alerts among those, and had nine instances of contraband found among those 49 positive alerts.

The Department has started collecting weekly wastewater sampling at OSP, SRCI and Oregon State Correctional Institute (OSCI). The sampling, measuring nanograms per liter of collected waste, includes testing for the "parent" substance, such as methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, or fentanyl, but also the metabolized form of that substance. Samples are collected every fifteen minutes for one full day per week and then sent to an independent lab for testing. Results are sent to DOC typically within about 48 hours where it is being logged by facility and substance. This information will then be used to create a baseline and from there, what mitigating steps need to be taken. At this point, the Department has about five weeks of wastewater data, is still analyzing the findings, which can include both contraband substances and substances provided as part of an adult-in-custody's medically assisted treatment plans.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Emergency Board acknowledge receipt of the report, with instructions that the Department provide a follow-up status report with relevant data on the substance use disorder pilot programs, K-9 units, and wastewater testing to the Emergency Board in December 2024.

Request: Report on the substance use disorder pilot program as required by a budget note associated with Senate Bill 5504 (2023) by the Department of Corrections.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Discussion: In 2023, the Legislature approved a pilot program of two additional substance use disorder treatment programs, provided funding for a K-9 program for drug detection, and directed the Department of Corrections (DOC) to perform wastewater testing for controlled substances at correctional institutions. This is a report on the implementation of this program as required by the budget note.

DOC has been working on staffing these programs and providing appropriate spaces for both additional staff and programming. As is the case with many state agencies, it is difficult to fill positions in professions that are in high demand in both the public and private sector, including qualified mental health professionals and substance use disorder treatment counselors. DOC is actively recruiting for the treatment counselor positions however have not yet been able to fill them.

Similarly, finding highly trained drug detection dogs and handlers can be difficult as these teams are in demand by law enforcement throughout the country and in different sectors. DOC was able to find the canines and is looking for a second handler to complete the two teams.

DOC has installed equipment for wastewater testing at three institutions (Oregon State Penitentiary, Oregon State Correctional Institution, and Snake River Correctional Institution). Though this is still in early stages and collection at this point is setting a baseline for analysis later, this will be a valuable tool in determining efficacy of drug interdiction efforts and treatment programming at the institutions.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Department of Corrections
Headquarters
3723 Fairview Industrial Drive SE 200
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August 26, 2024

The Honorable Senator Rob Wagner, President of the Senate
The Honorable Representative Julie Fahey, Speaker of the House
Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: DOC Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Budget Note

Dear Senator Wagner and Representative Fahey,

Per the Budget Note contained in Senate Bill 5504 (2023), please accept this letter as an update on our implementation progress.

By way of background, the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) operates 12 institutions across the state housing over 12,000 adults in custody (AICs). Approximately 65% of AICs in DOC have a need for SUD treatment and 52% of AICs are classified as having a “severe” need for treatment, which is between three to four times the average presence in the community on a nation-wide basis.

During the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session, SUD was recognized as a chronic illness (HB 2257). For the 2023 Legislative Session, DOC submitted an SUD policy option package (POP) requesting additional staff positions and resources to expand SUD treatment and move treatment to a chronic disease model of care. While the POP was not funded in its entirety, the department was given staff positions to pilot two SUD treatment expansion programs and to implement a K-9 program for drug detection.

The 2023-2025 legislatively approved budget included the following budget note:

“The Department’s budget includes funding for a substance use disorder pilot program to operate at Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) and the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP), to provide treatment to adults in custody throughout their length of stay. Additionally, funding is included to operate K-9 units at OSP and Oregon State Corrections Institution (OSCI). The Department is directed to return to the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means during the 2024 session with an update on the implementation of the pilot program and the utilization of the K-9 units and baseline measures for the proliferation of drugs in institutions, including drug testing results and drug-related contraband misconducts.”

An expansion of SUD programming and peer support services are increasing the number of AICs who can access treatment. DOC anticipates that increased access to this chronic disease model of care, combined with stronger

drug interdiction efforts, will lead to a reduction in institutional substance abuse. We have made progress implementing these programs despite numerous challenges and we're excited to share the early results.

Agency Action

[SUD Treatment](#)

The necessary cubicles, offices, meeting spaces, and group counseling rooms for the staff and programs have been identified at both OSP and SRCI. OSP has one manager and four treatment counselors, who have in turn trained 15 AIC peer mentors. We are still actively recruiting to fill the rest of the treatment counselor positions. SRCI has hired its program manager, but the twelve treatment counselor positions remain unfilled, despite intense recruitment efforts. Though short-handed, nine peer mentors have been trained. In our efforts to hire these necessary treatment counselors in the Ontario region, we are expanding our recruiting efforts and working with DAS to develop our ability to hire those who still need some clinical hours to meet their certification requirements. A weekly report submitted by the program managers gathers treatment information that feeds into our database.

[Baseline Drug Proliferation Measure: K-9 Utilization Update](#)

Our two trained dogs (Sig and Trey, a black lab and yellow lab, respectively) arrived in April 2024. We currently have one fully staffed K-9 drug detection team (dog and handler) and are currently interviewing for a second handler position. We did have the second K-9 team staffed, but a mismatch between dog and handler developed, forcing the program to start a search for another handler. Both dogs are showing great skill in finding the controlled substances they've been trained to detect. Anecdotally, we have heard the presence of these K-9 teams has successfully acted as a deterrent and boosted the morale of staff who are concerned about AIC overdoses. Procedures and practices for documenting the results of search events are in place and flowing into our database successfully.

[Baseline Drug Proliferation Measure: Wastewater Testing](#)

We are collecting wastewater samples for analysis from OSP, OSCI, and SRCI. Installation of equipment was challenging at each institution due to their unique plumbing, combined with the structural and electrical requirements for the collection and storage equipment. The samples are automatically collected every fifteen minutes and refrigerated. After one week, all samples are shipped to an independent lab and analyzed for the presence of high-risk substances and a report is provided to DOC within 48 hours. This report flows into our database for analysis by DOC staff.

[Findings](#)

We are in the early stages of our results analysis for these three facilities, but already we can see a more robust view of drug use and the impacts of intervention strategies. We will be able to share this more detailed view during our September Legislative Days presentation. Our ultimate goal is to provide this information to policy makers, legislative staff, and DOC employees in a format that can be explored for use in crafting data-informed policies and programs.

Sincerely,



Michael Reese
Director