



**Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
Office of the Secretary**

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Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
Q00B - Division of Correction
Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee
Senator Sarah K. Elfreth, Chair
Friday, February 23, 2024

Appropriations Committee
Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee
Delegate Jazz Lewis, Chair
February 21, 2024

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PROGRAMS, TREATMENT &
RE-ENTRY SERVICES

Tablet Program

Issue: DPSCS should comment on challenges to guaranteeing each housing unit has the proper technology needed to consistently deploy tablets as guided in the Tablet Computer Program directive. DPSCS should comment on funding needs for making any necessary changes to housing units.

Response:

It is important to remember that our buildings are all more than 40 years old and were not designed to incorporate the technology we are currently utilizing. However, DPSCS meets regularly with the tablet vendor, ViaPath, and their Field Technicians to discuss issues the facilities encounter that require addressing to ensure the best connectivity possible for the tablets. The infrastructure and maintenance of the tablet system is the responsibility of the vendor, ViaPath, who continuously monitors the connectivity of all applications in order to troubleshoot any issues that arise. The vendor has found that the 3rd party streaming apps, such as Pluto TV, have the most inconsistent connectivity and is working to find other TV streaming applications to replace the current ones.

DPSCS has funding in the budget dedicated to the tablet program and infrastructure upgrades. Additionally, the Department of Labor has funds in their budget for correctional education, including the tablet program, and

intends on using funding to bolster WIFI connectivity within the facilities to support inmate education.

Reentry Passport

Issue: DPSCS should provide the committees with the most recent implementation schedule, including the number and share of formerly incarcerated individuals who are using the new portal.

Response:

The Department is still working through the details of the process for uploading all pertinent documents to the Reentry Passport System. There are still some security issues we are workshopping in order to finalize the policy and begin implementing this across our facilities. We hope to have the program actively running by Summer 2024.

New Performance Measures

Issue: DPSCS should comment on the best way to identify quantitative goals and projections related to reentry objectives, including identification cards but also extending to the other new objectives reported in the fiscal 2025 MFR.

Response:

The Department was proud to expand its reported data point on re-entry and rehabilitative programming in FY 23. A number of factors present challenges to quantitative goal setting for program evaluation and release document provision. The Department's population trends have shifted widely since the pandemic began, and while ADP is returning to pre pandemic levels, it may be years until release trends stabilize. However, the largest difficulty in setting proactive quantitative goals is the complexity of the total population for whom services may be delivered, or expected to be delivered to. As examined in the Department's programming and activities JCR as well as the annual identification document report, there are a number of legal and operational factors outside the Department's control that may impact engagement in a particular program or obtaining a particular document. Aspects of an individual's sentence, personal history, legal status, release mechanism and health may impact their engagement more than capacity for programming. The identification of the eligible population is very complex and often not clear until the year has ended, and for reasons beyond the Department's control, every individual may not be

served. With those considerations in mind, the Department will explore benchmarks in its upcoming JCR report and evaluate prior year performance to inform proposed changes to its MFR in FY 2024.

The Department remains committed to continuing its work to expand re-entry services to begin earlier during incarceration, and meet the needs of the underserved within our population.

The DPSCS Reentry Program has implemented a new data gathering enhancement to capture additional data in conjunction with vital records. The Department is exploring new measuring metrics pertaining to “social determinants of health” include referrals for: Employment, Transportation, Housing, Food and Clothing. Reentry coordinators will collaborate with Social Work and Medical/ Mental Health/ Substance Use Disorder vendors for additional referral information.

The reentry program has worked with four county jurisdictions to enter into MOU's for II's that agree to return to their local county detention centers prior to release. Final details are being vetted by DPSCS legal department.

Recommended Action:

- 1. DLS recommends adopting language restricting funds pending quarterly hiring and attrition reports.**

Response: DPSCS concurs with continuing these quarterly reports.