



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of the Secretary

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Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Overview - Q00

Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee
Senator Shelly Hettleman, Chair
February 5, 2026

Appropriations Committee
Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee
Delegate Gabriel Acevero, Chair
February 11, 2026

Assaults and Homicides in Correctional Facilities Remain Elevated

Issue: DPSCS should discuss the reasons for the increase in assault and homicide rates in correctional facilities and describe efforts that it is taking to reduce violence on staff and incarcerated individuals

Response: The changes in the security landscape within correctional facilities over the past 5 years have been marked by an increasing acuity of sentenced correctional population; there has been a 55% increase from FY 2019 to present in those incoming sentences for a death related offense. As a result, 84% of the sentenced population is now serving a sentence for a violent crime against another person. Over the past ten years, this proportion has increased by 10%. Nearly a third (31.08%) of sentenced inmates were serving a sentence for homicide or manslaughter in FY 2025, compared to a consistent level of nearly 24% of the total population from FY 2009 to FY15. Facilities that now house individuals for 5 years longer on average, are subject to limited plant capacity for expanded programming, additional protective custody, and have less flexibility for housing changes as individuals screening into higher security levels due to criminal history and institutional behavior.

Monthly Reduction in Violence meetings, chaired by Facility Leadership, and involving a multi-disciplinary team of both security and civilian employees. These meetings focus on conducting post-incident reviews in

an effort to identify areas of improvement in staffing, response protocols, and other preventative measures. These meetings are also used to review contraband recovery statistics (including weapons) and identify trends and patterns.

In response to the increases in homicides within facilities, the Department modified its policies surrounding immediate mortality review, involving the highest levels of correctional leadership, and incorporating interdisciplinary review to identify prevention opportunities across both security and inmate clinical services. These new reviews occur within 72 hours to allow senior leadership to take immediate corrective action to address any identified policy violations, or gaps in security. In January, under the authority of the new Deputy Secretary of Operations, the Secretary directed the reestablishment of DPSCS Security Audits, led by the Security Operations Unit. These audits will be focused on direct observation and review of security-related population management protocols, policies, and equipment. Development of an updated audit tool, and identification of the specific methodologies - to include direct observation of search procedures, equipment inventory and frequency of use, and policy review - is underway.

In FY 2026. DPSCS began a Body Worn Camera pilot program at Eastern Correctional Institution, Patuxent Institution, North Branch Correctional Institution, Maryland Correctional Institution for Women and Baltimore Central Booking and Intake Center. It is anticipated that full implementation at all DPSCS facilities will be completed by the end of March 2026. In addition, Secretary Scruggs directed the reinstatement of Crisis Deescalation Training (CDT) in March 2025. To date, 232 staff of various disciplines have received CDT training. Efforts are underway to expand training opportunities focusing on staff persons working in our highest risk units.

As always, the Department's long term response to improving safety and security in its facilities has included its continued efforts in hiring, to provide support and relief for our staff who serve the Department's 24/7 mission. Calendar year 2025 culminated in the Department's strongest hiring performance in three years, with 684 correctional officers hired.

Proposed Deficiency

Issue: DPSCS should discuss which facilities will receive emergency maintenance projects and how the funding will be prioritized.

Response: The Division of Capital Construction and Facilities Maintenance (DCCFM) is working with DGS and DBM Capital to ensure that projects already in the pipeline will not be factored into this funding. DCCFM is currently awaiting a comprehensive Building Assessment Unit report for all regions to identify which projects are critical and require funding from a dedicated purpose account.

At this time, the Department is working to compile a list of projects across all regions and facilities that need immediate attention. The scopes of work for these projects, along with a prioritization list, are being developed so once the budget passes, the Department can hit the ground running. While not all projects can be addressed immediately, those selected for funding will prioritize life safety issues and the replacement of systems nearing the end of their lifespan. Addressing these concerns will help reduce the number of emergencies and allow for a more effective allocation of State funding.

Recommended Actions

(1) DLS recommends adding budget bill language restricting \$250,000 in general funds pending a report on DPSCS's efforts to minimize the reliance on overtime, including overtime data for fiscal 2026 and 2027 year to date. The recommendation will appear in the Q00A – DPSCS – Administration analysis.

Response: The Department concurs with the recommended action.

(2) DLS recommends adding budget bill language restricting \$250,000 in general funds pending a report on DPSCS's oversight of the inmate health care contract, including its results from audits of staffing, pay rates, and medical examinations. The recommendation will appear in the Q00A – DPSCS – Administration analysis.

Response: The Department concurs with the recommended action.