

Chemical Dependency and Sex Offender Treatment Programs

The Department of Corrections can strengthen operations by capturing and analyzing data, and evaluating effectiveness of treatment programs offered to inmates at state-operated secure facilities.

Audit Findings

Montana State Prison (MSP) and Montana Women's Prison (MWP) are responsible for supervision of felony offenders, including providing various programs to address offender needs. Our audit focused on treatment programs at MSP and MWP.

To determine what was happening with regard to inmate treatment programs, we analyzed available data and made several observations. First, treatment waiting lists exist at both prisons due to a greater demand for treatment than current resources can address. Second, while prison treatment documentation exists, it is not consistent and does not provide a comprehensive record of treatment program involvement. However, we analyzed available treatment data and identified causal factors and outcomes both of which can affect an inmate's length of stay in a secure facility, including:

- court sentences
- inmate classification and behavior
- prison populations and the existence of waiting lists
- availability of professional resources and space
- Board of Pardons and Parole (BOPP) expectations
- availability of community-based programs

Both prisons have treatment tracking systems; however, neither facility compiles detailed analytical information, nor can existing treatment databases be considered a comprehensive inmate record. As a result, prison management does not have readily accessible data to obtain a clear understanding of the impacts of treatment programs. Also, neither facility has established a methodology for comprehensively analyzing operations to identify ways to potentially improve outcomes.

We conducted an Internet search to determine what performance measures are currently available or being used to evaluate effectiveness of treatment programs. Based on our review, recidivism is one measure of showing how well a correctional system is rehabilitating offenders. While DOC reports recidivism rates, there is no link to treatment programs, nor are there any formalized performance measures for treatment programs. DOC needs to strengthen its system for measuring and evaluating treatment program operations in order to maintain up-to-date data, identify issues on a timely basis, and modify operations to address issues and meet goals.

Audit Recommendations

Audit recommendations address resource needs, development of treatment tracking systems, analysis of program operations, implementation of performance measures, and evaluation of treatment program effectiveness.

Treatment programs for offenders, which are part of rehabilitation, are not limited to the two state-operated prisons. Treatment programs exist in contracted secure facilities, community-based programs, and through private providers. As such, our report discusses areas beyond prison where further study could provide useful information.