
https://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/dept-of-corrections-announces-restructuring-no-jobs-lost/article_ea08db0d-d3d0-5768-b953-1c37625b8fa2.html

Dept of Corrections announces restructuring; no jobs lost

Seaborn Larson

Jul 15, 2021



Brian Gootkin, director of the Montana Department of Corrections in his Helena office.

THOM BRIDGE, Independent Record

Seaborn Larson

The Montana Department of Corrections announced Thursday it will begin a system-wide restructuring that will take several months to complete.

Director Brian Gootkin said Thursday that no jobs will be eliminated in the restructuring, while new posts, including a chief financial officer, were repurposed from existing vacancies.

"We're hoping by late fall to have this all done," Gootkin said. "It's going to be fluid because we want those new people to have a say in how things work."

The department staffs 1,300 employees, oversees 17 state-contracted facilities, as well as four state-owned facilities, and has custody or supervision over more than 15,000 people. The restructuring plan was developed in consultation with Department of Corrections leadership, the Governor's Office and state Budget Director Kurt Alme, Gootkin said.



A view of an exercise area in low-side housing at the Montana State Prison.

Meagan Thompson, The Montana Standard

Gootkin said the reorganization is meant to sharpen the agency's focus on three components — public safety, rehabilitation and the department's accounting — and clarify the internal chain of command.

"There's accountability through the chain of command, so we have those chiefs who are responsible for those functions," Gootkin said. "And transparency; it shows the public what our main functions are and how we carry those out."

Hiring a chief financial officer will be one of the biggest pieces of the reorganization, he said. The department came into the 2021 legislative session with some financial issues, largely related to contract negotiations that had been handled by the director and deputy director. Gootkin declined to talk about the specifics of those issues but said the department caught them earlier this year and avoided any impact to the department's budget.

"(The department's) budget staff just hadn't been at the table," he said. "That's one thing we learned through the process and we'll absolutely be more efficient at in the future."

Adding a CFO will free up the department's central services chief, John Daugherty, to address the department's records management system, which has been under construction for several years now.

Additionally, the department is adding a public safety chief and rehabilitation and programs chief who will each oversee the bureaus and offices that previously reported directly to the deputy director and director.

"Change causes anxiety but we're trying to work with everyone to ease those concerns," he said. "This wasn't about individuals, it was about what's best for the department and, most importantly, what's best for the people we serve."

Seaborn Larson

State Reporter

Capitol bureau reporter Seaborn Larson covers justice-related areas of state government and organizations that wield power.
