



**Greg Gianforte, Governor | Brian M. Gootkin, Director**

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Sept. 11, 2023

Members of the Interim Budget Committee Section D,

The Montana Department of Corrections respectfully submits the following information in response to requests made by members of the Interim Budget Committee Section D in advance of its Sept. 13, 2023 meeting.

### **OMS Modernization Project**

The existing offender management system (OMS) is a home-grown, in-house system which presents a unique set of challenges:

- It requires specialized staff resources to maintain it. Like many state agencies, the department struggles in its Information Technology Bureau with high turnover and limited response to employment solicitations.
- The system requires ongoing vigilance to remain in compliance with ever-changing state and federal regulations.
- It uses outdated technology that is cumbersome to add or update modules and has no offline capabilities. These factors lead to redundancies and inefficiencies that create bottlenecks and barriers to efficient business operations. As such, the department has developed several workarounds and tools to compensate for the lacking functionality in OMIS.

The DOC had a third-party vendor complete a Needs Assessment Report on behalf of the department. They identified 115 specific challenges that exist within the current system – common themes include:

- Numerous manual processes that exist outside of the OMS system.
- Many items must be scanned and uploaded to OMIS rather than entered directly into the system – which makes searching and compiling data cumbersome and time-consuming.

Goals related to a new OMS include:

- A subscription-based system that allows the department to benefit from regular upgrades and continued development.
- Automation of processes and creation of business efficiencies.
- Easier access to data.

## Rental Voucher Program Update

- FY 2023 information on the rental voucher program
  - **Where the voucher program is being utilized based on the location of expenditures for each county**

- Totals for Fiscal Year '23

Location	Expended	Number of Offenders
Anaconda	\$1,150.00	1
Belgrade	\$1,000.00	1
Billings	\$37,497.00	54
Butte	\$8,400.00	12
Conrad	\$2,960.00	1
Deer Lodge	\$350.00	1
Great Falls	\$6,150.00	6
Helena	\$14,640.00	16
Missoula	\$1,647.96	4
Ronan	\$3,350.00	5
Shelby	\$2,400.00	1
Thompson Falls	\$1,650.00	1
Wolf Creek	\$1,500.00	1
Out of State	\$3,858.00	2

- **Strengths and weaknesses of the program**

- Strengths

- The program provides a funding source for safe, stable housing for individuals releasing from custody.
        - The average cost per rental voucher in fiscal year 2022 was less than \$500, which is a minimal investment for supporting a key component of successful community reintegration. This provides a savings to taxpayers if an offender would otherwise be incarcerated at a much great expense due to lack of transitional housing.
        - The program partners with Probation & Parole officers to ensure offenders are referred to other support services to meet court-ordered requirements and individual needs.
        - The program makes payments directly to landlords, decreasing the risk of funds being diverted by offenders.

- Weaknesses

- Per statute, the funds may only be used for rent. They cannot be used for other housing-related expenses, such as application fees and deposits. DOC recommends statutory revision to allow rental voucher funds to be used for housing-related expenses.

- Per statute, the funds may only be used for individuals releasing from prison on parole. It may not be used to assist offenders releasing from other facility types or onto other supervision statuses. DOC recommends statutory revision to allow all offenders on community supervision by DOC to be eligible for rental vouchers, no matter their supervision status.
  - **Programming to reduce recidivism offered in each of the facilities by the property owner accepting rental vouchers**
    - While some housing providers do provide on-site services, it is not a requirement to receive rental vouchers, and DOC does not monitor or track which services are provided.
- **Provide an update on the usage of the additional 50 MCCA beds authorized during the 2023 session.**
  - The facility contracts are completed and beds are being filled as they become available and transportation can be scheduled.

Facility	# of beds added
Elkhorn	7
PARC/PPRC	5
Nexus	3
GFPRC	10
GCRP	8
BPRC	10
Alpha	5

**Total** **53**

- **HB 693 Reporting from the 2021 session**
  - These reports have been provided to Legislative Fiscal Division staff for distribution to committee members.

**Evaluations conducted pursuant to 53-1-211(2)(b) and 53-1-211(5)**

These are located on the department’s website here:

<https://cor.mt.gov/ProgramsandServices/ProgramsandServicesPages/Correctional-Program-Checklist>

## Performance audits 20P-05 (Probation and Parole) and 22P-03 (Inmate Welfare Fund) Update

### Probation and Parole 20P-05

At the time the DOC provided its responses to legislative auditors (March 28, 2022), work had already started on many of the recommendations included in the legislative audit. That work has continued over the past year.

**Recommendation #1: We recommend the DOC identify means to simplify the assessment and reassessment process without decreasing effectiveness at predicting recidivism risk** – In an effort to simplify the assessment process, the department has retired the WRNA, allowing staff members to focus on the proper use and administration of the MORRA. In addition, to ensure the effective use of the MORRA, the department has re-certified all staff members who use the tool. In addition, the DOC has trained six new trainers to ensure staff members receive regular re-certification, and is scheduled to train 12 more trainers in the coming months. The DOC policy related to risk and needs assessments has undergone significant updates as explained in Recommendation #4 below.

### **Recommendation #2: We recommend the DOC:**

- **Decrease caseloads for nonspecialized officers below 70 offenders** – To affect this change, the department has implemented regional administrative caseloads in all six regions. This means, one PO per region has a high caseload of low-risk offenders so the rest of the POs in the office have smaller caseloads allowing them to focus more on the higher-risk offenders. Also, the addition of 10 Probation and Parole officers to various regions following the 2021 legislative session reduced caseloads.
- **Identify and implement options to decrease the administrative requirements of low-risk, nonviolent, and nonsexual offenders** – P&P no longer requires signatures on intervention hearings and has decreased hearing summaries by using the report ability. The implementation of the regional administrative caseloads is also a tool to decrease the administrative requirements for these types of offenders.
- **Decrease the amount of paper processes and signatures required outside of OMS** – The department received legislative funding during the 2023 session – and recently issued an RFP – for a new offender management system. Implementation of this system will be helpful in addressing this recommendation and ensuring more efficient processes. P&P leadership is also working with front-line supervisors to identify redundant forms and processes to make improvements to address this recommendation.

**Recommendation #3: We recommend the DOC develop a method in its caseload health dashboard to easily identify offenders who have exceeded average days expected by risk level since last offender and collateral contact** - This functionality was added to the dashboard in 2022 and is being used regularly by P&P officers and supervisors.

**Recommendation #4: We recommend the DOC strengthen the inclusion of offender risk assessment results in officer case management strategies by:**

- **Revising current case plan, policy, and procedures** - DOC policy for Risk Assessments and Case Plans is being updated to require that, agency-wide, case plans be developed from the risk assessment results. In conjunction with the DOC policy revision, the Probation and Parole Case Management procedure is under revision with the assistance of the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI). A work group of Probation and Parole officers, supervisors, and Probation and Parole leadership have been meeting since April 2023 to revise contact standards and caseload management requirements for staff.
- **Establishing quality assurance methods to monitor officer performance** - DOC policy for Risk Assessments and Case Plans revision includes establishment of a quality assurance process and tools for all supervisors to use to monitor officer performance related to risk assessments and development of case plans.
- **Providing annual refresher training to officers** – All staff members who use the MORRA have been re-certified in its usage. In addition, DOC policy for Risk Assessments and Case Plans is being revised to establish a requirement that staff must attend refresher/booster training on MORRA every three years.
- **Evaluating and validating the risk assessments for Montana’s offender population and communicate results to stakeholders** – With the retirement of the WRNA as described above, the DOC can better establish interrelated reliability for the MORRA which is a necessary first step to conducting a validation study.

**Recommendation #5 We recommend the Department of Corrections develop processes for ongoing maintenance and evaluation of the MIIG, including making necessary revisions and targeting training efforts** – DOC has evaluated the MIIG and made necessary revisions, including simplifying the tool for staff to clearly understand and apply the tool to affect offender behavior change. Training on the updated MIIG has been completed across the Probation and Parole Bureau as of Sept. 6, 2023.

**Recommendation #6 We recommend the Department of Corrections review and update OMIS to meet community supervision data needs, establish an effective OMIS change request process, develop a road map to embed user workflows, and evaluate long-term offender management information system needs for the department** - See updates provided on page 1 of this document regarding the OMS Modernization Project. Specific to Probation and Parole practices, functionality has been identified in the Needs Assessment Report that will make significant improvements for Probation and Parole to address this recommendation.

### Inmate Welfare Fund 22P-03

#### **Recommendation A: The DOC should add clarity on what items and activities qualify as appropriate expenses.**

- Policy has been updated to clarify what items and activities qualify as appropriate expenses. An additional internal control has been implemented that requires CFO review of annual IWF budgets and large dollar purchases to ensure that expenses are allowable and appropriate.

#### **Recommendation B: Remove items for indigent inmates from allowable IWF expenses.**

- Items for indigent inmates are no longer an allowable IWF expense and are no longer being charged to the fund. This resulted in additional expense to the department's general fund budget; however, the legislature approved an increased appropriation to accommodate this expense as part of HB2.

#### **Recommendation C: Reflect current practice and expectations regarding the processing of requests for funds.**

- Policy has been updated and training provided to staff regarding the processing of requests for IWF funds. This has helped to ensure that departmental practice is consistent with policy, and that the process for requesting funds is consistent across the department.

#### **Status of low side housing replacement, anticipated number of beds**

In coordination with DOA's Architecture & Engineering Division, the DOC has selected architecture firm DLR and general contractor Sletten Construction to complete this project. The HB 817 projects are on schedule to be contracted by the Sept. 30, 2023 deadline. To help ensure the projects remain on track throughout the process, an owner's representative will be assigned. The department expects the development of a full timeline for the work to be completed by December 2023.

Because the DOC, A&E, DLR, and Sletten have had only preliminary discussions of the projects, we are unable to provide a total number of beds that will be added upon completion of the construction and renovation. It is important to note that the projects include the replacement of units A, B, and C and a renovation of Unit D. Neither of these projects were proposed in a manner intended to significantly increase the number of beds on the Low Side of the MSP campus, but rather to maintain our existing capacity.

#### **Status of HB 817 appropriations to obtain 120 secure facility beds**

The RFP for these beds was issued last week and will close on Sept. 28.

Please let us know if you have any questions related to these responses.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Gootkin, Director