



The Illinois Department of Corrections

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Regular Board Meeting of the Adult Advisory Board

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

9:30 am to 11:30 am

Location: Via Webex/Teleconference

<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=mdff42b9de366d7460575c4af8e2750a3>

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Committee Member	Present	Telephone	Absent	
Illinois Department of Corrections Staff:				
Acting Director – Latoya Hughes	X			
Assistant Director – Alyssa Williams		X		
Confidential Assistant to Director – Shelith Hansbro	X			
Chief of Parole – Jason Garnett		X		
Chief of Programs – Jennifer Parrack			X	
Chief Inspector – Areda Johnson	X			
Chief of Operations – Justin Hammers			X	
Deputy Region 1 – Christine Brannon-Dortch			X	
Deputy Director Region 2 – Angela Locke			X	
Deputy Director Region 3 – Kim Smith	X			
Chief of Administration – Jared Brunk				
Policy Advisor to Director – Sofia Manuel		X		
Public Information Officer – Naomi Puzzello			X	

Mission: To serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change for those in custody, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization.

Warden – DeeDee Brookhart	X			
Planning & Research – Sharon Shipinski		X		
Acting Chief of Women and Family Services – Margarita Mendoza		X		
Kelly – AA at law				
Board Members:				
David Olson – Loyola University	X			
Executive Director of John Howard Association – Jenny Vollen-Katz		X		
Nneka Jones-Tapia – Executive Director of Chicago Beyond	X			
Malon Chamberlain – Heartland Alliance			X	
Sadie Joseph – North Lawndale Employment Network			X	
Richard Watson – Sheriff, St. Clair County	X			
Xavier Williams			X	
Guest:				
Gwyn Troyer – John Howard, Member of the Public		X		

Chairperson Remarks:

Director’s Remarks:

Acting Director Hughes thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and welcomed everyone who was in attendance. Acting Director Hughes wants to highlight some of the things going on at Lawrence Correctional Center and is very excited about some of the things that are happening with the grievance process under the leadership of Chief Johnson. Acting Director Hughes also wants to discuss CGL reports, facility master plan, as well as programming and IDOC staffing levels. Acting Director Hughes believes that all these items are intertwined, and hearing about all of these factors will give a good insight to the Department of Corrections. Acting Director Hughes introduces Warden Dee Dee Brookhart and gives her the chance to speak.

Executive Staff Updates:

Warden Brookhart: announces that Lawrence Correctional Center just received their ACA accreditation. A couple of years ago Lawrence converted from medium security to maximum security which has caused a lot of physical changes to take place at the facility to allow that to happen. An incentivized correctional system has been implemented at Lawrence, where the Individuals in Custody come to the facility through the restrictive housing process. From there they step down to a general population housing unit where they will have the opportunity to participate in programming. This will allow them to move through the system that the facility has in place based on pro social behavior and program participation. There are two housing units where they have more opportunity for out of cell time, programming, jobs, and academic and vocational pursuits. Every housing unit has a different number of privileges that they have available to them, and it is entirely based on their commitment to changing and making positive growth for themselves and working with our staff. This has really been a great thing because the individuals enjoy their less restrictive environments, as many of them have spent their time in a facility where they never had a job or the opportunity to participate in programming or academics, and now they are getting those chances and it’s making them want more. They are doing everything they can to make more opportunities available to them. Lawrence utilizes the multi-disciplinary team approach; all their housing units are run through unit management. This allows for security and

programming staff to work together and bring those programs to fruition and ensure that the Individuals in Custody needs are being met. Lawrence hosts a multitude of different levels of security of Individuals in Custody: General population, maximum security, restrictive housing, administrative detention, and protective custody. Lawrence also still has a handful of medium security individuals that can go for outside clearance and things that their max individuals wouldn't be able to do. This has helped Lawrence be safer, more secure, and reduce the number of violent assaults that they've had, along with the amount of little day-to-day problems that facilities have.

Nneka Jones-Tapia: Inquired how many Individuals in Custody are currently housed there and what staffing vacancies they have.

Warden Brookhart: It was 761 or 762 as of yesterday, but I haven't checked this morning, and don't believe we got any in overnight. We are about 120 or so officers short.

David Olson: Inquired about if it's a unique challenge for Lawrence to get staff being far away from the highway and larger communities.

Warden Brookhart: I don't know of a facility that's just flush with staff, even with facilities that are located closer to more populated areas. Lawrence got lucky and had a huge screening back in June and had a lot of people interested; however, I don't know if that was just timing, or if people were just ready to finally join the workforce. Things have changed since the pandemic, and I don't think it's anything in particular to Corrections, but is a nationwide issue.

New Business:

Chief Johnson – Grievance pilot:

September 1st, we rolled out a pilot for the grievance process at five facilities: Decatur, Dixon, Fox Valley ATC, Menard, and Southwestern. The purpose of this pilot was to improve the grievance process that we currently have by improving our overall response time by our counselors and grievance officers. July and August were spent going around to staff and Individuals in Custody at the five facilities that were part of the pilot explaining the changes and answering any questions they had, and they are spoken to on a bi-weekly basis. Counselors have only thirty days to respond to an Individual in Custody's grievance to improve response time. However, we've built in a system in which we can request an extension of time to respond to those grievances.

David Olson: Inquired about the formal grievance process and how it interfaces with the more informal ones, where Individuals in Custody may contact the John Howard Association with issues and concerns. Is there some kind of connection between the two?

Chief Johnson: The hope with the improvements that we're attempting to make with the grievance process is to resolve those issues, so it doesn't get to the point of us having to have outside involvement. This pilot is really pushing more involvement from our counselors and grievance staff and getting those thorough responses back to the individual and resolve the grievance.

Richard Watson: Inquired if the grievance is computerized or a physical form, if not, he would like to get an electronic system up and running.

Chief Johnson: It's still a physical form, but we are trying to move towards the digital, but in the interim, we are working with what we currently have. We have the grievance boxes where the Individuals in

Custodies can submit them. We've made some tweaks to how big the slots are on the grievance boxes at our pilot facilities to ensure that grievances don't come up missing.

Nneka Jones-Tapia: Inquired if Chief Johnson has met with any Individuals in Custody to hear what they have to say about the pilot for the grievance process?

Chief Johnson: Stated that she did initially meet with them to explain the pilot program and to have any inquiries regarding the grievance process ready as she would be back in October to have those discussions.

Warden Brookhart: Every week they try and take their administrative team on tour to a housing unit and go door to door. While this is helpful, but the bigger help is that Lawrence went to management units, which means if taking care of their units the way that they should be, nobody really needs to talk to them when they do their administrative walkthrough.

David Olson: Inquired if the Department knows how many grievances have been resolved, filed, tracked and if it would be possible to look at what happens when you implement these changes and if there is a drop or increase in grievances?

Director Hughes: We don't always know, but over the last ten years or so we have started doing that. Chief Johnson tracks the grievances, how many are at each facility, the topics of the grievances so she can see what's happening at the facilities in her pilot. Yes, it is possible, however, we are still in the paper process, and the goal is to get us to an electronic process to check things in real time.

Jenny Vollen-Katz: Inquired if there's any connection going on between the constituent services reporting in concerns coming in and matching that with the data coming in through the grievance system to help spot trends or changes?

Chief Johnson: Yes, she is working to create a way in which her unit and constituent services can review grievances coming in. More likely than not, we are receiving the same complaint from constituent services, my office, GOCA, and the Director's Office, so she is matches those with grievances that may be coming in. She is hoping it'll take six to nine months to run the pilot. The pilot was received well by the Individuals in Custody because they were happy to be part of the conversation.

There are some new positions that are in the works. Five Facility Oversight Managers that would work directly under Chief Johnson to allow for better tracking of trends and ensure grievances are being responded to in a cohesive, uniform, and timely manner. Two of these have been filled, with three still open. There is a statewide advocacy liaison position that is meant to work alongside our constituent services and be the director contact for all our advocacy groups. We have also been approved by the Clinical Service Commission to be able to have a grievance officer at all our facilities. These positions will be solely responsible for responding to grievances, so they would no longer have the responsibilities of counselors.

Assistant Director Williams – Programs:

Some of our facilities have staffing deficits and we are rotating programs to ensure the Individuals in Custody are still able to go to their educational programming, counseling, and mental health sessions, medical, etc. We are continuing our educational programming through Lakeland, Danville area Community College and Kaskaskia. We are still engaged with our university partners as well:

Northwestern, Northpark, Northeastern, Eastern, DePaul, Adler, Augustana, and Lewis, which are our main University partners in various facilities. Some are offering bachelor's level programming and one is offering a masters level program.

Vocationally, we are really struggling to find instructors for our auto tech programs. Lakeland and the Department are both struggling to find instructors for those programs, so we are trying to possibly find a replacement for it. If we can't find instructors, we need to examine different options to ensure they're getting as many programs as possible. Our two main substance abuse providers are Westcare and Geo, and we had a provider down in Big Muddy, but they can no longer provide services due to staffing issues. We have tried to connect with DHS and Super when it comes to finding providers. Super is our substance use disorder guru, subsection of DHS, so we are looking to them for guidance to ensure we're meeting industry standards to make sure funding mechanisms are coming through.

We're looking at MAT pilots so we can do our Medical Assisted Treatment for our opioid use disorders. Our Chief psychiatrist, Dr. Puga, is working with our re-entry team, as well as others to start implementing those MAT programs. It's a slow start, but we will work to reach our federal mandate at providing that service to individuals while they're in custody as well as after release.

We are struggling with some of our contractual providers to find staffing for Westcare and Geo. In relative to our clinical programming continues to roll out our fantastic programs. There are two programs that are on a national stage now that were started in Illinois. Start Now is one of the programs, which is typically dialectical behavior based that's working with some of our behaviorally challenged individuals and it seems to be very successful. We are in the process of going to other states to train their staff on how to roll out this program.

We are trying to strengthen our relationship with DHS to assist in court recognized parenting programs. While we have our own parenting programs, the courts do not always want to recognize parenting programs. We're continuing to explore domestic violence programs, which we've had for a while, but some of them are extremely expensive to roll out.

David Olson: Inquired about court approved parenting classes and if individuals are sentenced with orders by the court to participate in that?

Deputy Director Smith: For the women's division it is required on the DCFS side of things that we provide parenting classes and that we have begun those classes within the last couple of weeks, but we are working with DCFS on this matter.

Director Hughes: One of the big things we are trying to accomplish is continuing to work with DCFS, and to ensure that the women in our custody get credit for everything they can possibly get credit for. We are continuing to try and have those collaborative conversations with DCFS and what that looks like for them.

Sophia Manuel: Chief Mendoza and the women's division, and some of the men's facilities have already been doing a lot in partnering with DCFS. We are trying to find a way to make it more systematic, as well as hopefully get an agreement in writing. The Illinois Commission on Children of Incarcerated Parents started up this month, and we are hoping for some good processes and commitments will come out of that as well.

David Olson: Inquired if there is a similar issue with getting clinical staff at Joliet Treatment Center like there is with finding treatment providers? Is the issue that state positions are easy to fill in those environments, and the other providers are struggling, or is it more of a broad issue? The idea of Sheridan and SWIC being where they're at, being approximate to a more urban area where you can get more clinical staff.

Director Hughes: The staff at Joliet Inpatient Treatment Center are Correctional Officers, a lot of the other staff members that provide treatment for the population are DHS with the joint collaboration. Our mental health team certainly evaluates who needs that inpatient level of care and goes through that process to ensure that who needs to be there is there. JTC is another one of our facilities that is struggling with staff, and they encompass a lot of our mental health population as well.

Acting Assistant Director William: It's complicated sometimes, and it depends on the level of staff. Counselors, Officers, and up come from inside, many Mental Health Professionals have some through internships and they tend to stay on the state side, Wexford and some of our other providers are challenged on many different levels.

Nneka Jones-Tapia: Inquired if Assistant Director Williams has an update on the RFP for the healthcare services.

Acting Assistant Director Williams: That the evaluation process is finalizing through all the different partners, and she is looking for an award to be made within the next couple of weeks.

Chief Brunk – RFP Process:

RFP stands for request for proposal. For this process, we tell the vendors what we want the result to be and give them general parameters on how they will get to that result, but we don't tell them what they must do step-by-step. After they have scored the RFP it comes to the finance department and they look at the price from both sides, then they come together and identify how many points were awarded to each vendor based on their responses and the winning vendor is based on the total number of points given. After they have scored the RFP it comes to the finance department and they look at the price from both sides, then they come together and identify how many points were awarded to each vendor based on their responses and the winning vendor is based on the total number of points given. The RFP process typically takes around four to six months.

Director Hughes: Inquired after there has been an award, is there is still the contractual process that must take place.

Chief Brunk: Yes, with an RFP, we only provide those guide rails and this solicitation after an award is made, we sit down with the vendor and go line by line to negotiate that contract to finalize the agreement. If for some reason the vendor that we had

David Olson: Inquired what the projected timeline would be.

Chief Brunk states that our projected timeline takes us to March 29th, 2024, but that is not solely for the award, but for the intent to be posted and then the contract negotiation for the terms and conditions to be successfully negotiated and executed. Our current projection is about six-months from award to contract being executed. If we can execute a contract prior to that end date of March 29th, we will terminate the current emergency extension with Wexford and go to the new contract.

Chief Brunk – Facility Master Plan:

We issued a solicitation about two and a half years ago, and this past year we received the final report for master plan and is posted on our website. The FY24 Budget has increased from 4.9 million dollars to 7.5 million dollars, which is a direct result from this master plan. There were several deliverables included within the solicitation, most notable looking at the deferred maintenance of the department and helping us strategize how we should move forward. Our population has decreased almost 20,000 individuals over the last ten years, but during that same time frame, we had some litigation that have put a spotlight on the needs of the population and how the infrastructures were built. IDOC has a deferred maintenance of 2.5 billion dollars, that is the largest amount of deferred maintenance of any state agency under the Governor’s purview. Menard, Stateville, Logan, Dixon, and Pontiac have the highest totals of deferred maintenance, and Stateville has over a quarter of 1 billion dollars, and both Pontiac and Dixon are closely approaching that same total.

Newly designed housing units can consider better lines of site, which would then require less staff and staff incentives due to operations, and it would bring about rehabilitative housing units and structures within the department. We currently have approximately 100 active capital projects which encompass nearly 385 million of the 2.5 billion dollars. Some of the projects consist of new plumbing and ADA modifications for the south cell house at Menard, new locking control system at Big Muddy, and Pontiac has multiple roofing projects that are taking place, and Pinckneyville has new dietary floors. Even though we have this master plan, there is still a committed effort on the part of the state to address the capital projects so that we don’t continue to slide further into the degradation of our physical facilities.

There is also a projected bed gap with being approximately 1,200 beds short in the year 2027; however, our security levels of maximum and medium are projected to have a surplus at that time. This is something we are currently working on and discussing internally considering. CGL’s recommended that we address the deferred maintenance backlogs. For years, facilities have been given a small line from its operating budget of about 4.9 million dollars in addition to whatever the facilities can scrape up internally to do in our repair and maintenance projects. These projects are generally under the \$100,000 threshold, but that threshold is put in place to make sure we feel confident that the scope isn’t too big and that we can successfully procure it.

We have had a lot of internal conversations about the deferred maintenance that needs to be completed and are taking the information that we have been given and considering in conjunction with other information and expertise personnel on the inside as well.

Jenny Vollen-Katz: Inquired if the department broadens the constituency of people involved in the conversations when it comes to looking at the report.

Director Hughes: Yes, we always ensure that we’re looping in all stakeholders once final decisions have been made.

Shelith Hansbro: Wanted to remind everyone that the Board has the same training obligations that state employees have and must have them completed by December 31st.

Board Discussion/Inquiries:

Jenny Vollen-Katz: Inquired if they could get staffing level updates prior to the next meeting since Chief Hammers was unable to attend this meeting.

Public Comments:

None

Adjournment:

David Olson made a motion to adjourn, Sheriff Watson second that motion, meeting adjourned.