



## Correctional Substance Abuse Programs, While Few, Are Reasonably Efficient and Effective

### *at a glance*

Over half of inmates in Florida prisons need substance abuse treatment. The department provides three types of treatment programs; the cost and length of stay of the programs increase with the intensity of treatment. The lengths of stay are consistent with national models, and the costs appear reasonable. The programs, which are primarily grant funded, are in compliance with state and federal contract requirements. Due to differences in inmate treatment needs, there does not appear to be any benefit to merging the programs into one.

Approximately 75% of inmates who are assigned to a treatment program complete it. Program completers recidivate 3% less than those who need treatment but do not participate in a program. The gap between treatment need and availability is widening; in Fiscal Year 2003-04, the department served 4,715 inmates in its primary treatment programs and 14,350 inmates identified as needing treatment were released without it.

### Scope

Chapter 2004-269, *Laws of Florida*, directs OPPAGA to review the Department of Corrections' substance abuse and drug treatment programs to determine the efficiency

and effectiveness of these programs; identify all types and levels of these programs; and explore the possibility of merging the individual programs for cost effectiveness.

### Background

According to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, over 80% of inmates held in states' prisons reported past drug use and on average, one out of six criminal offenders reported committing a crime to obtain money for drugs. Without effective treatment, a large portion of the inmate population is likely to revert to drug use and commit more crimes after release from prison.

In Florida, the Department of Corrections' substance abuse treatment program, along with academic and vocational education programs, aims to rehabilitate offenders and reduce inmate idleness in prison. Since most prison inmates eventually will be released, substance abuse programs help prepare offenders for their return to society and enhance public safety by reducing recidivism.

Since 2000, due to major state revenue shortfalls, correctional substance abuse program funding has been reduced by nearly 47% and about 71% of substance abuse program sites have been eliminated. This was a reduction from 4,554 to 1,880 treatment slots.

For Fiscal Year 2004-05, the Legislature appropriated approximately \$7.8 million and 38 FTEs to the department's substance abuse program.<sup>1</sup> General revenue funds account for \$2.8 million and grants and donations trust fund covers \$5 million of the budget. The programs are largely provided by private vendors.

The trust funds are derived from federal grants. For Fiscal Year 2004-05, the department received nearly \$3 million from the federal Byrne State and Local Law Enforcement Formula Grant to operate correctional substance abuse programs.<sup>2</sup> The department also received another federal award of approximately \$1 million to operate a specialized Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program at Broward and Zephyrhills correctional institutions for inmates who need both substance abuse and mental health treatment.<sup>3</sup>

This review describes the department's substance abuse programs, discusses their efficiency and effectiveness, and explores whether the programs should be merged for cost effectiveness.

## Substance Abuse Services

### *All inmates are screened to determine if they need substance abuse treatment*

The department screens all inmates during the admission process to determine their substance abuse treatment needs. Substance abuse includes both drugs and alcohol. Over half of the inmates have substance abuse issues. The screening process assigns a score based on the severity of the inmate's addiction, previous treatment history, criminal history,

<sup>1</sup> The department contracts for most substance abuse programs; FTE are central office staff that monitor contracts and staff that operate the treatment programs at the two dual diagnosis institutions at Broward and Zephyrhills.

<sup>2</sup> The Byrne grant and the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program grant are administered in Florida by the Department of Law Enforcement.

<sup>3</sup> The Legislature authorized the department spending authority that was \$1 million higher than the actual federal grants received.

and the sentencing authority's treatment recommendations. The screening score is then used with the inmate's forecast release date to calculate the inmate's statewide priority ranking in relation to every other inmate who needs substance abuse services.<sup>4</sup> Department staff place inmates in treatment programs as slots become available. Inmates who are placed in programs are required to participate.<sup>5,6</sup>

### *The department provides three types of substance abuse treatment programs*

The department offers three types of substance abuse treatment programs; two in prisons and one at a work release center.<sup>7</sup> The details of these programs for Fiscal Year 2004-05 are shown in Exhibit 1.

- Residential Therapeutic Community. This is a residential program separately housed within the institution. Inmates live in the same dormitory, segregated from the compound's general population. Services are provided 24 hours a day, seven days per week to address problems of chemical abuse and patterns of criminal thinking. Two locations, Broward and Zephyrhills correctional institutions, serve dual diagnosis inmates that have significant mental health disorders in addition to substance abuse treatment needs. Participants stay 9 to 12 months, depending on the individual's progress in the program. As it is specified in the contract, the counselor to inmate ratio is

<sup>4</sup> Inmates with life or death sentences are excluded from getting a substance abuse ranking.

<sup>5</sup> Rule 33-507.001(2), F.A.C.

<sup>6</sup> According to department staff, most inmates do not object to mandatory participation in the program and the threat of disciplinary reports if they refuse is adequate for most to comply. Inmates who refuse treatment are subject to disciplinary actions which may include confinement and loss of gaintime. Inmates who refuse treatment also lose their eligibility for work release.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the treatment programs, a voluntary substance abuse prevention program is provided to 15 female youthful offender inmates at a time at Lowell Boot Camp. Section 958.045, F.S., requires that youthful offender basic training programs include substance abuse counseling as part of their educational curriculum. Also, self-help groups like Alcoholic Anonymous and Narcotic Anonymous are available through community volunteer participation in nearly all state prisons and work camps.

1:15. The residential therapeutic community programs served 2,042 inmates in Fiscal Year 2003-04.

- Intensive Outpatient Program. This program is classified as “outpatient” because the participants are not housed together in one dorm. The outpatient program provides substance abuse treatment services to inmates while they live and work within the general population at the institution.

Program activities include individual and group counseling, for half a day at least four days per week; inmates spend the remainder of their day performing institutional work assignments or attending educational programs. The length of stay is usually four to six months. The counselor to inmate ratio is 1:20. The intensive outpatient programs served 2,374 inmates in Fiscal Year 2003-04.

**Exhibit 1  
Twenty-Five of the Department’s 123 Correctional Facilities Provide Substance Abuse Treatment Programs**

Type of Program	Sites	Population	Beds	Name of Provider
Residential Therapeutic Communities	Broward CI	Adult Females, Dual Diagnosis	45	Department of Corrections
	Gainesville CI	Adult Males	68	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Jefferson CI	Adult Males	68	Florida Addiction Corrections Treatment Services (FACTS)
	Reality House	Adult Males	85	ACT, Corp.
	Walton CI	Adult Males	68	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Zephyrhills CI	Adult Males, Dual Diagnosis	135	Department of Corrections
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>469</b>	
Intensive Outpatient Programs	Avon Park CI	Adult Males	90	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Cross City CI	Adult Males	90	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Dade CI	Adult Males	70	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Everglades CI	Adult Males	90	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Gulf Annex	Adult Males	70	Florida Addiction Corrections Treatment Services (FACTS)
	Hernando CI	Adult and Youthful Offender Females	70	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Lancaster CI	Youthful Offender Males	70	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Lawtey CI	Adult Males	70	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Madison CI	Adult Males	50	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Marion CI	Adult Males	90	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Mayo CI	Adult Males	90	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Okaloosa CI	Adult Males	70	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Okeechobee CI	Adult Males	90	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Sumter CI	Adult Males	70	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Taylor CI	Adult Males	70	CiviGenics, Inc.
	Wakulla CI	Adult Males	50	Florida Addiction Corrections Treatment Services (FACTS)
	Walton WC	Adult Males	20	Unlimited Path, Inc.
	Washington CI	Adult Males	70	Florida Addiction Corrections Treatment Services (FACTS)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>1,290</b>	
Work Release Center	Hollywood WRC	Adult Females	121	CiviGenics, Inc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>121</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>1,880</b>	

Source: Department of Corrections, count as of July 1, 2004.

As part of both residential and outpatient programs, inmates participate in pre- and post-treatment. Pre-treatment is a weekly discussion group intended to prepare and motivate inmates to wholeheartedly participate in the treatment programs. Inmates who have successfully completed their programs and are housed at an institution that has substance abuse treatment are required to participate in the post-treatment or alumni group. Participation in these groups reinforces the gains made in treatment and provides opportunities for inmates to practice the behaviors and principles they have learned, thus enabling them to maintain a lifestyle abstinent from drug and alcohol use.<sup>8</sup> There is considerable research demonstrating that participation in aftercare programs following completion of substance abuse treatment significantly reduces relapse and recidivism, and improves long-term outcomes.

- Work Release Treatment. This modified residential therapeutic community program is provided at the women's Hollywood Work Release Center. It is designed for inmates that are within 12 to 18 months of release and eligible for work release. It offers a continuum of substance abuse services, educational and vocational programs, and re-entry skills.

The program has two phases: Phase I is the treatment component, lasting 6 to 12 months, while inmates live at the work release center; Phase II is the work release component, during which inmates participate in the department's work release program during the day and receive program services in the evening and on weekends. The work release treatment program served 213 inmates in Fiscal Year 2003-04.

## Program Efficiency ———

To assess the efficiency of the treatment programs, we looked at program costs, length of stay, and contract compliance. We determined that the programs are operating reasonably efficiently.

### *Costs vary by program type, but appear reasonable*

As shown in Exhibit 2, the cost of the programs increases with the intensity of treatments, which is reasonable. The department contracts with four vendors for these services, and the costs among vendors for comparable services are similar. While it is difficult to compare the costs for substance abuse treatment services, as programs differ in content and requirement, we determined that the costs of the department's programs were generally in line with those of similar programs. Also, department staff reported that they take several steps to ensure that these costs are reasonable. Contracts for the substance abuse programs are competitively bid. Staff compare their costs to similar services provided by the Florida Department of Children and Families and track program costs over time, across the state, and among contractors to help ensure that these charges are reasonable.

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<sup>8</sup> Although illegal, some inmates do obtain and manufacture illegal substances while in prison.

**Exhibit 2  
Increases in Program Costs Reflect Additional Services**

Program Type	Total Number of Slots	Annual Cost for All Staff Positions for FY 2004-05	Average Daily Cost Per Slot	Average Stay	Average Cost Per Inmate
Intensive "Outpatient"	1,290	\$3,562,569	\$ 7.57	4.5 months	\$1,082.51
Hollywood Work Release Center Modified Residential Therapeutic Community	121	348,444	7.89	11.0 months	2,722.05
Residential Therapeutic Community	204	927,336	12.45	10.0 months	3,710.10
Dual Diagnosis Residential Therapeutic Community	180	991,899	15.10 <sup>1</sup>	10.0 months	4,499.80

<sup>1</sup> This cost includes educational (ABE/GED) programming for inmates; the department could not separate these costs.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

***Treatment duration is consistent with national standards***

Both the therapeutic residential community and the intensive outpatient programs are nationally recognized treatment models with standard lengths of stay. Florida’s correctional substance abuse program follows these precedents. We concluded that the program lengths of stay are reasonable and that the state is not paying for excessive treatment.

***The programs are in compliance with state and federal contract requirements***

The department’s contracts with vendors for substance abuse treatment include several provisions to ensure that appropriate services are provided. Contractors must meet department substance abuse program and policy guidelines and maintain required local, state, or federal substance abuse licensure. The contracts also include performance standards and specify staffing levels. The department makes prorated deductions from monthly payments if the contractor does not maintain a position fully staffed by qualified permanent staff. Vacant positions are to be filled within 30 working days.<sup>9</sup> Contract oversight is provided by a designated contract manager at the central office and two

regional correctional service administrators who visit program sites monthly.

Department monitoring reports indicate that the programs are in compliance with state and federal requirements. However, the most frequent concern noted is the providers’ difficulty in recruiting and maintaining staff and maintaining a standardized curriculum and program. For example, one provider contracted to provide treatment at a cluster of four institutions with 22 positions experienced 42 turnovers since May 2000, including program director, counselors, and clerical help. According to the department, the most likely reasons for the staffing problems are the often isolated locations of the institutions and the lack of benefits associated with these positions. The department reports that maintaining curriculum and program consistency is difficult due to employee turnover.

The federal grants that fund the corrections substance abuse treatment programs are administered by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. FDLE reports that the programs’ operations are acceptable and they have found no conditions that require corrective action.

**Program Effectiveness —**

To assess the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment programs, we reviewed program completion rates, recidivism rates, and the extent to which inmates who need treatment are receiving it. We determined that inmates who

<sup>9</sup> The regional correctional service administrators certify the invoices and keep track of positions and vacancies. When vacancies exist longer than contract specifies, monies are prorated. Contractors also include a position tracking sheet with their monthly reports.

complete the programs have a lower recidivism rate; however, the percentage of inmates who receive treatment is low compared to the percentage that are identified by screening to need these services.

### ***Overall program completion rate is 75%***

As limited resources are available for substance abuse programs, completion of treatment by assigned inmates is important. In Fiscal Year 2003-04, the successful completion rate was 75% overall: 69% for residential treatment, 80% for outpatient treatment, and 87% for the work release center. Some inmates did not complete the program due to violation of program rules, but most were moved out of programs for administrative reasons such as medical, mental health, or court appearances and program closures. While a higher completion rate is desirable, many of these factors are beyond the department's control. The substance abuse completion rate is better than those of the department's other rehabilitative and educational programs.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Program completers recidivate less***

A large body of national research demonstrates that offender participation in prison based substance abuse treatment reduces the likelihood of repeat offending and improves public safety. The department's data confirm this trend in Florida.

According to the department, the recommitment rate for 3,043 inmates who completed a substance abuse treatment program prior to their release in Fiscal Year 2000-01 was 18% compared to 21.1% for those who needed treatment but did not complete a program. This reduction in recommitment (3.1%) translates into approximately 94 inmates not returning to prison. Avoiding the cost of their re-incarceration for one year would amount to a cost savings of approximately \$1.65 million.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In Fiscal Year 2003-04, 35.4% of inmates completed vocational courses, 34.6% completed mandatory literacy programs, and 17.8% completed ABE/GED courses.

<sup>11</sup> The cost avoidance is derived by multiplying the number of inmates who complete a program by the reduction in re-

Because the average length of time served by offenders is three years, these cost avoidances accrue over time to \$4.95 million. Additional benefits include reduced court and health care costs, higher payment of victim restitution, and the benefits of these individuals being gainfully employed, earning an income, and paying taxes.

### ***The gap between treatment need and availability is widening***

Providing treatment for inmates who have a history of substance abuse is a key to facilitating their successful return to their communities. Overcoming substance abuse involves more than the cessation of drug use. The goal of treatment is to bring about changes in the offender's thought process, behavior, and lifestyle. Unless the underlying aspects of substance abuse are treated, upon leaving the prison the offender remains vulnerable to environmental and social influences to resume substance abuse and criminal behavior.

However, inmate access to treatment is limited and the gap between treatment availability and need has been widening. During Fiscal Year 2003-04, substance abuse programs served 8,038 inmates including pre and post treatment groups, and 14,350 inmates were released from prison that were identified as needing substance abuse treatment but were unable to obtain it during their incarceration.<sup>12</sup> On June 30, 2004, over half or 51,121 of the 81,974 inmates in Florida's prisons had been identified as needing substance abuse treatment. For the 2004-05 fiscal year, 1,880 substance abuse slots are available; given the average length of stay, they may serve twice that number of inmates; however, well over 45,000 inmates who need treatment likely will not receive it.

In addition to the lost opportunity for rehabilitation, the inability to treat these inmates has contributed to an increase in inmate

commitment percentage (difference in completers and non-completers) and multiplying this number by FY 2001-02 annual incarceration rate of \$17,500 per inmate.

<sup>12</sup> This number represents a 64% increase over the number of inmates needing but not receiving substance abuse services prior to their release in Fiscal Year 1999-00.

idleness. A Florida prison typically houses more than 1,000 inmates, with about 40 correctional officers on duty at any given time. One significant component of inmate management is program assignments. Since 2000, inmate idleness has doubled from 18% to 33% due to a steady increase in inmate population but an overall decrease in meaningful assignments for inmates resulting from the elimination of many rehabilitative and educational programs due to state revenue shortfalls.

## Program Consolidation—

### *There does not appear to be any benefit to merging treatment programs*

There does not appear to be any benefit to consolidating the three types of programs into one type of program. Given the differences in inmate treatment needs, providing an intensive residential therapeutic treatment program and a less intensive and less expensive “outpatient” program is reasonable and more cost-effective than providing only one type of treatment. The program at the work release center is similar to the types of programs provided in the institutions, but modified to the work release center environment.

Using multiple providers instead of a single system-wide provider also seems to be beneficial. The department receives a federal grant to serve dual diagnosis inmates in-house and uses four outside contractors to provide substance abuse services that are mostly funded by the federal Byrne grant. Some of the providers indicated that their companies would be willing and able to provide services to the entire state, and that they may be able to do it

for less due to economies of scale. However, the department believes that using multiple providers and bids enhance competition and drive prices down. The department can choose the best qualified provider in a geographic region, even though that provider may not be interested or capable of serving the whole state. It also insulates the department from totally relying on one contractor and then, in case of emergency, not having any backup.

Offering substance abuse treatment at several correctional institutions is also advantageous because it allows the department flexibility in meeting treatment needs while also meeting other assignment priorities such as security, gender, and age.

## Conclusions—

Substance abuse treatment programs at Florida’s correctional institutions are reasonably efficient and effective. The three types of programs serve different treatment needs, and merging them would not be beneficial.

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Project supervised by Kathy McGuire (850/487-9224)

Project conducted by Anna Estes (850/487-0831)

Gary R. VanLandingham, OPPAGA Interim Director



*The Florida Legislature*

***Office of Program Policy Analysis  
and Government Accountability***



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