

Cabinet and Governor Appointed Agencies' Performance Audit Action Item(s) & Status**Improving Staff Safety in Washington's Prisons**

(See also [cabinet agency response](#) for full context to Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) [report](#), March 2016)

The Department of Corrections (DOC) was audited for this performance audit.

SAO Conclusion: The department's staff safety initiatives are innovative and unique.

SAO Issues Summary:

1. Staff feedback points to need to improve communication.
2. There are opportunities to improve implementation of staff safety initiatives.
3. Gaps exist between correctional leading practices and those used by the department.
4. The department needs more specific performance goals and measures to improve the effectiveness of its staff safety initiatives.

SAO Recommendations (Rec) Summary:

1. Address the issues with implementation of the staff safety initiatives the SAO's experts identified, including clarifying policies and procedures related to staff accountability, radios for non-custody staff, duress alarm testing, cameras, security specialists, place safety musters, and the local security advisory committees.
2. Address the gaps identified by our experts between the department's safety related policies, procedures and practices and correctional leading practices. Specifically:
 - a. Develop policies, procedures and practices to conduct staff searches
 - b. Evaluate and update the staffing model to ensure staffing levels are adequate and appropriately utilized to meet all the requirements placed on staff
 - c. Develop a more focused approach to monitor and audit the implementation of the staff safety initiatives to provide feedback on how well staff understand and are following relevant policies and procedures
 - d. Evaluate whether making further changes to department policies, procedures and practices to address additional identified gaps would be beneficial, including cell searches, issues with visibility, searching people entering facilities and access to facility control centers
3. Enhance approach to assessing the effectiveness of staff safety initiatives and implementation to provide additional opportunities for improvement. To do so:
 - a. Develop specific performance goals and measure progress toward meeting those goals.
 - b. Conduct periodic, anonymous staff surveys and focus groups to gather staff input on the effectiveness of the safety initiatives and whether they have improved how safe staff feel.
4. Improve staff communication about safety issues. To do so:
 - a. Provide additional guidance and training to facilitators to improve the effectiveness of the place safety musters, and local and statewide safety advisory committees.
 - b. Evaluate whether the benefit of re-establishing shift musters, which allow staff the opportunity to communicate about potential safety concerns before beginning their shift, outweigh the additional staff time and expense it would incur.
 - c. Provide more specific guidance for the role of security specialist to ensure good communication occurs on staff safety issues at the facilities, including ensuring staff receive feedback on the status of their staff safety suggestions.

The table below shows the current status of action items the agency initiated to address issues identified in the performance audit report. Please see the [cabinet agency response](#) for additional context and any additional steps already taken.

For an explanation of the columns below, [see the legend](#).

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 1	Completed	Conduct a focused review of policies pertaining to the specific security issues (staff accountability, *radios for non-custody staff, duress alarm testing, duties of security specialists, place safety musters and local security advisory committees in advance of regularly scheduled policy review periods, and clarify policy expectations as needed	DOC	7/16 12/17	*N = Radios for non-custody staff	*Y = Radios for non-custody	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus group was conducted to gather feedback and recommended changes to the staff accountability process. FACT (facility Access Control Tracking), an electronic staff accountability program was piloted successfully at Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) reducing average time to account for all SCCC staff from one hour to about 17 minutes. Recently FACT was approved as the enterprise wide staff accountability solution and is currently in implementation phase at Monroe Correctional Complex. Focus group review of DOC 420.160 Staff Accountability and DOC 420.010 Place Safety Muster completed in advance of scheduled policy review. Security specialist position descriptions revised statewide to ensure a security focus and consistency in the work assigned locally. Review of duress alarm procedures completed June 13, 2017. Alarms
	Completed							
	Completed							
	Completed							

	Deferred							<p>work and testing has been incorporated into pre-scheduled drills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• *Funds for radio purchases were requested in the 2017-19 and 2019-21 budget requests to OFM, but was not funded. This request will be resubmitted in the 20 2021-23 operating budget request. Budget requests have not been approved.
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Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
	Completed							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowable Items and Employee Searches Policy was published 2019.
Rec 2	Completed Completed	Submit a decision package to OFM for funding of an external evaluation of its custody staffing model	DOC	9/16	N	Y	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The request was advanced to OFM for consideration in the 17-19 budget cycle and funding was provided for FY 2019. Staffing Model final draft report is due June 30, 2019.
Rec 2	Completed	Ensure inclusion of the specific security items (cell searches, issues with visibility) in their regular auditing process to ensure consistency in application and practice	DOC	7/18	Y	N	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of security issues noted in SAO report incorporated into audit cycle in the 2017-18 cycle and will continue in subsequent cycles.

Issue/Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources ?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 4	Completed	Conduct a fiscal analysis of the costs associated with re-establishing shift musters	DOC	5/16	N	Y	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of costs were conducted, and financial impacts were approximately \$8.5 million per fiscal year and over \$17 million biennially. The request was advanced to OFM for consideration in the 17-19 budget cycle but was not funded.
Rec 4	Completed	Re-affirm the role of the security specialist I alignment with the positions description and related policies	DOC	12/16	Y	N	N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position descriptions and associated duties of the Security Specialists were completed and were reaffirmed through conversations with Captains and Superintendents, September 2016.