

Department of Corrections
February 12, 2014
Town Hall Meeting Questions

Responses to the questions and comments made at the February 12, 2013 Town Hall Meeting are below. We have done our best to provide a response without making it too long or complicated. In several instances, we included a link to a document that provides more information. We also recognize that our answers may not satisfy the participant. This does not mean that the Department does not value the comment. All of the comments are given serious consideration and weighed against the current constraints of the Department. In the course of our planning, we will review public input and make changes, where appropriate, to the operations of the Department.

We are thankful for your participation and look forward to dialogue at future meetings.

1. Can you provide more information about the SFI population? Are they best served in prison or can they be helped more in another setting?

The term “seriously functionally impaired” (SFI) is defined in statute, as follows:

Seriously Functionally Impaired (SFI)

- (A) a disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory, as diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional, which substantially impairs judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality, or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life and **which substantially impairs the ability to function within the correctional setting;** or
- (B) a developmental disability, traumatic brain injury or other organic brain disorder, or various forms of dementia or other neurological disorders, as diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional, **which substantially impairs the ability to function in the correctional setting.”**

The Department of Corrections in collaboration with the entire Agency of Human Services is currently engaged in several initiatives designed to support inmates who were designated as seriously functionally impaired successfully return to their communities.

- Local Interagency Teams meet at least monthly in each of the twelve AHS districts to discuss specific individuals transitioning to community and their unique needs.
- The SFI State Interagency Team meets regularly to discuss policy, practice and staffing for the most complex individuals designated SFI and re-entering community.
- DOC is working closely with DVHA to implement changes related to Health Care reform for both incarcerated individuals and detainees in order to improve access to health

care and improve or enhance reimbursement for services provided by our community partners

- DOC and the Vermont Council have formed a group to improve collaboration between the Department and the DA/SSA provider network
- DOC has developed two Transitions Units and two Re-Entry Coordinators to facilitate re-entry for offenders leaving the facility
- DAIL, DMH and DOC meet monthly to staff offenders designated SFI in order to informally pre-screen those individuals for community services.

2. How much money do you have in your food budget? How much more would you need to remove process foods from the diet for offenders?

The FY2014 food budget for all facilities was \$2,692,717. This averages out to \$1.55 per meal based on an average daily population of 1,580. Based on our knowledge of food costs we expect to see the price per meal double or triple to if we were to remove all processed food. This is just an estimate. We do, however, strive to provide healthy, balanced meals in all facilities. Our meals are based on nutritionist's guidelines.

3. How many people are in the Springfield facility as an alternate to a state hospital? Are their plans to build a separate mental health unit on the grounds of the Springfield facility?

The Springfield facility holds between 2-8 people, depending on the day, who awaiting hospitalization subsequent to a court order. We do not have plan to build a separate mental health unit on the grounds of the facility.

4. What is the administrative/overhead cost for treatment contracts?

Most contracts have some administrative cost. This supports the contractor's ability to provide information and reports to the department on service delivery. A typical contract can have a 10% administrative cost.

5. Page 193 of Facts and Figures shows very different costs for the two work camps in the state. What contributes to this disparity?

The cost of the Southeast Work Camp increased when the treatment program for sex offenders was moved to that location.

6. What programs are available for inmate's families?

The Department does not offer programs specifically for inmate's families. We do have a Victim's Services Unit that provides a wide range of services to individual when the offender in their case is in the custody of or being supervised by the Department of Corrections. Services include providing information, support, release planning assistance, support groups, an Apology Letter Bank, the VAN Service (automated notification) a Victim Offender Dialogue Program and a Victim Impact Program. For more information call (888)810-1847.

7. What changes could be made to make things better for inmates, workers and the state?

The Department of Corrections strives to maintain safe and secure environments for both staff and inmates. This includes operating all of our facilities no higher than the recommended capacity. Additionally, the DOC works with inmate to successfully reenter them into the community, at the earliest point in their sentence as possible.

8. What are the current policies around program refusal? Why does someone need to wait six months for programming if they refuse it at first?

When inmates approach a program eligibility date, they are offered an opportunity to indicate their willingness and interest in programming by completing a program interest form. This program interest form supports the DOC to identify and manage the limited number of program beds, and reduces transportation and movement challenges. If an inmate refuses, s/he will be reoffered the program in six months by the caseworker.

9. Is the general policy for a PO to visit someone at their home after work or is it policy to make the offender travel to the office during business hours?

Contact between and offender and probation officer is determined based on the assessed risk of each offender. The Department of Corrections utilizes a specific, defined method to assess risk and develop the supervision level and related contact standards. For more detailed information regarding contact please review Department Directive 430.10 Risk Management Supervision – Field at the following link: <http://doc.vermont.gov/about/policies/rpd/correctional-services-301-550/401-500-programs-security-and-supervision/430-10-risk-management-supervision-field>.