

TN

Department of
Correction



Fall Update

Spotlight on Recruitment, ACA Review, and Next Steps

Tennessee Department of Correction | Update | November 2015



Overview

This fall the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) has been focused on recruitment and retention of officers as well as the American Correctional Association (ACA) recommendations. There is good news to report. Our creative recruitment efforts have caused an improvement in our vacancy rate at three of our most challenging facilities. Our team is also actively reviewing the ACA recommendations and devising a plan to implement the changes to our incident reporting. More information on each of these positive efforts are detailed below.

Recruitment

Current State

Our recruitment efforts are continuing. In August, the department instituted a \$600 hiring bonus for Correctional Officers and a \$100 recruitment stipend. This initiative, along with other recruitment efforts, has contributed to a 15% reduction in our vacancy numbers since August. In the past three months we've hired more than 300 Correctional Officers. While this influx of officers has benefited the entire system, it has directly impacted our three most challenging sites. These sites have seen reductions in vacancies ranging from 10% to 34%.

*Since August
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10% reduction
in vacancies
statewide.*

Next Steps

TDOC is providing a one-time \$1000 retention bonus to the correctional series. This bonus helps the department retain staff, recognizes their hard work, and encourages them to continue to assist in recruiting more officers. TDOC is working with Department of Human Resources (DOHR) to have this reflected on the December 2015 paycheck.

As the department increases officer safety by providing increased training and equipment, Probation Parole Officers now go through a vigorous training process to become weapons certified. To recognize the officers for their increased learning, TDOC is also offering a \$100 per month assignment differential for Probation Parole Officers who have passed the weapons course and are armed as part of their duties. This assignment differential will go into effect in 2016.

Summary of ACA Review

The Department of Correction recently requested the American Correctional Association to conduct an independent assessment of several of our prisons. Specifically we asked ACA to focus on issues related to vacancies, scheduling, incident reporting procedures, as well as an overall assessment of facility operations. ACA assigned a team of veteran correctional professionals to conduct the assessment, and a report of their findings was provided to the Tennessee General Assembly and the department.

The ACA team determined that our prisons were operationally disciplined, stable, and productive. The team also recognized the professionalism and dedication of our staff which enables the department to achieve its core mission of ensuring public safety. Additionally, the report included two alternative solutions to address concerns regarding staff scheduling and inmate disciplinary categorization.

Key Findings

- The ACA Proposal recommends changing to a 14-day work period and 12-hour shifts within the current FLSA time keeping system.
- The second recommendation removes injury as a defining term in disciplinary rules and changes several disciplinary offenses. This suggestion is also being reviewed to ensure that any changes made increase offender accountability, add clarity, and reduce subjectivity.

Schedule Update

Current State

Currently, the Correctional Officers who work in TDOC facilities are on a 28-day time keeping period where they work six days and then are off for three days. The ACA proposal recommends changing to a 14-day work period and 12-hour shifts within the current FLSA time keeping system. The department is currently vetting to determine the feasibility of such an option.

The ACA review recommends changing to a 12-hour shift.

Next Steps

The Department of Correction is currently partnering with the Tennessee State Employees Association (TSEA) to create a survey to gauge shift preferences for our Correctional Officers. We are also working closely with DOHR and Edison to determine our scheduling options going forward. At this time, the Edison system is not capable of accommodating a 14-day work period. According to Edison staff, system configurations to provide a 14-day work cycle would not be completed until October 2016. As such, TDOC is concentrating on staff preferences for either 8.5-hour or 12-hour shifts. Prisons that opt for 8.5-hour shifts will continue to work a 6 days on, 3 days off rotation. Those sites that prefer 12-hour shifts will move to the rotating work cycle proposed by the ACA: 3 days on, 2 days off, 2 days on, 3 days off, 2 days on, and 2 days off. The Department, in conjunction with TSEA, expects to begin the staff survey in November. TDOC intends to make adjustments to shifts by facility beginning in January 2016. The survey results will be considered as the facilities make their decisions on shift preference for 2016.



Incident Update

Current State

For several years the Department of Correction has taken steps to improve accuracy of incident reporting and increase the transparency of the information. The recent ACA review pointed out opportunities for the department to improve in this area.

The ACA review recommends removing injury as a defining term in disciplinary rules and changes several disciplinary offenses. TDOC is updating our policy to reflect this change. We thoroughly reviewed this recommendation to ensure that any changes made increase offender accountability, add clarity, and reduce subjectivity. We are in the process of notifying the staff and inmate population about the change to the incident policy.

Next Steps

Currently, we are reviewing our incident policies and definitions as recommended. We are also taking steps to ensure any other policies that may be impacted by modifications to our incident policies are also aligned with these improvements. One area which may be impacted by these improvements is our offender management system data entry fields related to definition modifications or other similar changes.

Steps are being taken to ensure staff receives updates and training regarding any procedural changes which may occur.

While the assault numbers may fluctuate, the first four months of FY16 (July-October) TDOC is averaging fewer staff assaults per month than this same period last year.

