

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Department of Corrections Staffing-Related Safety Plans

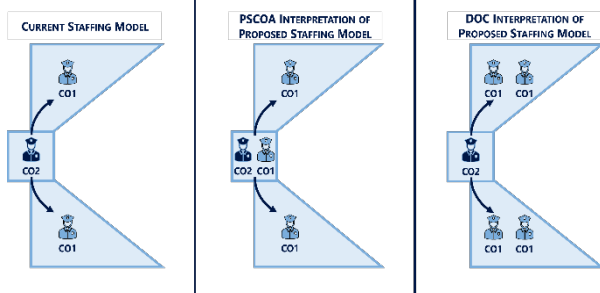
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House Resolution (HR) 174, adopted by the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on October 26, 2022, directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to conduct a study on the cost of implementing a safety-related staffing plan at state correctional institutions (SCIs) with Level 3 and Level 4 housing units. Key highlights include the following:

- ❖ **Staffing models on Level 3 and 4 housing units depend heavily on the configuration of the SCI.** While “prototypical” staffing models exist for Level 3 and 4 housing units, SCIs can enact practices to meet their facility’s needs. As a result, uniform staffing projections are difficult to compile.

- ❖ **There are two interpretations of how to accomplish the staffing model proposed in HR 174.** HR 174 requires “at least two corrections officers (COs) per pod when inmates are permitted freedom of movement from their cells.” DOC believes this language requires the addition of two additional CO1s for each Level 3 housing unit on the two daytime shifts. The Pennsylvania State Corrections Officer Association (PSCOA) – representing COs believes the staffing model in HR 174 can be accomplished by adding one CO1 per housing unit for the same shifts. We provide projections for both models for our study’s 12 SCIs with Level 3 housing units.

Staffing Models Proposed by DOC and PSCOA.



- ❖ **On average, SCIs would need to hire between 9 and 19 percent more CO1s to meet new staffing requirements under the PSCOA and DOC models, respectively.** We found the average CO1 complement would increase from 272 per SCI to 295 under PSCOA’s model and 320 under DOC’s model.
- ❖ **Total average spending on CO1s for the 12 impacted SCIs ranges between \$448 and \$484 million annually.** Total annual expenditures are projected to increase by an average of seven (PSCOA model) and 15 percent (DOC model) from the current average spending of \$420 million. At the SCI level, annual expenditures could increase by an average of seven (PSCOA) and 16 percent (DOC) per facility.
- ❖ **As a result of increased staffing requirements, SCI vacancy rates for CO1s could increase by an average of 11 to 18 percent.** The average vacancy rate for CO1s at impacted facilities at the end of our observation

period (June 2022) was three percent. Ongoing issues regarding the hiring and retention of COs could force SCIs to depend heavily on overtime to meet new staffing requirements that could impact costs. However, many of the underlying issues regarding staffing and overtime practices are outside the scope of this report.

- ❖ **DOC devotes significant training hours each year to courses that help prevent and respond to violent incidents.** All DOC employees undergo orientation, basic training when hired, and annual in-service training. Newly hired COs start as CO trainees (COT) and go through a 1-year training and probationary period. All COs then complete 40 hours of in-service training annually, including classes in assault management and use of force, among other courses aimed at the skills for preventing and responding to violent incidents.
- ❖ **In FY 2021-22, inmate-on-staff assaults occurred at 11.4 per 1,000 inmates.** Total violent incidents occurred at 44.9 per 1,000 inmates in the same year. During our report period, we found that one major inmate-on-staff assault guilty misconduct occurred per 1,000 inmates.
- ❖ **We recommend that DOC invest in and update its Misconduct Tracking System and collect additional data on violent incidents.** Our analysis did not find a strong predictive correlation between total violent incidents and staffing levels at SCIs. However, DOC could not provide specific assault data for incidents on Level 3 and 4 housing units, preventing us from performing more targeted analysis. We encourage DOC to increase the department’s knowledge of specific violent incident locations, subsequently enhancing SCI staffing decision-making.

For a full copy of the report, email us at lbfcinfo@palbfc.us or download a copy at <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/>.