

# **FY 2017-18 BUDGET REQUEST**

**SECRETARY JOHN E. WETZEL AND CHAIRMAN LEO DUNN  
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING**

**F E B R U A R Y 2017**

INTRODUCTION	3
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS	6
REDUCING PRISON POPULATION	6
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	8
MEDICAL CARE	9
MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT	11
DRUG AND ALCOHOL	11
THE PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION ACT	12
BUREAU OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	12
VETERANS	13
FUNDING AND COST SAVINGS	14
CLOSING SCI PITTSBURGH	14
GO-TIME AND OTHER COST SAVINGS	15
BUREAU OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS	16
BOARD OF PROBATION AND PAROLE FIELD SUPERVISION	17
RECIDIVISM AND CRIME	18
ASSAULTS IN PRISON	19
REDUCING THE RESTRICTIVE HOUSING POPULATION	19
CONCLUSION	20

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION



Good morning,

Governor Wolf's proposed budget for 2017-18 presumes the merger of corrections and parole into one unified agency. We have long been in support of this unification and come before you today as one team to make our budget request for 2017-18, the new Department of Criminal Justice.

This unification, and our proposed budget, does not impact the independent decision-making process of the Parole Board or the Sex Offenders Assessment Board or the important work of the Office of Victim Advocate, other than to provide each of them with more efficient and more cost effective administrative and technological support services.

Our two agencies have accomplished much, individually and together, during the past year. As we move forward, we intend to build on that relationship to improve our services and provide a continuity of care during the incarceration of these individuals and as they reintegrate back into society.

## **Bottom line: we anticipate increasing public safety while better managing expenditures.**

Remember that 90 percent of individuals in state correctional institutions will return home someday. If we can help these individuals with their addiction and mental health issues, if we can help them get basic education and vocational training, if we can help them reconnect with their children and families - then maybe they can get out and live a life with purpose and integrity, find work, support their children and not return to prison.

The consequence of that is stronger families and safer communities for all of us.

## **Another consequence of that is less people in prison.**

This year, for the third consecutive year, our prison population has declined once again. The number of serious assaults on staff inside our prisons has also declined, which is especially significant for the safety of our staff.

This year, we will also reduce the number of prisons in Pennsylvania. The State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh will be closed by July 1, as we absorb inmates and staff into other facilities without jeopardizing public safety and saving the Commonwealth an estimated \$81 million.

Not only have we stayed within our budget during this past year, we continue to find ways to save more money and still expand services. This year's budget contains nearly \$170 million in saving initiatives within our department. We have been good stewards of the taxpayers' money as we manage our facilities and day-to-day operations.

We have done all this while working tirelessly in our mission to care for those entrusted into our custody. Through successful educational programs and expanded vocational training, we strive to

make these individuals better and more productive citizens when they return home.

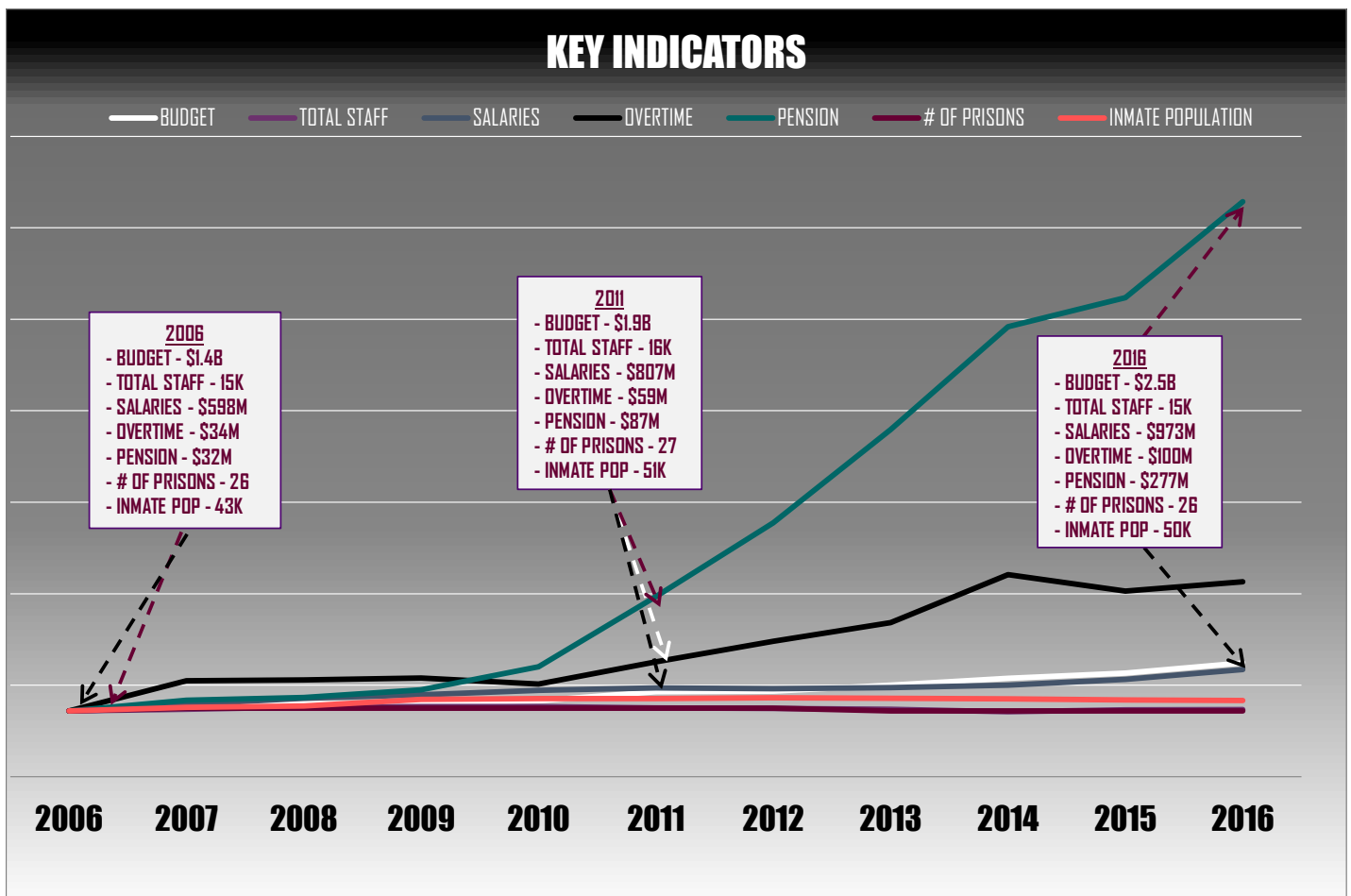
We have continued to improve our treatment and services for individuals with mental health issues, those who have served in our military and those struggling with drug and alcohol addiction.

We have made great strides to rein in overtime costs. This year, we are at the lowest level of correctional officer vacancies since 2009. By having a full complement of trained officers, we anticipate the need for overtime will be reduced.

One of the most significant factors regarding increasing costs is the pension obligation. From 2006 through this year our pension obligation has increased over 800%.

This budget request for the new Department of Criminal Justice is \$31.5 million less, or a decrease of 1.33 percent, from the current fiscal year's budget for both agencies.

While this budget includes more than \$6 million of additional personnel funding to consolidate the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) administrative offices and staff into the general operating fund of the new Department of Criminal Justice, the total personnel funding is a decrease of almost \$38 million or 2.7 percent less in personnel costs from the current year.



We are presenting a realistic, cost-effective budget based on mandatory personnel increases and modest operational cost increases, which is extremely difficult when operating an aging correctional system consisting of 25 facilities, a boot camp, community correction centers and a training academy.

The DOC is analyzing its operations for major efficiencies which have produced positive cost-saving results in the past. We will continue to develop efficiencies to free up funds to deal with key issues and necessary cost increases. We will review operations carefully and implement cost savings where achievable in a safe and secure manner.

But there has to be an absolute limit to our cost-cutting efforts.

We must maintain the proper staffing levels within our facilities to ensure the safety of our employees, inmates and the general public at large.

We cannot cut services to those inmates in need of medical and mental health care.

We cannot cut education and training for those individuals who will be leaving our prisons, unless we plan for them to fail upon release and subsequently return to our custody.

The tragic death of a corrections officer and hostage situation involving several staff members inside the Delaware state correctional facility recently should serve as a reminder to everyone the potential dangers our employees face every day.

These are not threats, this is our reality.

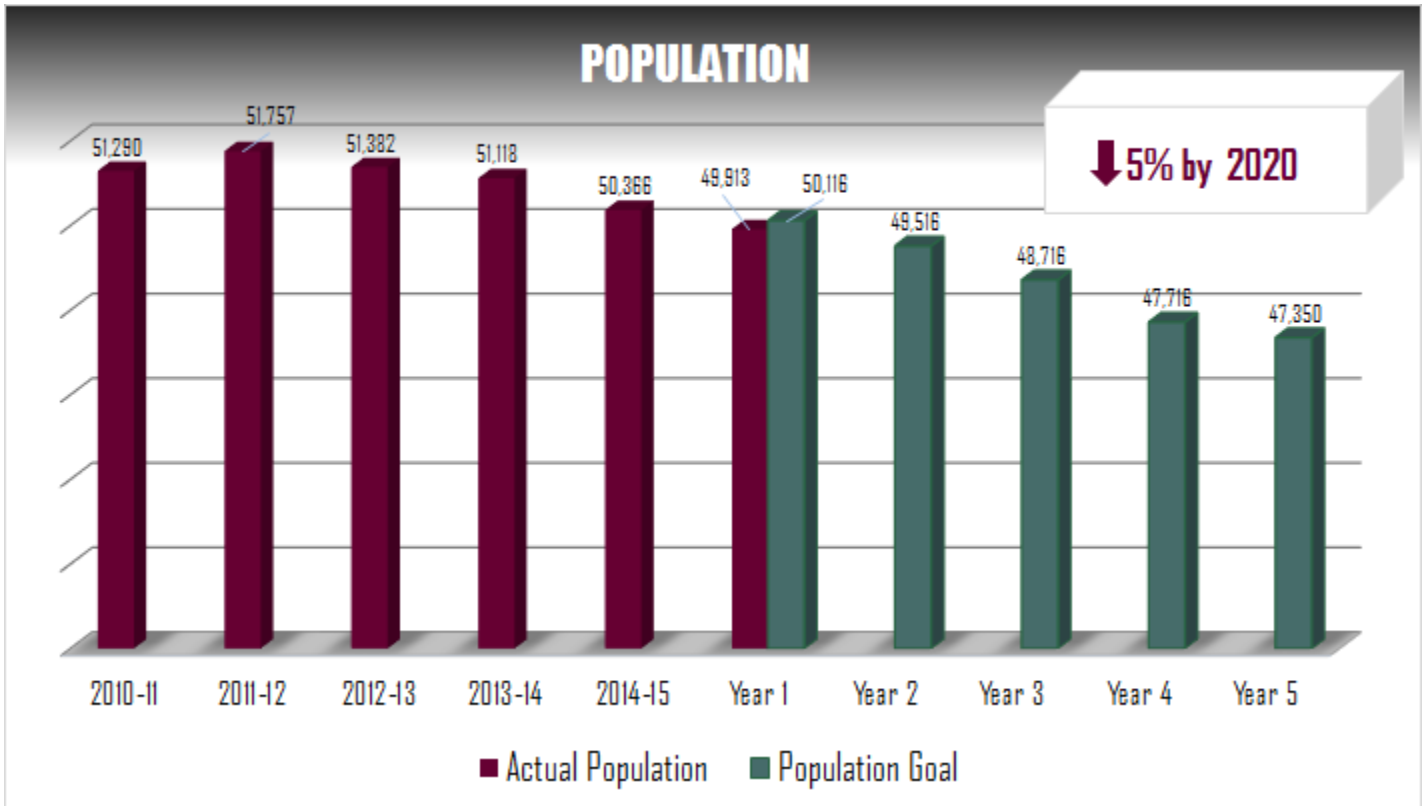
We have made tremendous strides in recent years, and with the support of our state leaders, we can continue to achieve even greater success for the people of Pennsylvania.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOALS



In 2016, we built on our many successes and expanded our goals to reach new areas of improvement.

The most effective means to achieve large cost savings is to reduce the inmate population, which we have done. Our current population is 49,301, the lowest it has been since 2009.

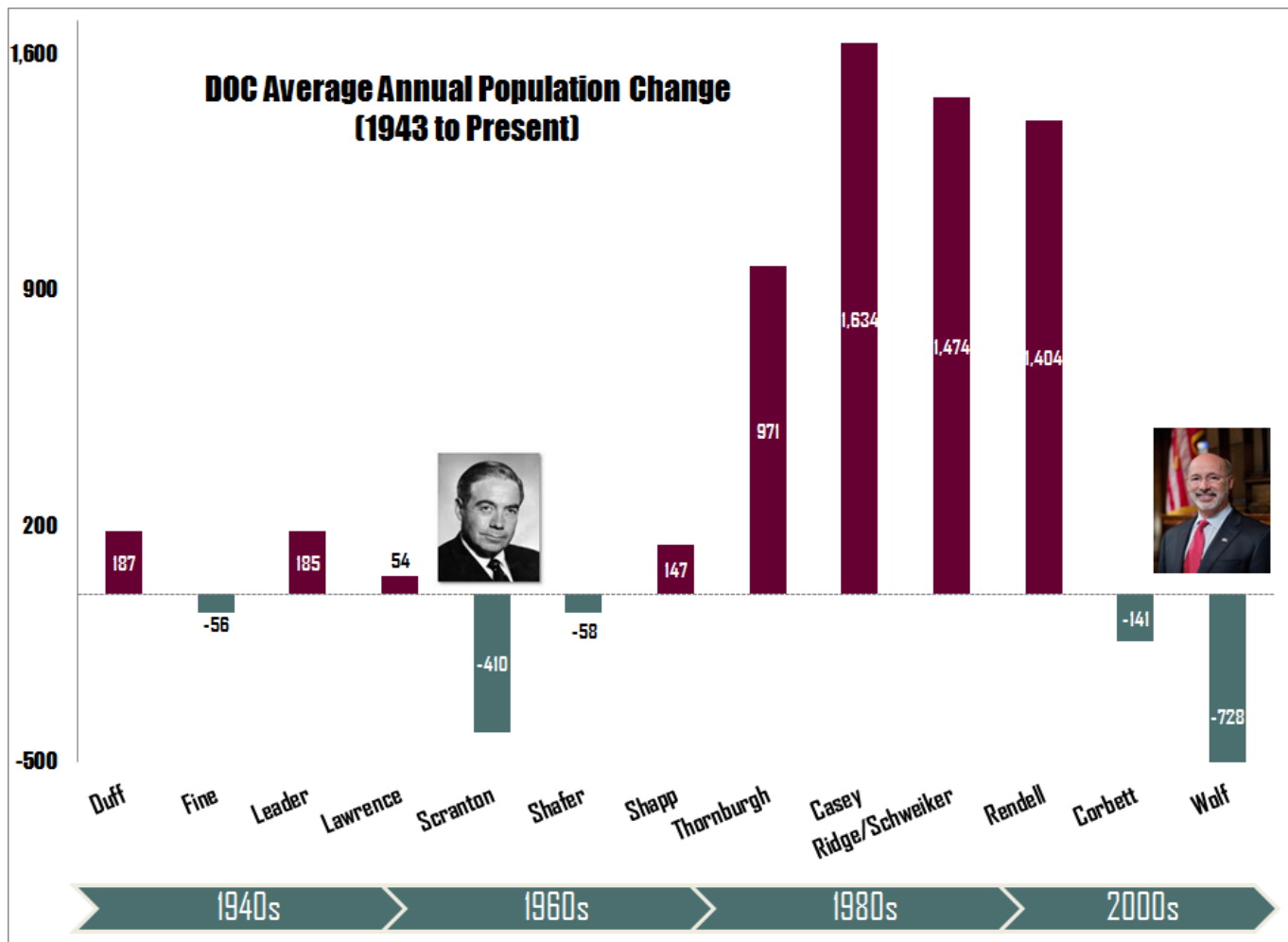


With fewer people coming into the system and a continued level of timely parole releases, our population is still declining and we continue to move in the right direction.

Between 2005 and 2009 our population was growing so rapidly, an estimated 26 percent, that state prison inmates had to be housed in counties and two other states. In 2010, our prison population was projected to grow to approximately 63,000 inmates by 2016.

We reversed this trend through a combination of internal efficiencies and timely parole actions and by 2012, the number of inmates was reduced by 454 individuals. This represented the largest one-year inmate population drop for the department in more than 40 years, and only the third year during the past 40 years that the department actually decreased rather than increased its inmate population in a given year.

The significant turning point was passage of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) in 2012. The primary intent of the legislation was to reduce the Department of Corrections' future inmate population. Since June 2012, the Department of Corrections' inmate population has declined 2,456 in the four and a half years since the passage of JRI.



Since 2012, there are two primary explanations for the continued inmate population reduction. The first explanation, accounting for roughly half of the reduction, is a result of the JRI effort, which primarily focused on safe alternatives to managing technical parole violators who have not committed new crimes. The second explanation, roughly accounting for the other half of the reduction, is a large decrease in new commitments being received by the courts.

It is difficult to say exactly why court commitments have declined, but we have a few clues from the data. The primary reason for this decline in court commitments is likely a result of the invalidation of certain mandatory minimum sentences in Pennsylvania, including mandatory minimum sentences for drug crimes. This was a result of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2013, and a Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision in 2015. Court commitments may also be in decline as a result of smarter approaches to divert low level, non-violent offenders from state prison, and as a result of a continued crime decline in Pennsylvania based on the most recent numbers available.

The declining population has been a testament to the DOC and PBPP's efforts to bolster reentry efforts, through education and programming, as well as alternative sentencing by the courts and efforts by the parole field agents to redirect technical parole violators into programs and community corrections centers, rather than returning them to state prison.

Current projections indicate that the department will see an additional reduction of more than approximately 1,000 inmates during the next four years. This is a conservative projection that frankly may already be outdated with most recent months' trends, due to the fact that the

department's population is already tracking more than 600 inmates below that projection already. As one of our three key performance metrics, we set as a goal to reduce our inmate population by 600 inmates in FY 2016–17. Just over halfway through this fiscal year, we have already seen a reduction that exceeds that goal.

The Commonwealth is currently considering another round of the JRI strategy, a move that could lead to further reductions in the prison population, and additional improvements to the criminal justice system which will increase public safety and further cost savings. Projections are that if the key recommendations of the new round of JRI were to be enacted, the department may see an additional reduction of another 1,000 inmates over the next five years, at a cost-savings to the Commonwealth of approximately \$108 million.

The cost to incarcerate a person for one year in state prison is about \$42,848 compared to \$3,500 – the cost to supervise an individual on parole. Through appropriate parole supervision, rather than incarceration, we continue to save taxpayers' money while ensuring public safety.

## ■ EDUCATION AND TRAINING

One of our best weapons against recidivism is helping individuals become more productive, independent citizens when they return home someday.

It is essential that these individuals have the tools to succeed when they are released and chief among them is a high school degree. Sadly, less than half of our population has a high school degree upon commitment.

For the fourth consecutive year, inmates in the Pennsylvania state prison system scored higher than the national average of inmates passing high school equivalency tests. In 2016, 82 percent of the state prison inmates passed the GED, compared with the national inmate passing rate of 79 percent. Last year, 370 inmates earned their GED and a total of 8,681 inmates were involved in academic programs.

Since 2014, when the GED test became computerized, the DOC has been making extensive changes to accommodate the new system by updated servers, computers, and the lab setting. At the same time the content was changed so that the subject areas better conformed with what was being offered to high school students, focusing on math, science, social studies and reading/language.

Now, all corrections school principals and counselors are certified examiners for these sites, and all testing is done on-site in each prison's education department.

The total cost for the department is \$4.19 million, which includes supplies, upgrades to software for GED, as well as increase equipment for the various vocational training programs offered to inmates.

Several colleges and universities have voluntarily offered courses to inmates interested in pursuing higher education. The DOC continues to find ways to reduce barriers to such opportunities in a prison setting.

This past year, through the U.S. Department of Education's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, six state prisons will work with four Pennsylvania institutions of higher learning in a national pilot to allow inmates additional access to post-secondary education. The pilot's goal is to examine how access to educational opportunities, as well as how academic and recidivism outcomes are impacted.



The second key component to success is vocational training. More than 80 percent of the prison population reports they have no skills or are unskilled.

Currently, the DOC offers 25 vocational programs that will afford inmates greater prospects for employment and successful reentry into society. Last year, 3,362 inmates participated in the vocational programs in prison.

Among these is the optical certification program at SCI Cambridge Springs, which is the only program of its kind in Pennsylvania to offer certification to graduates, as well as making prescription eyeglasses for the DOC.

Commissary operations were centralized at one facility, SCI Mahanoy, teaching inmates warehouse skills, including forklift operation certification.

The list of vocational training programs is long and practical from restaurant trades to building trades, such as carpentry, electronics, landscaping and plumbing.

## **MEDICAL CARE**

The DOC is responsible for the care as well as the custody of inmates. The cost of providing medical care continues to rise because of a number of factors, including increases within the medical industry and an aging inmate population.

The DOC resumed treatment of Hepatitis C in January 2016, an expensive treatment program that will increase pharmaceutical costs by about \$14 million next year. That number is based on the 170 inmates currently receiving this treatment, but that number may increase significantly in the future. The total estimated pharmacy cost for the DOC is \$39 million.

Another cost driver in providing inmate health care are the contracts with medical service vendors for all health care services except pharmacy, mental health and hemophiliac medications. The estimated cost for those contracts in 2017–18 is \$64 million.

To help reduce costs and increase medical care, the DOC partnered with Temple University Hospital to provide prescription medication at discounted prices as well as offering post-release medical care for hundreds of individuals, especially those receiving HIV treatment, when they return to the community.

Under the federal program, drug manufacturers are required to provide outpatient drugs to eligible health care organizations at significantly-reduced prices.

Currently, more than 600 inmates are being served and the program is expected to save the DOC \$3.9 million annually, and more than \$16.8 million over four years.

With 40 percent of reentrants returning to the Philadelphia region, this local program also ensures that they have an established patient status with a practitioner in the area and can receive continuity of care upon reintegration into the community.

More than 20 percent of our prison population is over the age of 50, a number that has almost doubled in the past 10 years. Because inmates age at a rate of five-to-10 years faster than their chronological age, this is considered a senior age group, according to national standards.

As of January 1, 2017, the DOC counted 10,442 inmates over the age of 50. That number has steadily increased since 1995. Eighty-five percent of those inmates are on medication that costs the department \$3.25 million per month.

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The list of vocational training programs is long and practical from restaurant trades to building trades,

such as carpentry, electronics, landscaping and plumbing.

Additionally, we have three special long term care units, combining both skilled and personal care, we have 399 male inmates at SCI Laurel Highlands and Waymart, plus nine female inmates at SCI Muncy.

As one of the DOC cost savings and efficiency efforts, we have saved more than \$500,000 a year in transportation costs by temporarily relocating inmates receiving radiation treatment to a single facility at SCI Somerset.

## **MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT**

One fourth of our male prison population struggles with a mental health disorder and eight percent have been diagnosed as seriously mentally ill. Among the female prison population, nearly 70 percent struggles with a mental health disorder.

As a result, we must continue to maintain and increase the number of mental healthcare staff required to meet the level of care and services needed to treat this population, both in handling and helping this group of individuals.

The DOC continues to collaborate with two major reviews of the mental healthcare system conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania.

After these reviews, the DOC ensured that inmates with serious mental illness and/or intellectual disabilities would no longer be subjected to solitary confinement and instead receive specialized treatment.

To achieve that goal, we increased the number of diversionary housing units inside our facilities that allow for specialized out-of-cell programs and activities for inmates with mental health disorders.

Corrections staff members have received Crisis Intervention Team Training to help in their handling of mentally ill individuals, educating them on potential behaviors and skills to de-escalate crisis situations.

Parole field supervision staff have also received training in mental health first aid to recognize understand and respond to the symptoms of mental health disorders.

By intensifying the training of our staff and increasing the number of specially-trained psychological professionals inside our facilities, we are helping to create a safer environment for all those who live and work inside our prisons.

The current provider for mental health services estimates the 2017-18 contract will increase to \$26 million.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL**

Nearly seventy percent of our population is dealing with a dependency on drugs or alcohol. As drug addiction is a factor related to criminality, the department provides treatment in this area at levels clinically appropriate.

Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatment programs are provided in all correctional institutions and the capacity within these programs has expanded significantly over time. Funding for programs

has likewise increased and inmate participation in these programs has doubled.

One of our major treatment methods is the therapeutic community living units, where intensive drug and alcohol programming is provided.

We have expanded our Medication Assisted Treatment program with a goal to help those with drug addictions curb their physical cravings through medication, while counselors work on the psychological and emotional factors.

Our goal is to help these individuals have one less barrier as they return to society. Without substance use disorder (SUD), hopefully these individuals will not resort to crime, resulting in safer communities.

We have awarded \$1.5 million to human service agencies serving 11 counties to provide Medication Assisted Treatment (Vivitrol) to inmates for substance use disorder, which will help more than 150 people fight opioid use disorder and return home as healthier and more productive citizens.

Parole agents supervise reentrants with heroin and other SUDs and, at times, may encounter an emergency. As such, all parole offices have been supplied with Naloxone, the live-saving opioid overdose reversal antidote. Agents also educate family members about this important lifesaving resource that is available in the community.

## ■ THE PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION ACT (PREA)

The Prison Rape Elimination Act, established by the U.S. Department of Justice and signed into law in 2003, is designed to prevent, detect and respond to prison rape. The federal regulations also set minimum standards to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in a confinement setting.

Governor Wolf made a commitment to the Department of Justice that Pennsylvania would achieve full compliance with the national standards for confinement facilities.

The DOC has fully implemented PREA regulations and standards within every facility. However, this has added a large volume of work for treatment staff and institutions' security offices, as well as a central compliance office that must monitor, investigate and evaluate inmate claims.

## ■ BUREAU OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The DOC and the PBPP have combined information technology services, but it is still a fraction of other agencies of similar size.

Together, our two agencies account for almost 20 percent of the state's computer usage.

During the past year, the Bureau of Information Technology continued the ongoing process of bringing a severely outdated infrastructure up to date, as well as streamlining storage practices and improving databases, while concentrating on security and reusability of services.

The major project is the implementation of the Corrections and Parole Total Offender Repository (CAPTOR). When completed, this system will totally manage an individual from the time he is arrested through his parole. It will leverage the business process, standardize data and improve workflow capabilities between the two agencies.

Other initiatives include planning and developing a disaster recovery plan, video archiving and surveillance, enhancing the public inmate locator site, improving technologies at the training academy and modernizing the education infrastructure.

The Bureau of Information Technology budget request is \$27.1 million, but also includes necessary upgrades to the data center, the time keeper and scheduling system, as well as the biometric system, which allows staff to monitor who is inside the prison.

## **VETERANS**

This year, the DOC established a statewide veterans' coordinator to track the more than 3,200 inmates who have served in the U.S. Military.

Several of our facilities have specialized veterans' units to offer these individuals the services and counseling they may need while in our custody, as well as peer support, but also to ensure they receive the benefits they have earned.

In addition, the veteran coordinators in our facilities and trained parole agents provide information about medical, psychological and social services, including housing and employment opportunities for the veterans upon release.

The goal is to provide assistance and guidance, but also to facilitate reentry achievement and mitigate recidivism.

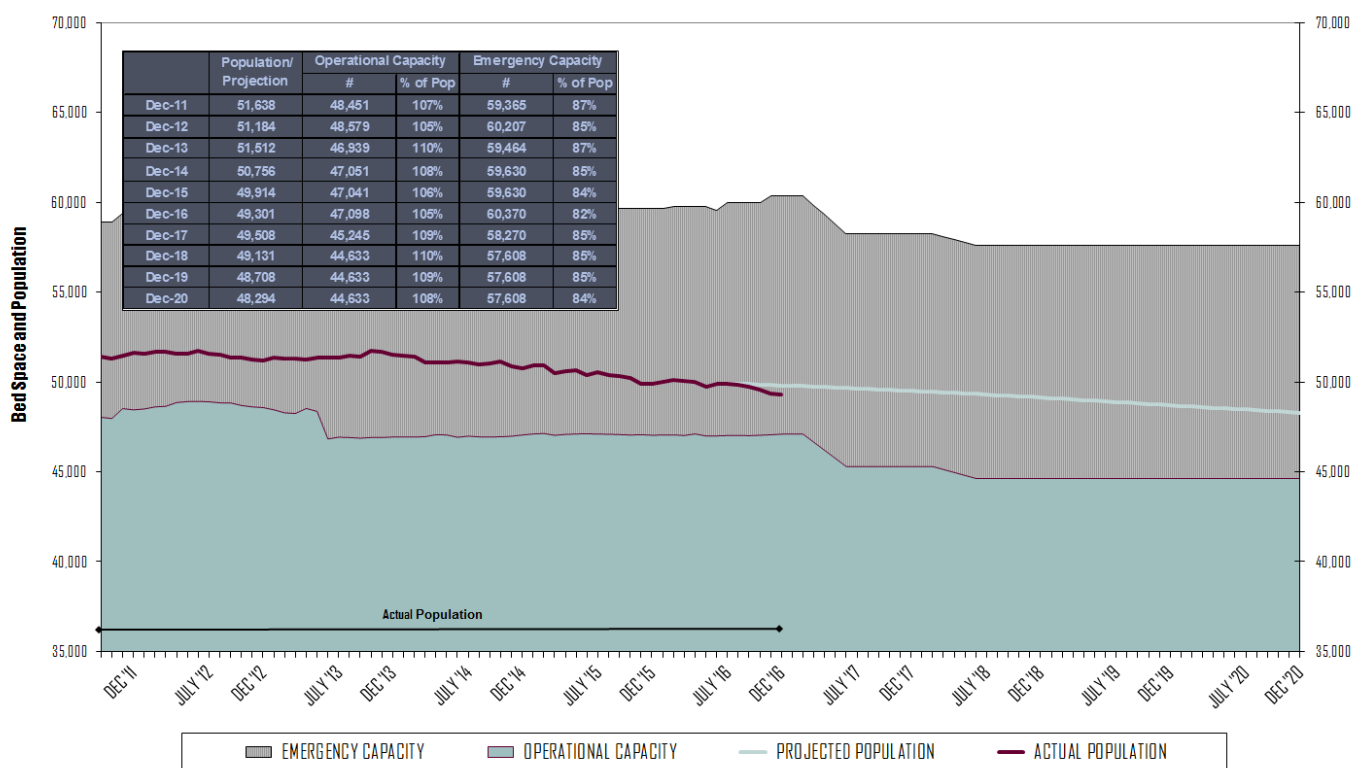
# FUNDING AND COST SAVINGS

## CLOSING SCI PITTSBURGH

The closing of SCI Pittsburgh will save the Commonwealth an estimated \$81 million. This does not include proceeds from the eventual sale of the riverfront property, located on the north side of Pittsburgh, which will be managed by the Department of General Services.

The DOC made the decision to close only SCI Pittsburgh to minimize the impact to the staff, economy, and community, while still achieving necessary cost savings.

**Pennsylvania Department of Corrections - Population vs. Bed Space**



Note: The above population/capacity numbers include total DOC population, including female inmates and community corrections/county jail inmates who are counted in DOC population.

The population reduction in recent years has resulted in more than 6,000 unused beds throughout the state prison. As such, we will be able to safely absorb the employees and 1,921 inmates at other existing state prisons.

This closure also impacts the regional office of the Bureau of Community Corrections and the Riverside Community Corrections Center – both of which operate out of the front building at SCI Pittsburgh. The regional office will be relocated, while the center will be closed.

In addition to the prison closure, the DOC plans to:

- Save as additional \$37 million by reducing the capacity of our state's halfway houses by 50 percent,
- Save approximately \$5 million with a 10 percent reduction in Central Office administrative staff

- Save another \$7.3 million by reducing the number of inmates in county prisons.
- Through attrition and relocating the approximately 500 employees from SCI Pittsburgh at our other facilities, we expect to fill vacancies and reduce overtime costs by \$10 million and salaries by another \$5 million.

The DOC is aware of the legislature's concern for overtime spending, and justifiably so. Overtime in 2015–16 was just under \$100 million, which was very high due to fiscal constraints and complement controls. Due to a number of internal initiatives, overtime costs are now trending down and expected to drop to \$90 million by the end of the current fiscal year. Mandatory overtime has decreased in 2016–17, this year to date, to 6.6 percent overall.

For 2016–17 and continuing into 2017–18, an aggressive effort is being made to fill correctional officer vacancies and reduce overtime costs.

In addition, a statewide staffing analysis is currently being conducted to maximize daily operational efficiencies and determine the proper level of manpower needed at each facility. These initiatives are expected to save the state \$10 million in the next fiscal year in overtime savings and net personnel costs.

## ■ GO-TIME AND OTHER COST SAVINGS

During the last 10 years, the DOC has made numerous changes that have resulted in millions of dollars of annual savings, including: staffing efficiencies, renegotiation of program contracts, food savings, inmate transportation efficiencies, laundry and pharmacy savings and consolidation of specialized inmate medical treatment such as oncology, dialysis, mental health and hemophilia.

We are also aggressively managing our operating costs, making significant reductions in travel, training, housekeeping costs, heating costs, maintenance costs and other supplies.

Specifically, some of the savings initiatives include:

- The Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program, which began in FY 2015–16 and allows the DOC to procure drugs at reduced prices through the federal program, continues to net increased savings. We estimate our cost avoidance at more than \$3.9 million for FY 2017–18.
- The DOC has also entered an agreement with the Department of Aging to enroll qualified inmates into the Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly (PACE) program. This has resulted in an annual savings of \$2.1 million for the Department as well as savings for the Commonwealth in additional rebates from the drug manufacturers.
- The DOC entered into a pilot program at SCI Dallas to reduce energy consumption in water and electric that is projected to save \$1.7 million in five years. The Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA) provides an innovative financing technique that uses cost savings from reduced energy consumption to repay the cost of installing energy conservation measures, such as replacing existing interior and exterior lights with more efficient light emitting diode (LED) lighting.
- The DOC is evaluating the cost benefit of reducing the current round-the-clock presence of utility plant operators in select central utility plants using gas boilers and electric chillers. Since



technology is available to extend facility automated alarms and safety features, we are considering the risk management and regulation compliance if we reduced utility plant operators' hours at night and weekend shifts. The anticipated savings would be about \$1.2 million.

- The DOC signed a food procurement service contract with Aramark Correctional Industries, LLC. By contracting with a single Pennsylvania vendor, with much greater purchasing power and a state-of-the-art inventory management, the DOC estimates it will save at least \$8 million annually. In addition to supporting a Pennsylvania-based business and keeping those dollars in the Commonwealth, we are still able to maintain our staff-delivered food operations within our institutions, including educating inmates on food preparation, determining portions, uncompromised security and adhering to food regulations.
- The DOC is in the process of implementing Correct Pac, the new housekeeping supplies packaged by Correctional Industries. A pilot program has been underway at specific institutions for nearly six months, which includes extensive training to staff and inmates. The program also provides inmate employment in the packaging of the supplies. To date, there has been a savings of 30 percent, with an estimated \$4.5 million savings projected in FY17-18.
- The operational request also reflects a decreased cost in utilities primarily because of converting from heating oil to natural gas at several facilities. Natural gas pipelines have now been installed at the State Correctional Institutions at Camp Hill, Retreat, Dallas and Waymart, as well as the Training Academy.
- The DOC has initiated improvements to its Worker's Compensation Claim Management. Improvements are being made on claims reporting and oversight, accident investigations, improved safety measures and claims settlement. The DOC has reviewed all claims and made determinations to settle where fiscally sound. Approximately \$4.5 million was spent to reduce future claims obligations in excess of \$105 million. The DOC has saved future obligations in the amount of \$101 million from this initiative.

## **BUREAU OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**

The last step in the re-entry treatment is community corrections. The department operates its own community corrections centers as well as contracting with providers (group homes) for community placement of individuals to reintegrate them back into the community.

At the centers, individuals receive 24-hour supervision and can utilize counseling services while working or attending school. These centers provide programming reinforcement during the transition back into the community. The centers also offer alcohol and other drug treatment services, employment assistance, and specialized counseling for hard-to-place individuals.

Because of historically under-performing results of the community corrections system, the department has set a goal to reduce its group home beds by half for FY 2017-18. It is anticipated that this capacity reduction will generate savings of approximately \$37 million.

Working together will allow us to place more focus on the individual, tracking his progress, educational and vocational needs, as well as treatment services from the first day in prison until his last day on parole. It will create a long-term, continuity of care plan for each individual who comes into our system.



## BOARD OF PROBATION AND PAROLE FIELD SUPERVISION

By making our joint administrative efforts more efficient, the DOC and PBPP can improve communication with each other and channel our resources into community supervision. In addition to support services and basic needs such as medicine, housing and employment, we will work with paroled individuals to troubleshoot problems.

Convicted parole violators – reentrants that commit another crime – are returned to prison. That will not change.

What we propose to change is the management of technical parole violators – those persons who do not commit another crime, but still violate conditions of their release, such as a missed appointment, a failed urine test, failure to pay fines or not report a change in address. By responding immediately with a brief punishment, such as a week in a parole violation center or contracted county jail, inappropriate behavior is corrected before it elevates to the level of committing a new crime. This will give parole officers the tools, strategies and resources to hold reentrants accountable.

This model of parole supervision is based on a nationally recognized, evidence-based model known as the Swift, Certain, and Fair (SCF) approach. Several states, like Washington State and North Carolina, have adopted this model for supervising probationers and parolees. Washington State recently implemented an SCF supervision program among all state parolees, and a recent study found that they have had a 20 percent reduction in felony convictions and a 30 percent reduction in violent felony convictions among supervised parolees as a result of using this model. A recent cost-benefit analysis of the SCF supervision model finds that an agency can expect to save \$4 in improved outcomes for every \$1 spent on operating such a model. We expect that introducing this new model might conservatively save the Commonwealth \$4 million during the first year of use.

This 2017–18 budget submission underscores the creation of a newly established Department of Criminal Justice.

Under this framework, approximately 1,196 or more of the PBPP's complement would be transferred to the Department of Criminal Justice, leaving a residual number as board employees.

The nine members of the board, the hearing division, the Office of Board Secretary, and appropriate support staff would comprise the new independent agency with a budget request of \$13.2 million.

All other current functions of the agency would be transferred to the Department of Criminal Justice, including the board's institutional and field parole supervision staff, county probation services, interstate probation and parole service, administrative service, research and statistics.

Supervision in the community by field parole agents is a crucial part of the reentry process as individuals transition from prison to the community. Reentry is a process, not a program and it requires that field agents provide the tools necessary to help reentrants become law-abiding citizens. Field supervision is requesting a \$3.7 million increase in cost to carry funding for personnel funding.

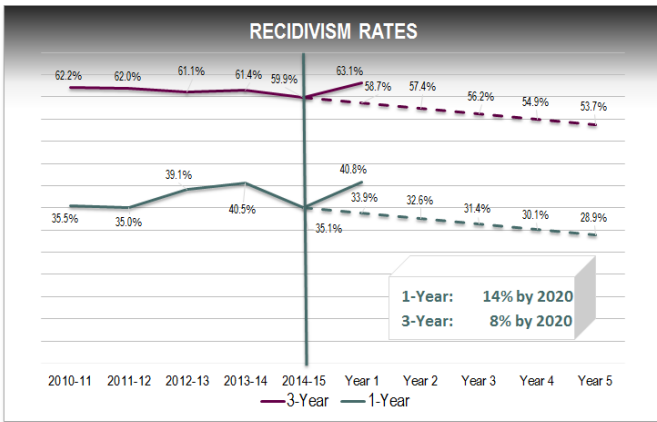
The new structure will allow for enhanced parole decision making along with increase efficient, cost saving and improved public safety through streamlined reentry resources and services.

## RECIDIVISM AND CRIME

Recidivism is defined as the first instance of either re-arrest or re-incarceration to DOC custody within one year or three years after release from DOC custody.

During FY2015-16, recidivism rates increased slightly. Statistically speaking, these increases fall within a normal level of year-to-year variance experienced over the past 10 years, and thus does not represent a substantial increase.

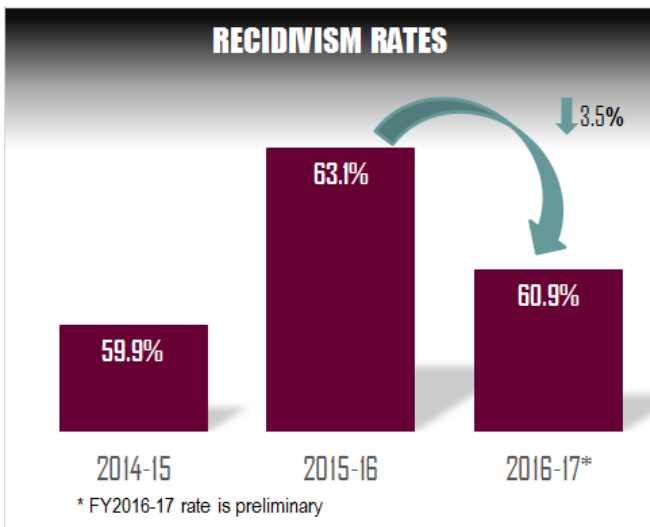
A few challenges have contributed to this slight uptick in recidivism.



First, a larger number of technical parole violators who have not committed new crimes have been returned to DOC custody. Even though many of these technical parole violators are not returned to a State Corrections Institution (SCI), they are being returned to other secure confinement settings like Parole Violator Centers (PVCs).

Second, as a result of the heroin/opioid epidemic, a larger percent of parole violators were returned to the department's custody after testing positive for heroin use.

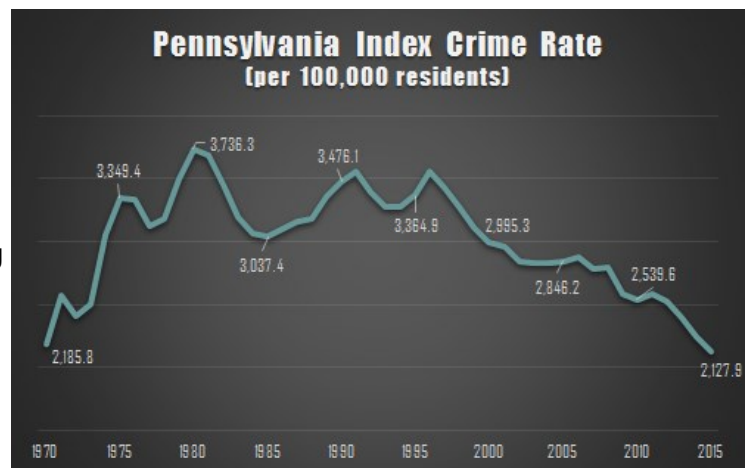
Third, as more low risk individuals are effectively managed outside of prison, the department's remaining population is comprised of increasingly higher risk individuals, meaning that they have higher recidivism rates. Even so, recidivism rates for state prison-only releases declined in FY2015-16. This highlights some of the challenges in community corrections that DOC and PBPP are working together to address.



Despite this slight uptick in recidivism rates in FY2015-16, projections for FY2016-17 indicate that the 3-

year recidivism rate has dropped back down by 3.5 percent.

Pennsylvania crime rates remain low as well. In 2015 (the latest official crime statistics available), violent crime remained essentially the same as in 2014, while property and drug crimes both decreased. The crime rate in Pennsylvania is lower today than it was in 1970. While the DOC inmate population dropped by 2.5 percent from 2013 to 2015, the Pennsylvania crime rate dropped by 4

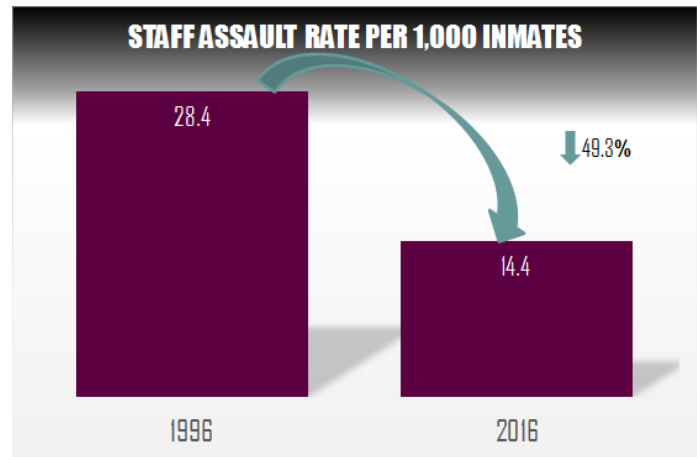
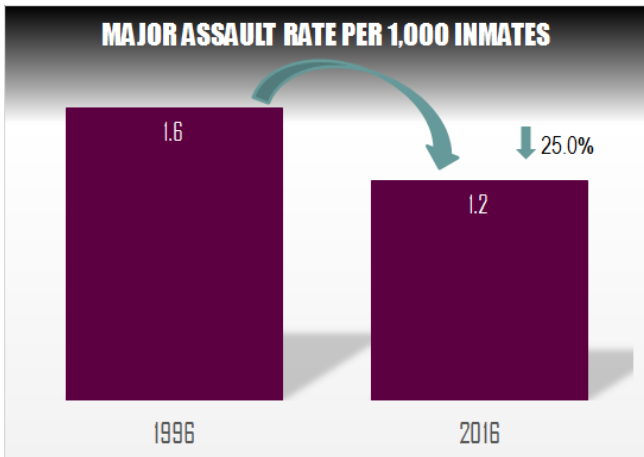
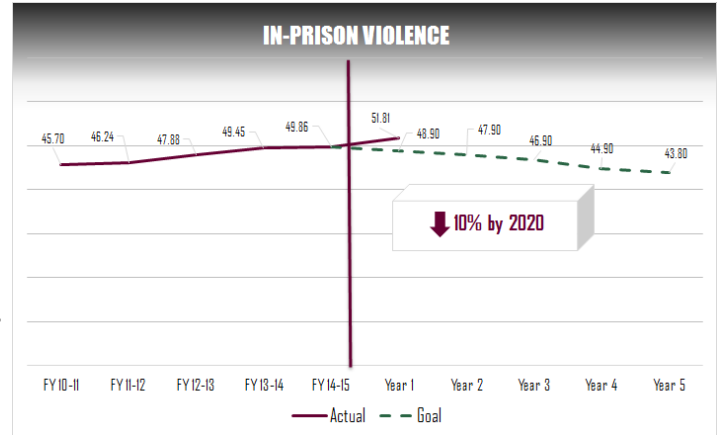


percent during the same time. A recent analysis shows that from 2010 to 2015, the Pennsylvania counties with the largest state prison population reduction showed a crime drop of 10 percent, whereas counties where the state prison population increased only showed a crime drop of 1 percent.

## ASSAULTS IN PRISON

In 2016, assaults on staff were down more than 11 percent and major assaults were down 3 percent. The assault rate on staff in 2016 was nearly half of what it was in 1996 (49 percent), and the major assault rate on staff in 2016 was 29 percent lower than it was in 1996. Although overall inmate on inmate assaults were up slightly last year, major assaults on inmates were 29 percent lower in 2016.

Compared to 22 other states, Pennsylvania has the fifth lowest assault rate, and 75 percent less assaults than in our neighboring state of Ohio. Our prisons in Pennsylvania are safer today than they have been in our past and are comparatively safer than prison systems in many other states.



## REDUCING THE RESTRICTIVE HOUSING POPULATION

In 2015, the department convened a large group of more than 200 DOC staff of all different job classifications, with the dual goals of reducing the use of solitary confinement and also reducing in-prison violence. The department joined forces with a group called BetaGov to assist in this effort.

BetaGov is a nonprofit organization based out of New York University, promoting innovation in government agencies and using rapid, practitioner-led experiments to quickly determine if ideas are effective.

BetaGov services come completely free to the department. Their role is to support the testing of staff ideas. To date, more than 100 trials have been proposed by DOC staff members for reducing in-prison violence and reducing the use of solitary confinement. More than 20 of these trials are already underway, with results expected soon.

This type of experimentation will help us to get better at figuring out what works best for making our prisons safer and our punishments fairer. This model of staff-led experimentation has been so successful that we have extended it to an additional goal of improving staff wellness.

## CONCLUSION



With goals of protecting public safety, transparent operations and fiscal responsibility, reducing prison violence, providing inmates with life-improving and life-sustaining skills and providing employees with the knowledge needed to work in a challenging environment, 2016 was filled with many accomplishments at the facility and department level.

Individuals are getting the services they need at a more-appropriate level of the criminal justice system, thus ensuring appropriate treatment, and saving expensive state prison space for the more violent criminals – those that truly should be separated from society.

Our re-entry programs include drug and alcohol treatment, education, work and community corrections. Since research shows that appropriate programs and proper re-entry practices can reduce recidivism, this is also a public safety issue.

Given that 90 percent of all incarcerated individuals will eventually be released into the community someday, we need to focus on programs and practices that prepare these individuals for responsible, crime-free community living.

**Returning better citizens makes for a safer society, and that's what we are all about.**