

Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry Annual Compliance Review of Specific Statutory and Policy Requirements

Department released 122 of 123 inmates we reviewed within earned release time frames but did not release some inmates 3 months early and did not comply with some reporting requirements; and between 31 and 51 percent of inmate enrollments in its self-improvement, education, and treatment programs ended in noncompletions, potentially impacting inmates' receipt of intended benefits

Audit purpose

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1610.02, we are required to annually review the Department's compliance with statutory requirements related to earned release credit programs, the inmate transition program, and the drug and alcohol treatment program annual report; compliance with its statutory purpose to rehabilitate inmates by reporting programming information; and compliance with its own policies regarding industry-recommended reporting guidelines. Our report is due on or before September 1, each year.

Key findings

The Department:

- Released 122 of 123 inmates we reviewed according to earned release credit program time frames.
- Did not release 1 of 41 eligible inmates to the transition program, and 8 of 41 inmates 3 months early as required because of factors both in and out of its control.
- Has not complied with some statutory reporting requirements related to earned release credit programs, the transition program, and its drug and alcohol treatment programs.
- Offered inmates self-improvement and treatment programs during fiscal year 2022, but between 31 and 51 percent of inmate enrollments ended in noncompletions, potentially resulting in inmates not receiving the intended benefits.
- Continued to have discrepancies in its data related to inmate programming similar to those we previously identified in our 2021 performance audit.
- Did not have its own Department Orders regarding industry-recommended reporting guidelines but sees potential value in developing them.

Key recommendations

The Department should:

- Continue efforts to help ensure eligible inmates are timely released 3 months early to the transition program, as statutorily required.
- Review programming data for unexpected values and duplications; make corrections; and change policies, guidance, and/or trainings or identify and implement system updates that are needed to prevent errors.
- Continue developing and then implement Department Orders related to reporting guidelines to address its noncompliance with statutory reporting requirements we identified.