

State of Arizona Office of the Auditor General

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS SUPPORT SERVICES

Report to the Arizona Legislature By Debra K. Davenport Auditor General

> April 2001 Report No. 01-07

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WILLIAM THOMSON DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL

April 30, 2001

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Jane Dee Hull, Governor

Mr. Terry Stewart, Director Arizona Department of Corrections

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, A Performance Audit of the Arizona Department of Corrections—Support Services. This report is in response to a June 16, 1999, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The performance audit was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by A.R.S. §41-1279 and as part of the Sunset review set forth in A.R.S. §41-2951 et seq. I am also transmitting with this report a copy of the Report Highlights for this audit to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

This is the third in a series of reports to be issued on the Arizona Department of Corrections.

As outlined in its response, the Department agrees with all of the findings and recommendations.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

This report will be released to the public on May 1, 2001.

Sincerely,

Killie Baven

Debbie Davenport Auditor General

Enclosure

Program Fact Sheet



Department of Corrections Support Services

Services: Support Services is one of five subprograms under the Prison Operations program in the Department of Corrections. Its mission is to provide administrative and technical support for functions associated with inmate incarceration. Support Services includes a wide range of program functions, some directly affecting inmates or families, such as classifying inmates' custody levels, calculating sentence lengths, or placing inmates in protective segregation. Other functions support fiscal or administrative activities such as inmate stores, maintenance, and warehouse management.



Equipment: 1,979 vehicles at an original purchase cost of over \$35 million

91 buses 539 cars 470 vans

879 trucks



Personnel: 1,177.5 full-time equivalents

90 at the Department's central office

1,087.5 at the various prison facilities

Program Goals (Fiscal Years 2001-03):

Although the Support Services area covers 12 functions, the Department has established only 2 goals:

- 1. To reduce costs in the prisons; and
- 2. To process requests for Protective Segregation consistent with the parameters outlined in Department policy.

The Department should consider establishing additional goals for Support Services. Currently, there are no goals for important functions, such as inmate classification and time computation for inmates' sentence lengths.

Further, the first goal, reducing prison costs, is overly broad and does not provide sufficient guidance on specific program costs to be included. For example, the Department has not identified specific areas to reduce prison costs.

Adequacy of Performance Measures:

The Department has developed two performance measures for the first goal, which is to lower costs at the prisons. Specifically, the Department has developed an input and output measure, but has not developed outcome, efficiency, and quality measures for this goal. The input measure tracks the amount of operating costs at the prisons, and the output measure tracks the percent reduction in costs at the prisons. The performance measures for this goal could also be more specific. For example, the output measure refers to "percent of reduction in costs" without reference to specific areas where cost reductions could be realized.

The Department has also developed two performance measures for the second goal, which is to properly process inmates' requests for Protective Segregation. Similar to the first goal, the Department has developed an input and an output measure, but has not developed outcome, efficiency, and quality measures for this goal. The input measure tracks the average number of days needed to review an inmate's Protective Segregation request. The output measure tracks the reduction in the number of days to process an inmate's Protective Segregation request. While both of these measures track the process for requesting Protective Segregation, they do not examine outcomes of the program. Potential outcomes could include such things as reductions in inmate assaults or homicides.

SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit and Sunset review of Support Services at the Arizona Department of Corrections, in response to a June 16, 1999, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. This performance audit was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1279 and as part of the Sunset review set forth in A.R.S. §41-2951 et seq. The audit is the third in a series of six audits of the Department of Corrections. Audit reports on Security Operations and Human Resources Management have already been issued (Auditor General Reports No. 00-20 and 01-04). The remaining areas to be audited are Agency Infrastructure, Private Prisons, and Arizona Correctional Industries.

Support Services, a subprogram of the Department's Prison Operations program, provides administrative and technical support for prison operations activities. Support Services functions include a variety of administrative and inmate-related services, including calculating inmate release dates, overseeing financial transactions and operations of inmate stores, and assigning inmates to protective segregation.

The Department Can Further Ensure That Inmate Release Dates Are Calculated Accurately (See pages 7 through 14)

Although the Department generally calculates inmates' sentences correctly, a small number of inmates continue to be released earlier or later than their correct release dates, increasing the Department's financial liability. When the Auditor General examined sentence length calculations in 1990, the Department had released 64 inmates, or 1 percent, either too late or too early in 1988. In 1999, the error rate was .28 percent. Errors have been reduced partly because the Department has improved its automation practices and because new state statutes effective in 1994 have made it easier for the Department's Time Computation and Records Unit to calculate release dates. Generally, all inmates sentenced under the 1994 Truth in Sentencing statute must serve at least 85 percent of their sentences.

Although errors occur for only a small percentage of total releases, they can create a financial liability for the State. Not only may the Department be liable for harm done by an inmate released early, but since 1995, the Department has paid \$124,500 in lawsuits brought by four inmates who were released late.

Errors stem from several sources, requiring action on several fronts. To reduce errors made by employees who do the computations, the Department should develop a technical manual and a checklist or some other means to review new staff's work. The Department should also improve communication between prison offices and other administrative units. Additionally, the Department is also scheduling a replacement for the computer program that calculates sentences. Finally, it should also work with Arizona courts to reduce errors in transferring sentencing documents between the courts and the Department.

Department Needs to Improve the Business Offices and Inmate Stores (See pages 15 through 20)

The Department generally has appropriate procedures for financial and related transactions at its prisons, but recent experience shows that it needs to ensure that employees adhere more carefully to these procedures. For example, one employee was convicted of stealing about \$118,000 between 1992 and 1995 when the business office did not ensure that cash-handling duties were adequately segregated among the business office's staff. Additionally, another employee at this same prison complex has been charged with stealing about \$72,000 from 1998 through 2000. The Department should require prison business managers to ensure that staff at business offices adequately follow Department policies and that duties involving cash and other assets are adequately segregated among staff.

The Department also needs to improve its management of the inmate stores, which sell snacks and other items to inmates at each prison. These stores generated over \$18 million in sales in fiscal year 2000. In 1999, a Department task force issued a report on these stores and identified many ways in which operations could be improved. For example, the Department had no systemwide approach to tracking inventory and inmate purchases. The task force recommended a variety of immediate to long-term strategies to improve store operations, such as implementing a training program for officers and inmates working in the stores, developing a statewide computerized store system requiring perpetual inventories, and establishing store space based on inmate population and security level. However, the Department has not established a plan to implement these recommendations.

Other Pertinent Information (See pages 21 through 25)

The audit also presents information about the Department's protective segregation program. Protective segregation is a correctional management tool that separates inmates who face threats of violence from other inmates in the general population. Inmates may apply for protective segregation or be placed involuntarily, based on staff assessment and the inmate's history. Although many inmates request placement in protective segregation, few are approved. However, the Department places many inmates at alternative housing units.

The Department has recently revised its protective segregation policies to respond to a lawsuit filed by many inmates who disagreed with its management of the program. The new policies, first revised in March 1998 and finalized in January 2000, include changes for increasing inmate safety while applying for protective segregation, such as requiring the Department to immediately move inmates requesting protection to secure cells segregated from other inmates. Additionally, the policies require each prison to have one officer designated as a specialist for all protective segregation issues. As of July 2000 the lawsuit has been conditionally dismissed, with the agreement that an independent monitor will review the program periodically for at least 12 months. (This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit of Support Services at the Arizona Department of Corrections, in response to a June 16, 1999, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. This performance audit was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1279 and as part of the Sunset review set forth in A.R.S. §41-2951 et seq. The audit is the third in a series of six audits of the Department of Corrections. Audit reports on Security Operations and Human Resources have already been issued (Auditor General Reports No. 00-20 and 01-04). The remaining areas to be audited are Agency Infrastructure, Private Prisons, and Arizona Correctional Industries.

Support Services Functions

Support Services, a subprogram of the Department's Prison Operations program, provides administrative and technical support for prison operations activities. Support Services functions can be grouped under inmate-related services and administrative services. Inmate-related functions include services such as calculating inmate release dates, inmate classification, and assigning inmates to protective segregation. Administrative functions include inmate stores, maintenance, and fiscal management.

Staffing and Budget

Support Services has 1,177.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Because Support Services administers a variety of areas, some staff work at the central office in Phoenix while others are stationed at the ten prison complexes. For example, some of the 90 central office staff under Support Services maintain master inmate record files, oversee Department budgets, or calculate inmate sentences. In contrast, the 1,087.5 Support Services staff at prisons have responsibilities such as classifying inmates, conducting protective segregation reviews, keeping fiscal records up to date, or maintaining Department vehicles. As shown in Table 1 (see page 3), for fiscal year 2001 the Department is estimated to receive approximately \$129 million in revenues for Support Services, of which about \$126 million were General Fund appropriations.

Department Has Improved Since Previous Audits

The Auditor General's Office has conducted four previous audits that included functions of Support Services in the Department of Corrections. These audits identified a number of problems, most of which have been substantially corrected since the audits were issued.

The Department has improved its classification system—The Department has made changes in its classification system to improve how inmates are assessed for security risks to the public and to other inmates and staff. After a 1985 report (Auditor General Report No. 85-12) had found that the classification process misclassified inmates and increased security risks, the Department adopted a new classification model that is more objective and appears to be used appropriately. A 1991 audit (Auditor General Report No. 91-4) first reported on the new system, and the current audit did not identify any issues with classification. Additionally, consultants hired by the Auditor General's Office to assist with the Security Operations audit (Auditor General Report No. 00-20) stated that they believed the classification policy conformed to sound correctional practices, although they did not review the process in depth.

The Department has made several improvements to its fleet management—The Department has improved practices for managing its vehicle fleet since an earlier audit. A report in 1986 (Auditor General Report No. 86-3) found that the Department's vehicle fleet was poorly maintained and that many vehicles were old and had high mileage, resulting in high operating costs. The current audit found that the Department had improved its fleet

The Department has improved inmate classification and fleet management, although it still needs to make some improvements to the time computation process.

Table 1

Arizona Department of Corrections— Support Services Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Other Financing Uses Years Ended or Ending June 30, 1999, 2000, and 2001 (Unaudited)

	1999 (Actual)	2000 (Actual)	2001 (Estimated)
Revenues:			
Appropriations:			
State General Fund ¹	\$84,893,200	\$83,911,800	\$126,279,900 ²
Corrections Fund ³	13,496,000	1,074,100	1,083,500
Sales and charges for goods and services	568,267	702,237	702,200
Interest	371,209	27	
Intergovernmental	257,426	125,164	125,200
Fines and forfeits	18,061	28,137	28,100
Private gifts, grants, and donations	16,061	66,788	66,800
Other	362,026	284,937	284,900
Total revenues	99,982,250	86,193,190	128,570,600
Expenditures:			
Personal services	21,850,890	25,277,839	56,529,800 ²
Employee related	3,420,429	3,744,469	16,769,100 ²
Professional and outside services	78,336	24,898	1,259,000 ²
Travel, in-state	431,205	443,100	451,000
Travel, out-of-state	34,038	30,896	
Food	31,317,758	30,796,631	37,454,500 ²
Aid to individuals and organizations	375,073	288,230	430,600
Other operating	33,693,392	21,222,531	14,351,700 ²
Buildings and equipment	8,530,425	3,471,684	573,900
Total expenditures	99,731,546	85,300,278	127,819,600
Excess of revenues over expenditures	250,704	892,912	751,000
Other financing sources (uses):			
Net operating transfers in (out)	(9,721)	351,724	(18,900)
Remittances to the State General Fund	(675,174)	(795,119)	(732,100)
Total other financing sources (uses)	(684,895)	(443,395)	(751,000)
Excess of revenues and other sources over expenditures			
and other uses	<u>\$ (434,191)</u>	<u>\$ 449,517</u>	<u>\$0</u>

¹ The actual State General Fund appropriation includes amounts appropriated as special line items for food and discharge costs and shown net of reversions to the State General Fund.

² These amounts are significantly different for 2001 because the Department is realigning costs and their related funding sources. In addition, the 2001 amounts for personal services and employee-related expenditures do not include a reduction for estimated vacancies.

³ The appropriation, supported by alcohol and tobacco taxes, is primarily for the construction, purchase or lease, and maintenance of correctional and state-operated juvenile facilities. The final \$12.4 million payment on a contract for additional prison capacity was made in 1999; consequently, the Correctional Fund Appropriation decreased significantly in 2000.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Arizona Financial Information System (AFIS) *Accounting Event Extract File* for the year ended June 30, 1999 and 2000, and estimates for the year ended June 30, 2001, provided by the Department of Corrections.

maintenance program. For example, the Department now has a central office fleet administrator who tracks operating costs, purchases, and repairs at all prisons. Additionally, the Department purchased a software program to manage its fleet more efficiently. The program, currently used at three of the prisons, includes a vehicle inventory and schedules each vehicle's maintenance.

Although the Department has improved its time computation process, some problems remain—The Auditor General's Office reviewed the time computation process as part of a 1990 audit (Auditor General Report No. 90-12) and found several problems. The current audit found that the Department has made improvements to the process of calculating inmates' sentences but needs to make further changes to correct problems. See Finding I (pages 7 through 14) for issues and recommendations in this area.

Scope and Methodology

In addition to following up on inmate classification and fleet management problems reported in previous audits, this audit focused on two main areas where issues were identified during preliminary audit work: the time computation process, and business management practices at two prison complexes' business offices and inmate stores. The report contains findings and recommendations as follows:

- Improvements are needed to ensure accuracy in calculating the lengths of inmate sentences and;
- Improvements are needed in business management practices at prison business offices and inmate stores.

The audit also provides other pertinent information concerning the status of the Department's protective segregation program.

Auditors used several approaches in reviewing time computation. These approaches included:

- Reviewing documents such as Department policies, training materials, procedures for sentence calculations, and Time Computation and Records Unit logs of phone calls to the unit and letters from inmates;
- Observing the Time Computation and Records Unit's procedures for manually verifying information on sentence calculations;
- Analyzing sources of errors in inmate releases, based on the Department's release error reports for calendar years 1996 through 1999;
- Interviewing Corrections staff and court staff who prepare sentencing documents;
- Interviewing staff from the American Correctional Association; and
- Interviewing staff from five state Departments of Corrections.¹

Similarly, auditors used several methods to examine business management practices, including

- Reviewing Department reports and documents such as internal audits, business management policies, the prison activities and recreation fund report, and Department financial statements on inmate stores;
- Observing or examining internal controls relating to purchasing products and managing cash for inmate stores at seven prisons (Douglas, Florence, Perryville, Safford, Tucson, Winslow, and Yuma) and inventory for six prisons (Douglas, Perryville, Safford, Tucson, Winslow, and Yuma) and conduct-

¹ The five states contacted were California, Colorado, Florida, Texas, and Washington. Colorado, Washington, and Florida have achieved proficiency in automating their correctional systems, according to a national survey. Additionally, Texas and California were interviewed to learn how the time computation function is managed in states with large inmate populations and the responsibility for calculating a high volume of inmate releases each year.

ing tests of individual transactions for inmate banking and inmate stores at four prisons (Douglas, Florence, Perryville, and Yuma); and

■ Interviewing central office and prison business managers and inmate store staff.

This audit was conducted in accordance with government auditing standards.

The Auditor General and staff express appreciation to the Director of the Department of Corrections and his staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

FINDING I

THE DEPARTMENT CAN FURTHER ENSURE INMATE RELEASE DATES ARE CALCULATED ACCURATELY

The Department makes errors that, although infrequent, cause inmates to be released from prison late or early. These errors stem both from mistakes by Department staff and from defects in the computer program that calculates sentence lengths. Since these errors lead to potential liability for the Department, preventing them is an important function of the corrections system. Further, although the Department has improved its procedures to minimize errors, there are further steps the Department can take.

Time Computation and Records Unit Calculates Inmates Release Dates Based on Various Factors

The Department's Time Computation and Records Unit uses several factors to calculate release dates. An inmate's release date depends on such aspects as court sentencing decisions, statutory requirements in effect at the time of the offense, and disciplinary sanctions the inmate may receive during incarceration. The unit calculates an inmate's release date at least twice, once upon arrival at the Department and again shortly before the inmate is scheduled to be released. Nearly all inmate sentences, including sentences under the 1994 Truth in Sentencing statutes, provide some flexibility in release date so that an inmate who displays good behavior may be released into community supervision or paroled near the end of his or her sentence, while an inmate who behaves disruptively or violently must remain in prison until the end of the sentence.

Improvements Since Last Audit Have Reduced Incorrect Calculations

The Department has improved its sentence calculation function since a 1990 audit. However, a few inmates continue to be released early or late each year. The Department faces potential financial liability when such release errors occur.

Prior audit identified time computation deficiencies—The Auditor General's Office audited time computation as part of a report on Bed Space Impacts (Auditor General Report No. 90-12) in 1990 and found that 64 inmates, or about 1 percent of 5,300 releases in 1988, were released either early or late. The report identified several factors contributing to errors in the calculation of release dates. First, Arizona had a complex release system with nine release types based on statutes applicable on the date of offense. In addition, the Department's computer system could not reliably calculate release dates, and the Department also lacked a procedures manual to assist technicians in calculating dates manually.

Action taken to simplify and improve calculation process— Since the 1990 audit, the Department has improved its automation practices and legislative changes have simplified release codes. For example, the Department has increased the reliability of its computer calculation program. Additionally, all staff within the Department's time computation area now have access to computer terminal work stations. Further, the Legislature passed the Truth in Sentencing statute, effective January 1, 1994, which made it easier for the Time Computation and Records Unit to calculate sentences for inmates convicted since 1994. Generally, all inmates sentenced under Truth in Sentencing must serve at least 85 percent of their sentence. ¹

Some incorrect calculations still occur—Although the Department has reduced sentence calculation problems, it continues to make a few release errors. Inmates released in error represent a

¹ The Director can authorize certain inmates for supervised release up to 90 days early. This option is not available for inmates convicted of some violent crimes.



very small percentage of total inmates released. For example, the Department released 31 inmates in error during calendar year 1999, which accounted for only .28 percent of the total number of inmates released that year. Table 2 (see page 10) shows the number of inmates released either late or early in calendar years 1996 through 1999.

Examples of release errors in 1999 included the following:

- An inmate at the Perryville prison was released 77 days after the end of her sentence because the number of jail credits, or days, was entered as 83 rather than 353 into the computer system by an intake staff member. Although court documents showed the right number of credits, Time Computation and Records Unit staff did not discover and correct the mistake in the review of the inmate's information. The inmate tried unsuccessfully to have the sentence calculation reexamined through letters to the Time Computation and Records Unit and wardens at Perryville. The mistake was detected when a Perryville records supervisor reviewed the file and alerted the Time Computation and Records Unit.
- An inmate was released from the Florence prison 83 days early because staff at the prison's records office failed to seek a confirmation of the correct release date from the Time Computation and Records Unit. Department policy requires confirmation of inmate release dates from the Time Compu-

The Department releases a very small number of inmates either too early or too late. tation and Records Unit. The inmate was returned to custody 13 days later.

An inmate was released 743 days early from the Tucson prison because a Yuma County superior court forwarded copies of only one of two sentences to the Department. Therefore, the Department was unaware of one of the inmate's sentences. The inmate was out of custody for six days.

		Table 2		
Arizona Department of Corrections—Support Services Inmate Release Errors Years Ended December 31, 1996 through 1999				
	1996	1997	1998	1999
Inmates released late	27	15	22	18
Inmates released early	4	8	3	<u>13</u>
Total release errors	<u>31</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>13</u> <u>31</u>
Total releases	14,418	11,967	12,576	10,924

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Time Computation and Records Unit's reports for years ended December 31,1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999.

Errors place the Department at financial risk—Such errors, while a small portion of total releases, place the Department at financial risk. From calendar years 1995 to 2000, the Department has paid \$124,500 in lawsuits brought by four inmates who were released late, including one inmate released 777 days late. Additionally, although most inmates released early are returned quickly to custody, some inmates may remain out of custody for several days. For example, in 1999 two inmates were out of custody 31 days each. According to Department management, the Department may be liable for harm done by an inmate released too early, although no records to date show damage or harm.

Department Can Take Action to Continue to Reduce Errors

Although the Department has succeeded in reducing release errors since the last audit, it can take action to reduce errors further. As Figure 1 shows (see page 12), several areas—the Time Computation and Records Unit, prison records offices, courts, and the Department's computer system—impact the inmate release process. The Department should therefore consider multiple strategies to minimize problems in each area.

Implement more technical guidance for staff who perform time computation duties—To continue to reduce errors made by the Time Computation and Records Unit, the Department should improve its guidance for staff. The Department's records show that Time Computation and Records Unit staff were solely responsible for eight release errors in calendar year 1999. No procedures manual has been available to guide staff in calculating release dates, although the previous audit in 1990 had recommended that the Department develop a manual. Additionally, supervisors were not using a consistent method to review new employees' work. In order to reduce potential for error, the Department should provide staff a technical procedures manual regarding release date calculation and consider implementing checklists for supervisors and other trainers to follow in reviewing new staff's work.

Ensure records and intake staff know procedures—The Department needs to improve technical assistance and resources for prison records offices in order to ensure that staff follow procedures and avoid errors. Staff performing intake or release confirmation procedures in records offices accounted for five release errors in 1999. However, records office staff have not had a technical procedures manual to guide their work, and supervisors have cited a lack of sufficient training opportunities. Additionally, records offices may experience problems in communicating in a timely manner with the Time Computation and Records Unit regarding questions because this unit receives over 500 to 600 calls each week from prison offices, courts, inmate families, and others. However, e-mail, which could be an effective alternative, was available for only three records offices at the time of the audit. To continue to reduce errors, the Department should develop a procedures manual for prison records offices, provide more training on procedures, and also consider building in email capacity for all prison offices in future upgrades of its information technology resources.

The Department should provide a technical manual for staff who calculate inmates' release dates.



Arizona Department of Corrections—Support Services Sequence of Steps Impacting Inmate Release Dates As of December 2000

Step 1: State courts

Sentence inmate and send documents to Department of Corrections intake center.

Step 2: Department intake staff

Enter data from court documents to AIMS (Adult Inmate Management System) computer program.

Step 3: AIMS computer program

Calculates inmate release date.

Step 4: Time Computation and Records Unit

- Verifies data entry of department intake staff against court documents.
- Manually verifies all AIMS calculations.

Step 5: Prison disciplinary offices and records offices

- Records disciplinary penalties that may affect release dates.
- Requests verification of release date prior to inmate release.

Step 6: Time Computation and Records Unit

Sends verification of inmate release date to prison records offices.

Source: Auditor General staff summary of Department policies and procedures for inmate releases.

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The Department's computer occasionally makes errors in calculating inmates' release dates.

Build in upgrades to computer program as part of future system *improvements*—Because the Department's computer program has continued to make some errors even after a major update, the Department needs to ensure that these problems are addressed in any future repair or upgrade of its computer system. From 1998 to 2000 the Department paid a consultant \$127,898 to update the calculation program, enabling Time Computation and Records Unit staff to more accurately calculate release dates for inmates convicted under the 1994 Truth in Sentencing Statute. As a result, error rates for computer calculations of Truth in Sentencing release dates are now estimated as approximately 1 percent. However, older statutory codes continue to have computer calculation error rates ranging from 3 percent for codes between 1978 and 1993 to 16 percent for codes prior to 1978, and random errors also continue to occur.¹ To remedy these ongoing problems, the Department's strategic plan includes a new computer calculation system to be implemented in June 2003.

Continue to work with courts in reducing errors—The Department should continue to explore methods of reducing errors that result from missing or erroneous information from the courts. One way to help do so may be to transfer sentencing documents electronically between the courts and the Department. Currently, when courts omit information or include erroneous information in sentencing documents, the Department's Time Computation and Records Unit staff writes or makes phone calls to the court to request changes or corrections. For example, staff make about 60 to 70 queries per month asking judges to clarify sentencing instructions. In contrast, electronic data transfer, recently implemented in Colorado and being tested in other states, allows corrections agencies to receive court documents electronically and return them if information needs to be changed.

¹ Computer calculation error rates were based on Auditor General staff analysis of data on sentencing structures for 26,287 active inmates as of June 1, 2000.

Recommendations

- 1. The Department should develop a technical procedures manual for Time Computation and Records Unit staff who perform inmate sentence calculations.
- 2. The Department should consider implementing checklists for Time Computation and Records Unit supervisors to follow in checking new staff's work.
- 3. The Department should develop a technical procedures manual for prison records office staff who perform inmate intake or release confirmation procedures.
- 4. The Department should provide additional training for prison records office staff.
- 5. As part of its overall plan for information technology, the Department should consider building in e-mail capacity for all prison offices to quickly communicate questions and information to its Time Computation and Records Unit.
- 6. As part of its overall plan for information technology, the Department should consider correcting problems associated with its computer calculation program.
- 7. The Department should explore with state courts the feasibility of transferring sentencing documents electronically.

FINDING II

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN OPERATIONS OF BUSINESS OFFICES AND INMATE STORES

The Department can make improvements to operations within its business offices and its inmate stores. Although these offices and stores have an adequate set of procedures in place for controlling financial transactions, employees occasionally circumvent these procedures. At one of the prison's business offices, staff stole significant amounts of cash. In addition, an internal Department task force reviewing inmate stores also identified a number of other ways to make store operations more efficient. The Department should develop a plan for addressing the task force's findings and recommendations.

Business Offices and Inmate Stores Conduct Many Transactions

Within the Department, financial transactions occur both in business offices and inmate stores. The Department divides oversight for financial activities between a central business office, which allocates and monitors the prisons' budgets, and prisonlevel business offices, whose staff conduct and record transactions such as equipment purchases. The Department also operates at least one inmate store at each prison unit. The stores sell snacks and other items at a markup of 10 percent. For fiscal year 2000, the stores generated over \$18 million in sales. Profits generated by the stores are deposited in the Department's Activities and Recreation Fund and are used for items and services to benefit inmates. Inmates are allowed to purchase items from the store once a week by filling out an order form, and the funds are deducted from their inmate bank accounts.

Stronger Adherence to Procedures Needed for Financial Transactions

The procedures that the Department has established for transactions within its business offices and inmate stores are generally sound. However, the Department needs to do more to ensure that these procedures are followed. In recent years, staff have stolen significant amounts of money from one of the prison's business offices. The Department should ensure that business office staff duties involving cash and other assets are appropriately segregated and that staff adequately follow policies.

Internal control procedures established by the Department are generally adequate—The Department's procedures and practices for conducting financial transactions at two business offices and seven inmate stores are generally adequate. As part of an internal control review, auditors reviewed internal controls at business offices in two prisons, inventory procedures at inmate stores at six prisons, and cash and purchasing procedures at inmate stores in seven prisons. Auditors identified no significant weaknesses in the procedures the Department and the prisons had established.

Procedures have been circumvented in the past—Although the Department has acceptable procedures for managing cash and other assets, it needs to do more to ensure that these procedures are followed. The need for close adherence to procedures is best seen at the Tucson prison, where in two separate incidents, employees stole and allegedly stole thousands of dollars:

- A staff member in the Tucson prison's business office was convicted of stealing approximately \$118,000 between 1992 and 1995. This staff member was responsible for preparing deposits of cash and checks received by the Department. She stole cash and substituted checks received at a later date that matched the amount of cash that should have been deposited into the bank.
- From 1998 through 2000, another business office staff member from the Tucson prison business office allegedly stole approximately \$72,000. She has been charged with stealing cash

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The business offices and inmate stores we reviewed had adequate practices.

In two separate incidents, employees stole and allegedly stole thousands of dollars. received from the inmate stores and parole violators by substituting it with checks generated from the inmate banking system payable to the Department. She also allegedly wrote herself checks from abandoned accounts in the inmate banking system.

Although the Department's central business office ultimately discovered these thefts, a lack of adherence to procedures first allowed these thefts to occur. More specifically,

- Contrary to Department policy, some of the business office's duties, including receiving the monies and preparing deposit slips, were not adequately segregated among the business office's staff.
- Business office staff did not make prompt deposits to the bank, even though Department policy requires deposits to be made "as soon as possible after receipt."
- The staff member who allegedly stole money from 1998 through 2000 lacked adequate supervision, which contributed to her ability to write checks to herself.

Department needs to ensure procedures are followed—To reduce the likelihood that theft could occur in the future, the Department should require business managers to ensure that staff at the prisons' business offices adequately follow Department policies. Additionally, the Department should require duties involving cash and other assets to be adequately segregated among staff.

Auditors found evidence that some procedures had been strengthened since the more recent theft at Tucson. For example, the Department developed technical manuals to assist prison business managers, and at the Tucson prison, the business manager created new financial reports designed to help discover discrepancies. In addition, duties involving cash handling at the Tucson prison business office have been segregated among the business office staff.

Operations at Inmate Stores Can Be Made More Efficient

An internal Department task force, called the Venture Team, issued a report on inmate store operations in 1999 and found many inefficiencies. The Department has not developed a plan for implementing the team's recommendations.

Venture Team identified problems at inmate stores—The Venture Team identified several types of problems or inefficiencies:

- No systemwide computerized system was in place for maintaining and tracking inventory and purchases from the stores. For example, only one unit used a Universal Product Code (UPC) scanner to record sales and produce some store records. Moreover, there was no computer system to automatically deduct inmates' store purchases from their Inmate Banking System accounts. Currently, most store managers use hard copy computer printouts to determine whether inmates have enough money to cover their purchases.
- The types of sales equipment used also vary among stores. Many stores use 10-key adding machines to add up purchases, while others use non-networked computers and/or cash registers.

Department should develop a plan to implement Venture Team recommendations for inmate stores—The Department should develop a plan to implement the Venture Team's recommendations for the inmate stores, which included near-term, intermediate-term, and long-term recommendations. Near-term recommendations included developing an inmate store training program for officers and inmates working in the stores, developing a technical manual for store operations systemwide, and standardizing inmate store processes, recordkeeping, and reporting. Midterm recommendations included developing a statewide computerized store system with bar-coded inmate identification cards, merchandise scanners, and the ability to interface with the inmate banking system; requiring perpetual inventories and conducting random inventories for comparison against the perpetual inventory; and others. Long-term recommendations included establishing store space based on inmate population,

The Department task force identified many improvements for the inmate stores. security level, and other requirements; installing video monitors in the stores; and, where practical, purchasing store product on a statewide basis to realize quantity discounts.

Although the Department has not developed a plan for implementing the Venture Team's recommendations, it has taken steps to improve operations at the inmate stores. For example, the Tucson prison is piloting a software program that uses pointof-sale information to control inmate store inventory. Additionally, the program tracks inmates' Inmate Banking System accounts, spending, and the types of products they are allowed to purchase, depending on their custody level.

Recommendations

- 1. The Department should require prison business office managers to ensure that duties involving cash and other assets are adequately segregated among staff.
- 2. The Department should ensure that each prison's business office staff adequately follow Department polices for handling cash and other assets.
- 3. The Department should develop an inmate store training program for officers and inmates who work in the stores.
- 4. The Department should develop a technical manual for store operations systemwide.
- 5. The Department should standardize inmate store processes, recordkeeping, and reporting.
- 6. The Department should develop a plan for reviewing, and where feasible, implementing the Venture Team's remaining recommendations for the inmate stores.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

During the audit, auditors developed other pertinent information about the Department's policies and practices for managing inmates in protective segregation. The Department has recently revised its protective segregation policies in response to a lawsuit filed by inmates who disagreed with the Department's management of the program.

Protective Segregation Intended to Protect Inmates

Protective Segregation (PS) is a correctional management tool that separates inmates who face threats of violence from other inmates in the general population. Placement in PS can either be voluntary, based on the inmate's request, or involuntary, based on staff judgment and the inmate's prior PS history. Inmates may require protection for a variety of reasons, including problems former gang members have with current gang members, outstanding gambling or drug debts owed to other inmates, or because they have a particularly vulnerable appearance or attitude.

The Department houses inmates in PS at several units throughout the prison system. As of August 30, 2000, 693 inmates, or about 2.6 percent of the total inmate population, were in the PS Program. As illustrated in Table 3 (see page 22), the majority of the PS inmates are housed at the Lewis prison complex.

Process Used to Determine Placement in Protective Segregation

The Department has implemented a policy and practices designed to identify and safeguard inmates with legitimate protection needs. The Department's policy describes the following process:

Protective segregation separates inmates who are in danger from other inmates in the general population.

Table 3

Arizona Department of Corrections— Support Services Number of Inmates in Protective Segregation by Prison Complex As of August 2000

Prison Complex	Number
Lewis—Stiner	318
Lewis—Morey	252
Eyman SMU—I	102
Eyman SMU—II	9
Tucson—Rincon	6
Perryville—Lumley	3
Phoenix—Flamenco	2
Tucson Health Unit	1
	<u>693</u>

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Department's *Approved Protective Segregation Report* for August 30, 2000.

- Inmate or staff initiates process—Either an inmate or a staff member can request initiation of the PS process. In either case, staff from the unit are required to immediately secure the inmate in a detention cell away from other inmates. An officer then documents information regarding the reasons why protection may be necessary for the inmate. For example, the officer asks the inmate for the names of any inmates who may have assaulted or threatened this inmate. This information is given to the prison's designated PS Specialist, who also interviews the inmate.
- Investigation conducted—The unit deputy warden reviews the preliminary information gathered by the PS officer. If an investigation appears to be necessary, he/she initiates a formal investigation. For example, officers interview the inmate regarding his or her reasons for requesting protection, and compile a report.



- Prison complex officials make recommendations—The unit's deputy warden reviews the investigation results and recommends returning the inmate to his or her general population unit, housing the inmate at another unit, or continuing the PS process. The prison complex warden reviews the deputy warden's report and makes his or her own recommendation to the Central Office. The warden may also request additional investigation of the case.
- Central office committee decides outcome—The Department's Protective Segregation Committee, composed of the PS administrator and two central office staff, reviews the prison's recommendations and determines whether the inmate will be allowed into PS.

If inmates do not agree with the Department's decision, they may appeal it. The final decision to uphold or deny the inmate's appeal is made by the deputy director for Prison Operations.
Most Requests for Protective Segregation Denied

Although many inmates request placement in the Department's protective segregation program, few are approved. For example, from March 1998 through March 2000, 4,082 inmates requested placement in PS. Of these, the Department made decisions regarding 3,713 and approved only 438. However, the Department placed about half of the inmates (2,086) at alternative housing units. In addition to the inmates who requested PS, Department staff identified 1,145 inmates for possible placement in the PS program. Of these, the Department approved 165 for PS, and placed 636 in an alternative housing unit.

Lawsuit Affects Department's Ability to Involuntarily Transfer Protective Segregation Inmates

A 1996 lawsuit led to changes in Department policy regarding the transfer of inmates out of protective segregation. In 1995, Department management was planning to transfer approximately 300 PS inmates into general population units. As a result, approximately 170 inmates filed lawsuits, claiming that they would be in danger in general population units. In late 1995, the court stayed and consolidated all of the individual lawsuits and appointed attorneys for the inmates. In early 1996, the inmates' attorneys filed a class action lawsuit against the Department on behalf of all inmates in PS, and requested that the court direct the Department to implement policies and procedures to safeguard these inmates.

The court has ruled on the Department's ability to transfer inmates out of PS into general population units. In 1997, the court ruled that the Department could transfer PS inmates to general population units as long as the Department submitted a plan describing how it could ensure the inmates' safety. In July 1997, the Department submitted the required plan and the court held a hearing in early 1998. The inmates' attorneys and the Department entered into a stipulation that the court later approved.

Inmates filed lawsuits preventing the Department from transferring them to the general population. This stipulation provided the Department with two years to develop a more comprehensive plan and required the Department to not involuntarily transfer any PS inmate to a general population unit during the two-year period.

In response to the lawsuit, the Department has made changes to its PS policies and procedures and in February 2000, submitted a plan to the court that outlines its changes. The new policies, first revised by the Department in March 1998, and finalized in January 2000, require the Department to immediately move inmates requesting protection to secure cells segregated from other inmates. Additionally, the policies require each prison warden to designate one correctional officer to serve as the prison's coordinator and specialist for all PS issues. Further, the Department now houses most PS inmates at its newest prison, the Lewis complex. Finally, the Department's plan provides some improvements to PS inmates' conditions of confinement. For example, according to the Department, services such as medical and mental health are now comparable to those provided to general population inmates of the same classification levels.

As of July 28, 2000, the lawsuit has been conditionally dismissed. The inmates' attorneys and the Department have agreed to have an independent monitor assess the Department's PS program for a minimum of 12 months and produce quarterly progress reports.

The Department modified its protective segregation policies in response to a lawsuit. (This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

Agency Response

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April 19, 2001

Debra K. Davenport Auditor General State of Arizona 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410 Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Re: Auditor General's Performance Audit Support Services Final Report Response

Dear Ms. Davenport:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the revised preliminary draft of the Support Services Audit report. I believe the report accurately reflects the performance level of this function, and it also identifies appropriate areas for continued development and improvement.

As with previously completed portions of our agency audit, I wish to extend my personal thanks to your staff for their professional work on this evaluation. Your staff has not only been genuinely interested in conducting a thorough review of our efforts in the areas of programs and services, they have also provided valuable assistance through their insights and recommendations.

Enclosed you will find our responses to the recommendations given in the report, along with clarification of three issues to assure complete and accurate understanding. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further documentation or answer any questions to assist in completing your report.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review and respond to your preliminary report.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Stewart Director

TLS/CLR/ve

Enclosures

AUDITOR GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT Support Services Final Report Response

Arizona Department of Corrections

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Auditor General's staff request, the revised preliminary report of the Arizona Department of Corrections' Support Services area has been reviewed. Based upon that review a response to the revised preliminary draft has been developed and is presented herein.

In making that presentation, it is noted that the Auditor General's staff have demonstrated a high level of thoroughness and professionalism in conducting the audit. Issues presented in the response in relationship to the overall report are in fact relatively minor. Clarifications and responses are presented in the Department's continuing willingness and desire to make optimal all operations and support components that contribute to furthering the efficiency of Arizona's state correctional function and enhancement of the public safety of Arizona's citizens.

Recommendations Finding I (Pages 7 - 14)

1. The Department should develop a technical procedures manual for Time Computation and Records Unit staff who perform inmate sentence calculations.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Although the technical manual in Department Order (DO) 101 format for DO 1001 and 1002 is not complete, to state that there has been no procedures manual available to guide staff is inaccurate. Staff have been working on converting the current technical users material/manuals for Time Computation and the inmate release system to DO 101 technical manual format.

The Inmate Records Tech Manual, 901, was in place effective February 1, 2000.

All Time Computation Unit Correctional Records Technicians (CRTs) must complete a certified, 160-hour classroom training program. Staff must pass a written test with an 85% or above to remain in a CRT position. During the training, staff are provided with numerous written materials that become their user/tech manual along with Department Orders 1001 and 1002. In addition to this written material, technical procedures are available for specific assignments such as audit release, parole, and violators. Further technical procedures are available at the supervisor level.

2. The Department should consider implementing checklists for Time Computation and Records Unit supervisors to follow in checking new staff's work.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The Department agrees that checklists should be implemented for Time Computation and Records Unit supervisors to follow in checking the work of new staff. Currently new staff, during on-the-job training, have their work checked by the assigned supervisor. Once the supervisor determines that the staff member is properly trained, the new staff is teamed with a peer mentor for monitoring and/or assistance for a period of three to six months. A checklist system is under development and targeted for implementation by the start of the 2002 fiscal year.

3. The Department should develop a technical procedures manual for prison records office staff who perform inmate intake or release confirmation procedures.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

As previously stated, Technical Manual 901, Inmate Records, has been in place since February 2000. The technical manual for DO 1001, Inmate Release System, which contains procedures for records staff, is in progress. It should be noted that DO 1001 is written much

like a technical manual and contains specific procedures to be followed.

4. The Department should provide additional training for prison records office staff.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Currently, training is provided as requested or when deemed necessary by administrative staff. A formal certification training will be developed and implemented for all current records office staff and new hires.

5. As part of its overall plan for information technology, the Department should consider building in e-mail capacity for all prison offices to quickly communicate questions and information to its Time Computation and Records Unit.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

E-mail capacity is available at sites connected through the Arizona Department of Corrections Wide Area Network (WAN). As the Department continues to expand the WAN, those additional sites will have E-mail capability added. The sites not connected are: Florence, Phoenix, Eyman, Safford and Douglas. The expansion of the WAN is dependent on the availability of additional funding.

6. As part of its overall plan for information technology, the Department should consider correcting problems associated with its computer calculation program.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The Department's IT Bureau will initiate a detailed review and subsequent modifications as required of the Time Computation program logic to help eliminate any possible program errors.

No program can cover 100% of all possible legal, legislative, and sentencing options that can exist both in today's environment and over the last 50 years.

7. The Department should explore with state courts, the feasibility of transferring

sentencing documents electronically.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The Department's IT Bureau will explore the feasibility of transferring sentencing documents electronically.

Recommendations Finding II (Pages 15-20)

1. The Department should require prison business office managers to ensure that duties involving cash and other assets are adequately segregated among staff.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The Department has initiated an effort to establish business office manager performance objectives to address the segregation of staff functions relative to the handling of cash and other assets. Upon implementation of the performance objectives, this management approach will involve inclusion of monitoring and evaluation related to annual PACE reviews.

2. The Department should ensure that each prison's business office staff adequately follow Department policies for handling cash and other assets.

<u>Response</u>: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Considerable attention and effort are being put forth by the Department to address this important issue. Training for managers and line staff is considered to be an important component of a strategic initiative to improve policy compliance in business functions and other areas. Internal inspections encompassing evaluation of performance in this area are ongoing. During recent visits by the Director to all prison complexes statewide, special mention of the need to improve policy compliance was covered at every site.

3. The Department should develop an inmate store training program for officers and inmates who work in the stores.

<u>Response:</u> The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented. The task group mentioned above will be developing a technical manual and training plan for implementation. Training for staff associated with inmate stores will be included. Inmates will be trained by those staff.

4. The Department should develop a technical manual for store operations system wide.

<u>Response:</u> The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

A task group has been formed and charged with the development of a technical manual. The manual is intended to make available a complete set of standardized practices and procedures.

5. The Department should standardize inmate store processes, record keeping and reporting.

<u>Response:</u> The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

The task group will develop the technical manual with completion and implementation targeted for Fiscal year 2002. Prison Operations is currently piloting a software program at the Tucson facility which utilizes point-of-sale and bar coding information to control inmate store inventory, record keeping and reporting. This pilot is scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2001.

Depending on the results of the pilot and the availability of additional funding, the program can be expanded and utilized at other prisons, thereby standardizing inmate store processes, record keeping and inventories.

6. The Department should develop a plan for reviewing and where feasible, implementing the Venture Team's remaining recommendations for inmate stores.

<u>Response:</u> The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Prison Operations is currently piloting a software program at the Tucson prison utilizing point-of-sale and bar coding information to control inmate store inventory, record keeping and reporting. This pilot is scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2001.

Depending on the results of the pilot and the availability of additional funding, the program can be expanded and utilized at other prisons.

Other Pertinent Information (Pages 21-25)

Whereas this section of the draft report contains no specific recommendations, the Department can only express that the descriptive information concerning Inmate Protective Segregation and the administrative processes involved, is accurate. The processes involved continue to be monitored and developed to ensure efficiency of processing and safety of inmates within Arizona Department of Corrections institutions.

Other Performance Audit Reports Issued Within the Last 12 Months

00-8	Arizona Department of Agriculture—	00-18	Arizona State Boxing Commission
	Animal Disease, Ownership and	00-19	Department of Economic Security—
	Welfare Protection Program		Division of Developmental
00-9	Arizona Naturopathic Physicians		Disabilities
	Board of Medical Examiners	00-20	Department of Corrections—
00-10	Arizona Department of Agriculture—		Security Operations
	Food Safety and Quality Assurance	00-21	Universities—Funding Study
	Program and Non-Food Product	00-22	Annual Evaluation—Arizona's Family
	Quality Assurance Program		Literacy Program
00-11	Arizona Office of Tourism		
00-12	Department of Public Safety—	01-01	Department of Economic Security—
	Scientific Analysis Bureau		Child Support Enforcement
00-13	Arizona Department of Agriculture	01-02	Department of Economic Security—
	Pest Exclusion and Management		Healthy Families Program
	Program	01-03	Arizona Department of Public Safety-
00-14	Arizona Department of Agriculture		Drug Abuse resistance Education
	State Agricultural Laboratory		(D.A.R.E.) Program
00-15	Arizona Department of Agriculture—	01-04	Department of Corrections—Human
	Commodity Development		Resources Management
00-16	Arizona Department of Agriculture—	01-05	Arizona Department of Public Safety-
	Pesticide Compliance and Worker		Telecommunications Bureau
	Safety Program	01-06	Board of Osteopathic Examiners in
00-17	Arizona Department of Agriculture—		Medicine and Surgery
	Sunset Factors		

Future Performance Audit Reports

Arizona Game and Fish Department—Wildlife Management

Arizona Game and Fish Department—Heritage Fund

Department of Public Safety's Licensing Bureau