

The September 2021 Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry performance audit found that the Department had not provided 3 of 4 programs we reviewed to most inmates who needed them, and many inmates who were enrolled in the programs had not completed them, impacting reduced recidivism and other rehabilitative benefits these programs provide to inmates. We made 15 recommendations to the Department, and its status in implementing the recommendations is as follows:

Status of 15 recommendations

Implemented	1
In process	10
In process in a different manner	2
Not implemented	2

Laws 2022, Ch. 327, requires our Office to annually review the Department’s compliance with various programs, reporting requirements, policies, and other provisions related to the Department’s rehabilitation of inmates and issue a report by September 1. We will follow up with the Department on the status of the recommendations that have not yet been implemented as part of this annual review.

Finding 1: Department did not provide cognitive restructuring and SA treatment programs to most inmates who needed them; therefore, these inmates could not achieve these programs’ rehabilitative benefits

1. The Department should take steps to expand its capacity to provide its cognitive restructuring, SA treatment, and DUI treatment programs, and thereby increase inmate enrollments in these programs, by:

a. Continuing to certify applicable COIIs and private prison staff to teach COB.

Implementation in process—The Department has established a 2-phase process to help it continue to certify COIIs and private prison staff to teach COB. The Department expects to complete the second phase of its certification process by October 21, 2022, and reported that as of April 2022, it had certified 124 COB instructors.

b. Continuing to monitor COB enrollments and completions to help ensure that program staff who are certified to teach COB are indeed teaching it.

Implementation in process—The Department has established a new Department Order that indicates only certified staff can teach COB, and this order also requires specific staff to monitor enrollments and completions as well as monitor some COB classes to ensure the quality of instructors/instruction. We will further assess the Department’s implementation of this order and associated processes as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

c. Finalizing and implementing the program-related standard work for COIVs.

Implementation in process—The new Department Order discussed in the explanation for Recommendation 1b also includes the program-related standard work for its COIVs. This standard work, effective April 2022, requires COIVs to regularly review program enrollment information and provide oversight to COIIs, who

teach the COB program. We will further assess whether COIVs are adhering to the standard work as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

- d. Continuing its efforts to fill its vacant licensed counselor positions.

Implementation in process—To help with retention of its licensed counselor positions, the Department reported that it sought, and the Arizona Department of Administration approved, compensation adjustments for its licensed counselors and all substance abuse treatment staff. In addition, to help fill its vacant positions, the Department purchased an exhibitor table to recruit additional counselors at an August 2022 conference hosted by the Southwestern School for Behavioral Health Studies. We will further assess the Department's efforts to fill its vacant licensed counselor positions as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

- e. Using its increased appropriation to contract for additional SA treatment services as planned.

Implementation in process—The Department has contracted with and is using 1 counseling organization to provide the Department with additional counselors to offer more SA treatment services. The Department reported approving 3 counselors from the counseling organization who began offering additional SA treatment services starting in September 2022. We will further assess the Department's efforts to expand SA treatment services as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

- f. Based on the number of inmates with assessed SA treatment needs, continuing to assess the level of counseling staff resources needed to meet inmates' SA treatment needs and requesting additional resources as appropriate, including monies to contract for SA treatment services.

Not implemented—The Department has 2 work groups that it reported have responsibilities for assessing the level of counseling staff resources needed to meet inmates' SA treatment needs. However, although 1 of these work groups met in April, July, and August 2022, the Department did not provide documentation showing that these groups performed any assessments. We will further evaluate the Department's efforts to assess the level of counseling staff resources needed to meet inmates' SA treatment needs and any actions taken to address those needs as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

- g. Continuing to expand the use of technology as staff resources permit to provide SA treatment programs at State prisons where treatment has not been provided.

Implementation in process—The Department has begun to expand its use of technology to provide SA treatment programs at those State prisons where treatment has not previously been provided. In February 2022, it offered a virtual SA treatment program at its Winslow prison facility to 2 different inmate groups. The Department reported that at the end of October 2022, it will conduct an evaluation to obtain data on the quality of the treatment received and that the results of the evaluation will guide future decisions regarding how the Department will expand its SA virtual treatment through technology.

- h. Completing the process to obtain licensure of its DUI treatment program and implementing its plan to provide DUI treatment to male inmates housed at State prisons.

Implementation in process in a different manner—The Department completed its process to obtain State licensure as a counseling facility to provide a certified DUI treatment program at its State prison facility that houses female inmates. Although different from its previously reported plan discussed in our audit report, the Department also reported it plans to submit additional State prison facilities that house male inmates for State licensure to provide DUI treatment and estimated it will apply for and obtain licensure for the first male prison facility by the end of calendar year 2022. We will further assess the Department's expansion of DUI treatment programs to male inmates at State-run prison facilities as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

Finding 2: Although program completion can decrease inmate recidivism, many enrolled inmates did not complete programs mostly due to transfers to different units and administrative discharges from programs

2. The Department should continue to assess whether condensing SA treatment program time frames has helped reduce program noncompletions and assess its impact on inmate recidivism. Based on its assessments, the Department should continue to use the condensed time frames or make adjustments, as appropriate.

Implementation in process—The Department has begun gathering information to assess whether condensing SA treatment program time frames from 6 months to 3 months has helped to reduce program noncompletions. In addition to tracking completion rates for both the 3-month and 6-month SA treatment programs, the Department reported that it plans to use recidivism data and input from its counselors who provide the programs to decide what treatment programming time frames will be used. The Department indicated that it has identified positive features of the condensed and standard time frames, such as some prison units that have experienced higher completion rates with the condensed time frame and some inmates being more receptive to enrolling in a condensed program. For the standard program, the Department reported that if an inmate had to miss a class, it was easier for an inmate to catch up on missed assignments when it met only 2 days instead of 4 days per week, or if an inmate had a conflicting work assignment, the 2-days-a-week schedule is less disruptive to the inmate's work schedule. The Department reported that it will continue to use both SA treatment program time frames.

3. The Department should continue its project to research and track specific reasons inmates do not complete SA treatment programs at State prisons and use this information to address problems that contribute to program noncompletions.

Implementation in process—The Department has continued to monitor the reasons inmates have not completed SA treatment programs and has taken some initial steps to reduce noncompletions. These include implementing its processes for denying transfers of inmates enrolled in major programs to enable them to complete programs, except when safety/security transfers are needed (see Recommendation 4), and condensing SA treatment program time frames to help inmates complete these programs in 3 months instead of 6 (see Recommendation 2). However, the Department reported that it needs more time to collect data to be able to determine the impact of these efforts on noncompletion rates. We will further assess the Department's efforts to reduce noncompletions as part of the annual review we are conducting of the Department required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

4. The Department should continue to implement its new process for approving transfers of inmates enrolled in major programs and codify this new process in its Department Orders. The Department should assess whether this new process helps to reduce program noncompletions due to inmate transfers and determine whether additional actions are needed.

Implementation in process—The Department has started using its new process for approving transfers of inmates enrolled in major programs and has codified this new process in its Department Orders. Based on a partially documented September 2022 assessment, the Department reported determining that the new process for approving transfers of inmates enrolled in major programs is having a positive impact by reducing the number of these inmates that are transferred. Specifically, between January 1 and September 7, 2022, the Department reported that 234 inmates were denied transfers, and of those, 170 inmates completed their major program and 31 inmates were still enrolled in a major program. We will continue to assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

5. The Department should update its program-enrollment guidance to provide standard and consistent direction on specific factors that all program staff should consider when identifying potential inmates to enroll in programs, including inmates' discipline histories, potential language barriers, assigned living spaces, racial balance, and other factors it deems appropriate, and train program staff on this updated guidance.

Implementation in process in a different manner—The Department has revised its enrollment guidance for staff who identify and prioritize inmates for enrollment by narrowing the factors program staff should consider to (1) inmates who will become eligible for an early prison release upon completion of a major program, organized by earliest release date; and (2) inmates based on their individual risk and needs scores and remaining time in prison.

The Department generates 2 reports that provide this information to its staff. In addition, the Department reported training its staff on the new guidance in March 2021. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

6. The Department should place its enrollment guidance materials in a single shared location to help ensure that they are readily accessible to program staff.

Implemented at 6 months

7. The Department should, for the 4 programs we reviewed and other programs it deems appropriate, develop and implement documented processes to use enrollment data to monitor program noncompletions by prison/prison unit, both overall and by reason for noncompletion (e.g., inmate transfers, administrative discharges, etc.); research the causes for variation in program noncompletions across prisons/prison units; and use this information to make changes, as needed, to its enrollment policies, guidance, and/or trainings.

Implementation in process—The Department has developed some new processes to help reduce the number of noncompletions, such as (1) requiring COIVs to review COB enrollment data (1 of 4 programs we reviewed) for each prison unit to help ensure inmates complete their COB programs and (2) limiting transfer requests while inmates are enrolled in a major program (see explanation for Recommendation 4). However, the Department has not yet developed and implemented a documented process to use enrollment data to monitor noncompletions by prisons/prison unit; research the causes for variation in program noncompletions across prisons/prison units; and use this information to make changes, as needed, to its enrollment policies, guidance, and/or trainings. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation as part of our annual review of the Department as required by Laws 2022, Ch. 327.

Finding 3: Department does not monitor program-completion time frames, which would help it evaluate and potentially improve enrollment practices

8. For the 4 programs we reviewed and other programs it deems appropriate, the Department should develop and implement documented processes to use enrollment data to monitor program-completion time frames for unexpected values; research the causes for unexpected values in program-completion time frames; and use this information to make changes, as needed, to its enrollment policies, guidance, and/or trainings.

Not implemented—The Department has developed and documented Department Orders that require COIVs to regularly review enrollment information for 1 of 4 programs we reviewed (the COB program). However, this review only requires the review of enrollment start dates, not completion time frames, which measure the number of days from start to finish for each individual inmate and would help identify unexpected values, such as completing a program in more or less time than required. Additionally, the Department has not yet developed or implemented documented processes for using enrollment data to monitor program-completion time frames for unexpected values and, therefore, has not used the information to research causes for unexpected values or make changes as needed to its enrollment policies, guidance, and/or trainings.