

## Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry

Department met some statutory objectives and purposes in the areas we reviewed, but did not release all inmates approved for the transition program 3 months early in 2020 and lacked a reliable process to ensure inmate grievances were processed according to its time frames

### Audit purpose

To assess whether the Department released inmates from prison to the transition program 3 months early as statutorily required, determined inmate eligibility for the transition program according to statutory and Department requirements, documented IT security practices in written policies and procedures, and complied with State conflict-of-interest requirements, and to provide responses to the statutory sunset factors.

### Key findings

- The Department operates 10 State prison complexes and contracts for 6 private or privately managed prisons. It also oversees offenders conditionally released to the community. As of June 30, 2021, the Department was responsible for 35,954 inmates in Arizona's State and private prisons and 5,047 offenders on community supervision.
- The Department's transition program provides eligible inmates with transition services, such as counseling and job placement services, in the community. In calendar year 2020, the Department:
  - Did not release 313 of the 1,200 inmates (26 percent) 3 months early as required by statute, which may have resulted in longer prison stays and higher Department costs. Thirty inmates we reviewed were not timely released because of Department process delays and other factors.
  - Denied all 45 of the inmates we reviewed of the approximately 1,600 inmates denied for the transition program in line with statutory and Department requirements, such as having convictions that made them ineligible.
- The Department has not yet programmed its system with all eligibility requirements for the transition program and drug possession release. It relies on manual processes to identify eligible inmates, which takes additional staff time and increases the potential for errors. The Department is working with its vendor to automate these processes and expects changes to be completed between October 2021 and November 2022.
- The Department's conflict-of-interest policy and procedures align with some State requirements and recommended practices, but it lacks a special disclosure file as statutorily required and has not adopted some recommended practices, such as annually reminding its employees to submit new disclosure forms when circumstances change.
- The Department has established a process and time frames for resolving inmate grievances but does not have a reliable process for tracking and monitoring compliance with its time frames.

### Key recommendations

The Department should:

- Establish time frames for how quickly transition program eligibility reviews should be initiated and completed, and develop and implement a written procedure for monitoring, identifying, and addressing delays that affect releasing inmates 3 months early to the transition program; and continue working to automate eligibility processes.
- Develop and implement revisions to its conflict-of-interest policy and procedures to help ensure compliance with State requirements and to better align with recommended practices.
- Establish a centralized process to monitor compliance with its inmate grievance process time frames.