

4/29/21



ALASKA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

"Walking Alaska's toughest beat."

April 5, 2021

Representative ,

We need your help. Alaska Correctional Officers have, and have had, a tough time over the course of the last year and it is not looking like it is going to get better without Legislative action.

The Problem

The DOC needs to hire 249* Correctional Officers this year just to maintain substandard staffing levels.

- The DOC has historically lost an average 120 Correctional Officers per year.
- The DOC has 129 vacant Correctional Officer PCNs (54 PCNs per the State's FY20 Bargaining Unit Profile and 75 PCNs to reopen the Palmer Correctional Center).

* 249 Correctional Officers does not address the additional 78 Correctional Officers needed over the DOC's current staffing levels to meet minimum safety requirements as recommended by the State-commissioned CGL Study.

The Repercussions

Widespread understaffing in the DOC compromises public safety resulting in:

- Officer burnout leading to retention and morale issues.
- Mandatory overtime (Officers being ordered in on their days off and working up to 16-hour workdays several days a week).
- Institutions operating below their minimum safe staffing levels.

Alaska facilities are chronically and dangerously understaffed, leading to significant voluntary and mandatory overtime throughout the State. In the last five years, overtime has ballooned to over \$10.3 million in FY20.

How to Fix This Problem

- Ensure the Department fills the currently funded, vacant Correctional Officer PCNs.
- Increase the number of PCNs to meet the CGL Study's recommended staffing levels.
- Ensure the DOC Recruitment Unit is fully funded and staffed by Correctional Officers.

These solutions will significantly reduce overtime costs, which will offset the cost of additional PCNs and the CO Recruitment Unit. Additionally, bringing our staffing numbers up will decrease burnout, saving the State money and alleviating the DOC's need to hire and train 120 new Officers each year.

Increasing Overtime



While the graph above reflects the increasing overtime costs within the DOC, it does not reflect the considerable human costs. The increasingly stressful work environment, mandatory overtime, fatigue, burnout, missed birthdays and family events combine to take a toll on morale and seriously impact the DOC's ability to retain Officers.

The cost of hiring the appropriate number of staff will be substantially offset by the corresponding decrease in overtime cost. Total annual DOC overtime cost is \$10,335,184 (per FY20 Bargaining Unit Profile).¹ The State could fund 93 Correctional Officer PCNs with the amount of money that is spent on overtime in FY20.

"The cost of these increases in staffing should be substantially offset by decreases in overtime expenditures."

- Page 2 of the State-commissioned CGL Staffing Study,
<https://doc.alaska.gov/doc/corrections-staffing-report.pdf>

¹ \$10.3 million in overtime may be artificially low. In ACOA's current negotiations, the State recently provided DOC overtime data, which ACOA can provide, that shows the total overtime for FY20 was \$11.44 million. In an effort to compare apples to apples, the graph above utilizes the \$10.3 million from the FY20 Bargaining Unit Profile.

CGL Staffing Study

"Our analysis indicated that a number of facilities are currently operating with staffing levels insufficient to meet basic security operational requirements. Approximately 57 percent of the recommended increase is attributable to providing necessary relief staff for correctional officers (COs) to fill required mandatory posts on an ongoing basis. Most of the remaining increase in staff goes to provide additional nurses to assure adequate coverage of health care unit responsibilities. In both cases, the cost of these increases in staffing should be substantially offset by decreases in overtime expenditures."

"This recommended level meets only minimum staffing requirements and is therefore identified as a "short-term" recommendation. To establish effective levels of operational performance that assures a superior level of security and program service delivery requires 2,019 staff, an increase of 144 positions over current budgeted levels, or a 7.7 percent increase. We strongly recommend that the DOC establish this level of staffing as their operational standard."

- Page 2 of the State-commissioned CGL Staffing Study,
<https://doc.alaska.gov/doc/corrections-staffing-report.pdf>

Institution ²	Current # of COs (as of 2/12/2021)	Total CO CGL Recommendation*	Additional COs Needed to Meet CGL Recommendations*
Anchorage Correctional Complex	158	212	54
Anvil Mt.	26	30	4
Fairbanks	61	75	14
Goose Creek	230	238	8
Hiland Mt.	71	74	3
Ketchikan	25	31	6
Lemon Creek	52	57	5
Mat-Su	37	36	-1
Palmer	0	75*	75
Spring Creek	113	124	11
Wildwood	76	93	17
Yukon-Kuskokwim	35	46	11
Totals	884	1091	207

* The Palmer Correctional Center has been updated since the CGL Study was released and now requires 75 Correctional Officers to operate per the Governor's proposed FY22 operating budget.

² The table does not include the CO Academy, Transportation Unit, or Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm since these were not evaluated in the CGL Study.

The table above is the current number of COI through COIV Correctional Officers, compared to the recommended number of Correctional Officers from the State's study. In total, including the number of Officers we are unable to retain annually, the DOC needs to hire a total of **327 Correctional Officers** in order to be able to open Palmer Correctional Center and *"to meet basic security operational requirements."* (full quote above).

COVID-19

COVID-19 has shown the State just how underprepared the Department of Corrections was to handle emergency situations. At its pinnacle, the State was ordering Officers in for multiple days on their days off, mandating Officers to work 16-hour days, force-transferring Officers to short-handed institutions, and began hiring new recruits without first interviewing them. Despite everything, Correctional Officers were willing to put their lives and the lives of their families at risk every day by walking into mods and housing units full of COVID-19 positive inmates.

Please support Alaska's public safety by

- Ensuring the Department of Corrections fills all funded, vacant Correctional Officer PCNs.
- Increasing the number of COI - COIV PCNs to meet the CGL Study's recommended staffing levels.
- Ensuring the DOC Recruitment Unit is fully funded and staffed with Correctional Officers.

Thank you for your support,



SSgt. Randy McLellan
ACOA President

Number of Correctional Officers Since 2016

— Number of Correctional Officers

