2012

Prepared by the
Division of
Legislative Audit

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

A Summary of 2009 through 2011 Audit Recommendations

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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SELECTED HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES
PART 1

Audit Control Number
20-30053A-09

REPORT CONCLUSION

Based on our review we determined the following.

- Less than six percent of the inmates were infected[1] with methicillin-resistant staphycoccolus aureus (MRSA) during the two-year period January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2008 at the four Alaskan correctional facilities; the rate was less than three percent at most of the facilities.

- Since correction officers are not required to disclose MRSA infections to the Department of Corrections (department) or any other state or federal agency, the frequency of MRSA infection among correction officers in Alaskan correctional facilities cannot be determined.

- The department's health and safety protocols for handling MRSA appear adequate. The department's health and safety protocols incorporate many of the guidelines and information available from Center of Disease Control's website. Although there are no specific MRSA protocols, the health and safety protocols that already exist through various sections of the department's policy and procedures appear adequate in the prevention and management of MRSA among inmates.

[1] Inmates were classified as being infected with MRSA if they either: (1) have a confirmed positive MRSA culture; or (2) have a skin infection that was not cultured but was treated by health care staff as if the infection was MRSA.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SELECTED HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES
PART 2

Audit Control Number
20-30053B-10

REPORT CONCLUSION

The following are conclusions based on our audit.

- The Department of Correction's (department) overall approach to determining staffing is a method recognized by the National Institute of Corrections and is used by other states' correctional facilities. However, the approach deviated from the national methodology for determining the shift relief factor in three ways.

  1. The shift relief factor calculation did not include meal and break hours for mandatory posts requiring relief for such absences;
  2. The shift relief factor was calculated on a statewide basis rather than on a per-facility basis; and
  3. The shift relief factor calculation used leave earned rather than actual leave taken.

- For some facilities, the Division of Institution's management did not accurately calculate the number of correctional officer positions needed to implement the 2005 shift relief factor study or the 2007 post study.

- The factors used to calculate staffing had changed since the 2005 studies. Using more current information for our calculation, we conclude that the Division of Institutions should update their shift relief factor calculations for determining correctional officer staffing requirements.

- The Division of Institutions needs to update its post analysis and address current posts' efficiency and effectiveness issues.

- Staffing policies and procedures as well as each facility's standard operating procedures are deficient. There is no written policy identifying the minimum staffing level posts that must be filled on a shift; post orders do not reflect current practices, and some posts do not have a written post order. Additionally, some of the policies and procedures are not consistently followed.

Corrections Safety Issues
(Continued)

- **Recommendation A:** The Division of Institutions director should address staffing deficiencies due to inaccuracies, update the shift relief factor for each facility using current data, and appropriately apply the shift relief factor to determine the number of correctional officer positions needed.

  The Division of Institutions' application of a consultant's studies when calculating the shift relief factor has created staffing deficiencies. The deficiencies are partially offset by the fact that the data supporting the 2005 shift relief factor study is out-of-date. Additionally posts at each institution must be correctly identified as either mandatory or essential to ensure the shift relief factor is correctly applied.

  Without correctly calculated correction officer positions, the institutions will experience excessive amounts of overtime.

- ✓ **Agency Response:** Generally disagreed.

  Overall, the department stated that it disagreed that there staffing deficiencies. However, it agreed that post orders should identify which posts are mandatory and which are essential.

- **Current Status**

Corrections Safety Issues
(Continued)

- **Recommendation B:** The Division of Institutions' management should address post efficiency and effectiveness issues.

  Efficiency and effectiveness issues need to be address at Anchorage Correction Complex (ACC), Anvil Mountain Correctional Center (AMCC), Fairbanks Correctional Center (FCC), and Spring Creek Correctional Center (SCCC). There are steps the department should take to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operations in the correctional facilities. These steps include completing the inmate classification system, changing operations, modifying facilities, reducing overcrowding, and/or changes in the number of correctional officer positions.

- ✓ **Agency Response:** Disagreed.

  According to the department, this finding is not supported by any cited incident impacting the safety of corrections officers, inmates, or public that could have been avoided by the additional posts recommended.

- **Current Status**

Corrections Safety Issues
(Continued)

- **Recommendation C:** The Division of Institutions' director should ensure the superintendents update post orders.

  The four facilities' post orders do not establish requirements for minimum staffing levels. Furthermore, the post orders do not accurately convey either Division of Institution managements' intent or actual facility practices in relation to which posts are considered mandatory. (Mandatory post requires another officer's presence to relieve the assigned correctional officer of a specific post for meals, breaks or other activities.)

  Post orders ensure that Division of Institutions management, the facilities' superintendents, and all correctional officers are familiar with the security procedures of the facility. National staffing guidelines indicate that, overall, post orders should be developed to reflect security procedures that have been agreed upon through consensus of the facilities' superintendents and Division of Institutions' management.

- ✓ **Agency Response:** Agreed.

  According to the department, it has directed the superintendents to review and update the post orders identifying if each post is either essential or mandatory.

- ❖ **Current Status**

Corrections Safety Issues
(Continued)

- **Recommendation D:** Division of Institutions' management should ensure that facility management comply with policies for minimum staffing levels and, if needed, provide the resources to allow compliance.

  The Division of Institutions is not consistently following departmental policies and procedures regarding minimum staffing levels. Each facility has a required minimum number of correctional officers to be on duty during each shift.

  During the six months between July and December 2008 the percentage of shifts that were staffed below minimum levels were:

ACC – East	11%
ACC – West	8%
AMCC	1%
FCC	4%
SCCC	5%

  The minimum staffing level is specified to promote adequate safety for the visiting public, inmates, correctional officers, and staff.

- ✓ **Agency Response:** Agreed.

  According to the department, a directive was issued to make sure that minimum staffing levels were met.

- **Current Status**