



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Quarterly Update | September 2021

Creating A Safer Montana Through Accountability, Rehabilitation, & Empowerment



Message from the Director

Change has been the theme at the Montana Department of Corrections over the past couple of months, with the announcement of a new mission for the agency and a revised organizational structure to help us better serve Montanans and support our offender population.

Within its new structure, the department will strive to achieve its mission of “Creating a safer Montana through accountability, rehabilitation and empowerment.”

Key elements of the reorganization included:

- Grouping the department into three major functions — **Central Services, Public Safety, and Rehabilitation and Programs.**
- Hiring a **chief financial officer** whose efforts will be solely focused on the department’s budget, making recommendations to the director and deputy director, and working with the Governor’s Office of Budget and Program Planning, ensuring the highest level of accountability and stewardship of taxpayer dollars.
- Creating a **customer service** position dedicated to better addressing the needs of Montanans.

No jobs were eliminated as part of this reorganization of the department. In addition, new positions related to the changes were repurposed from existing vacancies with no increase in full-time employees and operating within our current budget.

The department is extremely fortunate to have a dedicated staff throughout the state that genuinely cares about what they do and the Montanans they serve. This DOC Quarterly Update provides us with an opportunity to turn the spotlight on the hard work they do to ensure a safe Montana with more successful outcomes for the offenders under our supervision.

Thank you for reading,
Brian M. Gootkin, Director



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DOC health records go digital

In October, the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) is transitioning from paper health records in secure facilities to an electronic health records system.

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“Currently, there are hundreds of charts in all areas of the DOC facilities,” Clinical Services Division Administrator Connie Winner said.

“The Electronic Health Records (EHR) system will allow an integrated approach to healthcare and will bring all disciplines together to provide optimal health care to all of our residents. After many years of medical, dental, mental health, programming and treatment charts throughout the facilities, all charts will be located in one location—the EHR.”

The vendor for the new digital records program is TechCare EHR, NaphCare, Inc. The cost for the first four years of the contract is

\$1.06 million. Winner explained that since it is a correctional-specific program, it will incorporate standards from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) to further ensure continuity of care and treatment.

Montana State Prison (MSP) Director of Nursing Melissa Scharf said the new system will benefit staff members and patients. At MSP, employees track paper records across the different units, the work dorm, and outside medical visits. With paper records, only one person can look at a chart at a time.

With the electronic system, all records will be available in one location and alleviate the extra work of tracking or searching through paper records.

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“This changes our job a lot,” Scharf said. “... Having an electronic health record is definitely going to be a more efficient way to provide care.

In the long run, it will really help us to provide better care for our patients.”



The new EHR replaces paper records such as these ones used up until recently at DOC facilities.

Montana State Prison receives accreditation



**NATIONAL COMMISSION
ON CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE**

Montana State Prison (MSP) has once again earned accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) by demonstrating compliance with NCCHC’s Standards for Health Services in Prisons.

NCCHC has surveyed and accredited prisons, jails and juvenile detention and confinement facilities for 40 years. The NCCHC standards used in accreditation are developed with input from the nation’s experts in correctional health care.

The department’s Clinical Services Division works continuously to ensure compliance with NCCHC and to stay abreast of industry standards. That hard work culminated in June with a rigorous, on-site survey conducted by the NCCHC team. The survey evaluated MSP’s compliance with standards on continuous quality improvement, safety, infection control, personnel and training, medical and mental health care, health records, and more.



“MSP was first accredited in 2011 and it’s a great honor for us to maintain this accreditation,” Connie Winner, administrator of the DOC’s Clinical Services Division, said. “A tremendous amount of work goes into preparing for these evaluations, and in the end, the inmates are the true beneficiaries of this labor through the effective and efficient delivery of services. I’m just so proud of the efforts of this team.”

The next on-site survey for NCCHC re-accreditation is expected to take place in 2024.



“In achieving NCCHC accreditation, Montana State Prison has demonstrated its commitment to meeting constitutional requirements for health care for incarcerated individuals,” said National Commission CEO Deborah Ross, CCHP. “Accreditation is a voluntary process and we commend the Montana Department of Corrections for successfully undertaking this challenge to provide quality health care and instill confidence in the community it serves.”

DOC: Focused on financial accountability to Montanans

Ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services to members of the public and offenders under the Montana Department of Corrections’ supervision is no simple task; but it’s one the DOC manages every biennium.

That said, unanticipated expenses arise in corrections, and for the past four biennia, the department had to request supplemental funds to make up for deficits.

“The Administrative Services Division set a goal for the biennium to work with the department programs to ensure we stayed within our budget and did not need to make a supplemental request in the 2021 Montana Legislature,” Administrator John Daugherty said. “We wanted to break that cycle.”

According to Daugherty, the department was on track to meet that goal when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, placing considerable strain on the department’s \$228 million budget.

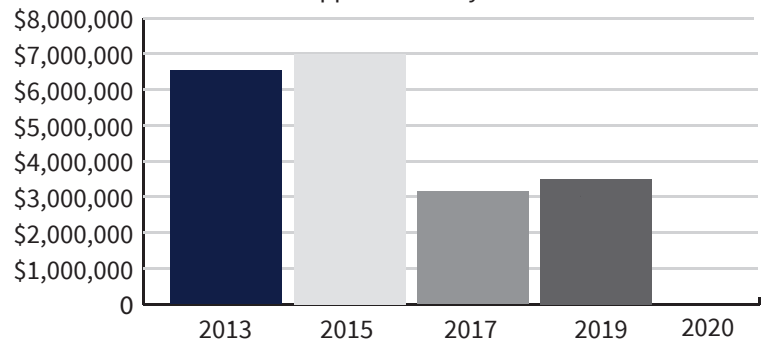


“While there were unexpected expenses with COVID-19, we were able to receive COVID-19 Relief Funds to offset these expenditures,” he said.

“At the end of the fiscal year, it was verified we met our goal of not having a deficit. Also, upon review of our non-COVID-19-related expenses and funds, we even ended the biennium with a small surplus.”

“This was a great accomplishment of the DOC’s fiscal staff and the department as a whole,” Daugherty said.

Supplemental by biennium



This chart represents the supplemental funding amount received by the DOC for the last five biennia. No supplemental funds were requested by the department in the last biennium.



Technology updates improve safety, health at DOC facilities

Employee and inmate safety at Montana Department of Corrections' secure facilities is a top priority for the department; to support that, the department completed a much-needed upgrade of its radio system at its three secure facilities this year.

“The new radios are going to improve the safety and communication at our secure facilities,” Director Brian Gootkin said. “It’s always exciting when we can improve the tools to help our staff members stay safe and succeed in their jobs.”

The radios were purchased for Montana State Prison, Montana Women’s Prison and Pine Hills Correctional Facility using \$1.7 million in general fund money. Other technology updates, funded through the CARES Act, included body scanners and mail scanners.



At MSP, the new radios have been well received. According to Warden Jim Salmonsén, radios have a life expectancy of 10 years, and the old radios were 12-year old analog radios. In fact, in some areas of the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) and Secure Adjustment Unit (SAU), the old radios could not reliably transmit through the buildings’ concrete and metal.

“The radios are going to be a safety improvement so our staff can be in communication with each other and not worry about their radios malfunctioning,” he said. “This is a newer technology, and this brings it up to a more modern technology that will be more useful and help with safety and security.”

Along with the new radios, the DOC is partnering with the Montana Department of Justice to install a repeater radio, allowing the DOC’s facilities to connect with the state trunking network. This trunking network will allow the DOC’s secure facilities (MSP, MWP, Pine Hills) to communicate more seamlessly on the radios.



DOC Transitional Assistance/ Rental Voucher Fund Usage

A significant factor in individuals not being paroled is their inability to secure appropriate housing in the community. The DOC assists by providing transitional assistance funds to support successful release (housing assistance, transportation, treatment or program costs, etc.) and rental vouchers which cover up to three months of rental assistance. The charts below illustrate how those funds were distributed in the fourth quarter of FY21.

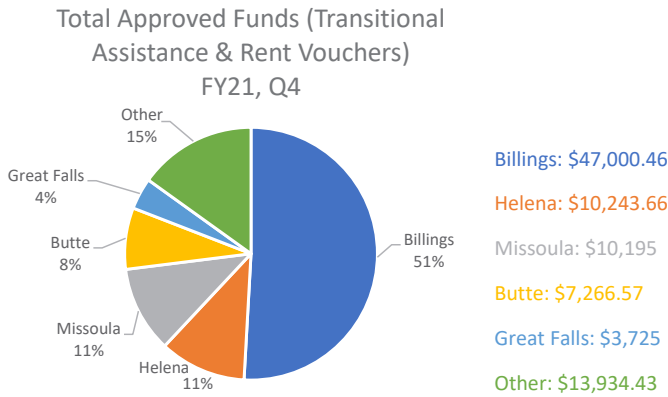


Montana DOC, U.S. Marshals Service transport inmates as part of Great Falls Regional Prison swap

Local, state, and federal correctional and law enforcement agencies from throughout Montana worked together earlier this summer to swap Montana Department of Corrections' (DOC) inmates and U.S. Marshals Service detainees between Crossroads Correctional Center and Great Falls Regional Prison.

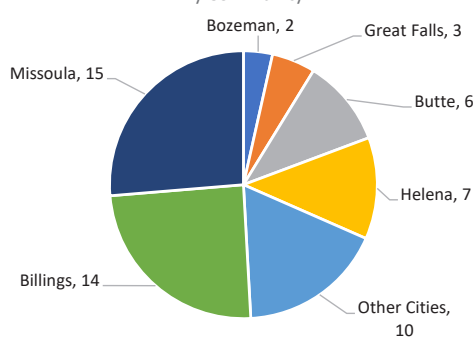
The move was a culmination of a plan announced earlier this year following an order by President Biden for the U.S. Department of Justice to phase out its contracts with private prison companies, like CoreCivic, which owns and operates Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby.

DOC Director Brian Gootkin agreed ending the state's contract with



Transitional Assistance & Rent Voucher Funds Approved, by Expense Category (FY 21, Q4)	
Bus Passes	\$748
Bus Ticket	\$105.99
Construction supplies/clothes	\$160.61
Deposit	\$2,400
DV Class Evaluation	\$350
Flight	\$693.20
Food	\$123.61
Mental Health Counseling	\$50
Rent Assistance	\$53,114.73
Room & Board Assistance at Prerelease Centers	\$28,198.25
Temporary Housing	\$6,420.73

Number of Vendors Receiving Transitional Assistance & Rent Voucher Funds (FY 21, Q4)
By Community



“ Cascade County saw this as an opportunity to help the U.S. Marshals Service respond to the president’s order, while at the same time, alleviating overcrowding at GFRP by moving Montana Department of Corrections’ inmates to Crossroads,” Cascade County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter said. “The U.S. Marshals have fewer detainees than the DOC, allowing us to use that space to keep more people who pose a danger to our community off the streets.”

Cascade County for 152 beds at GFRP was in the best interest of all parties, including the inmates. The 2021 Montana Legislature agreed to end the regional prison contract with Cascade County, allowing the move to take place.

Prison Swap Continued

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Crossroads has more services available related to recreation space, education, behavioral health, religious offerings and more,”

Gootkin said. “It’s key to the department’s mission that we create a safer Montana through accountability, rehabilitation and empowerment. This collaborative agreement definitely furthers that.

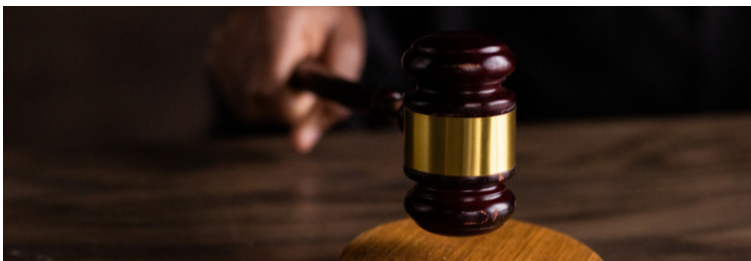
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One of the ways we provide value to our partners is offering flexibility in how they manage their populations,”

Bludworth said. “We are also proud of the robust reentry programming and comprehensive services provided at Crossroads and we stand ready to support our partners as their needs evolve.

The transport involved moving 65 DOC inmates to Crossroads.

Crossroads Warden Pete Bludworth said CoreCivic was pleased to be able to accommodate the new distribution of inmates.



Prison Issues Board Meeting

The next Prison Issues Board meeting is scheduled from noon to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 26th. A website link will be posted on the Montana Department of Corrections website at www.cor.mt.gov in October for members of the public who want to participate. Any changes for the meeting will be posted on the DOC website.

Montana DOC and Montana Manufacturing Extension Center partner for inmate training program

This fall, the Montana Department of Corrections' (DOC) Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) will team up with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) to offer training for inmates to prepare them for potential jobs in manufacturing upon release.

"Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) is always looking for new training opportunities for our inmate workers," said MCE Administrator Gayle Butler. "So we were honored when the MMEC team approached us about this partnership to prepare our inmates for work in the manufacturing field. At MCE, our goals are to provide meaningful education, work experience, and transitional services to assist offenders reentering our communities."

MCE is a division of the DOC which provides general and vocational education, on-the-job training, and work experience to inmates in industry, vocational and agricultural programs.

The new training will be five days in duration with eight hours of training each day. Classes will be offered to 20 inmates at Montana State Prison and 20 inmates at Montana Women's Prison. Some of the workshop discussions will include lessons on lean manufac-

turing principles and soft skills like effective communication and critical thinking.

"We are excited about the potential of this opportunity to grow the number of skilled workers in Montana," said MMEC Executive Director Paddy Fleming. "It will not only put inmates on a solid path to succeed after incarceration, but it will also help manufacturers fill critical open positions in a very tight labor market."

The \$10,000 grant being used to pay for the programming is part of an \$11 million package of grants through the U.S. Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP). MMEC was offered the grant through the state of Missouri manufacturing extension partnership. The Missouri manufacturing extension center is focusing its grants on workforce development.

Montana's program will be modeled after a similar partnership between the Purdue University Manufacturing Extension Partnership and the Indiana Department of Corrections.

According to the 2020 Montana Manufacturing Report, manufacturing grew more than double the national average in employment, income, and output. In Montana, more than 3,300 manufacturing firms are in operation and employ about 19,544 workers. The report stated in 2019 that 27 percent of firms had a significant shortage of workers at some point in the year.



Educating offenders: MWP education programs transition to MCE

As part of its work to provide the best and most equitable educational opportunities possible to inmates under the supervision of the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC), Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) assumed direction of all educational programming at Montana Women’s Prison (MWP) earlier this year. Previously, MWP contracted with School District 2 in Billings to provide adult education while MCE focused its attention on the vocational opportunities for inmates.



“By bringing this programming under the umbrella of MCE, we are assuring the department is in compliance with Montana Office of Public Instruction standards and is providing a smooth transition for students between basic education to a career readiness program,” said Gayle Butler, MCE administrator.

Two teachers have been hired to facilitate this effort. MWP offers two, two-hour HiSET prep classes each day, fulfilling OPI’s requirements for educational hours. In fact, three MWP inmates received their HiSET in August.

Butler said plans are to provide vocational education classes soon to support career readiness and MCE work programs. In addition, MCE staff has been collaborating with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry to implement additional pre-apprenticeship programs to help the inmates be more career-ready upon their return to Montana communities.





Beth Strandberg: Ensuring compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act, more

Since Beth Strandberg joined the team at the Montana Department of Corrections earlier this year, she has been visiting DOC facilities throughout the state to ensure the department is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Rehabilitation Act and Montana Human Rights Act pertaining to department employees and inmates with disabilities.

In June and July, she received 68 Offender Staff Requests (OSR). Of those, she granted 16, partially granted two, and denied 24. The remaining 18 requests are either still in process or were resolved by providing information to the requester or directing the request to department employees who were able to address the concern.

Items brought to Strandberg’s attention range from requests for additional time to walk to and from meals, to determining if an inmate in a wheelchair needs single-cell status or should be moved to another unit with an ADA cell.

Strandberg also held 15 ADA interactive and follow-up meetings with department employees during the June/July time period.

Along with addressing the actual requests, it is Strandberg’s job to ensure appropriate processes are in place for providing prompt and equitable resolutions for complaints, inquiries and requests for employee and inmate accommodations.

“Traveling to the department’s facilities gives me the opportunity to personally meet with employees and inmates to discuss their accommodation needs,” she said. “I explain the ADA process, then begin working with the individual to ensure they receive the appropriate accommodation.”

“I enjoy that this job allows me to work with all areas of the department,” she said.

In Strandberg’s role as it relates to inmates, her process includes talking to them about their requested accommodations. In many cases, the requests may be fulfilled; however, if the request can’t be fulfilled due to security issues, Strandberg works with the inmates to identify a suitable accommodation to allow them to participate in programs, services, and activities.

DOC employees who need an accommodation should:

- Contact their supervisor, who will then contact Strandberg; or
- Call Strandberg (406) 444-3803.

Supaman visits Pine Hills Correctional Facility

Every Friday this summer, Pine Hills Correctional Facility invited guests to its school to speak with students. In July, the students had a special guest when Supaman, a well-known Native American dancer and hip-hop artist, performed at the Miles City facility.

“His presentation is really interactive,” Pine Hills Principal Teagan Stanley said. “He wants them to repeat things and have their hands in the air. The kids loved it. There was a lot of buy-in.”

Supaman is a member of the Apsaalooke Nation and lives on the Crow reservation. Stanley said they first reached out to Supaman a couple of years ago to see if he would be interested in visiting with students. Now, Stanley said they try to schedule Supaman at the facility at least once a year.

The experience has been memorable for the students and Supaman as well.

“I enjoy coming to Pine Hills to share my story because you never know who you might inspire in their time of need,” he said. “No matter what mistakes we’ve made in life, we all have the choice to do better.”

Stanley said they are working on scheduling a second visit with Supaman later this fall for smaller workshops with the juvenile students.

Over the past three summers, Stanley said Pine Hills has worked to bring in educational and cultural opportunities to which the students wouldn’t otherwise be exposed. Other guests this summer included Fish, Wildlife and Parks employees’ nurses, and food truck companies. The break in schoolwork is a nice break for teachers and students, Stanley said.

“It’s been a good way for them (the students) to learn social and emotional learning,” she said. “We teach them how to interact with volunteers, manners. It seems simple, but it’s a good thing to practice and to give them an opportunity to use that.”

