



Corrections Rehabilitative Programs Effective, But Serve Only a Portion of the Eligible Population

at a glance

The department's rehabilitative programs serve only a small portion of inmates who are identified with educational deficits or eligible for substance abuse treatments.

Inmates who complete the GED, vocational training, and substance abuse treatment programs generally have successful outcomes in terms of program completion and lower recidivism. However, 90% of inmates who are enrolled in adult basic education do not successfully complete the program, often for reasons within the department's control.

Completing some educational and other rehabilitative programs translates into post-release success and may produce cost savings. In addition, rehabilitative programs reduce inmate idleness and promote institutional security.

While the department's sex offender treatment program is consistent with national standards, the program is voluntary, serves relatively few inmates, and allocation of treatment is not based on a validated risk assessment instrument.

Scope

Chapter 2006-25, *Laws of Florida*, directed OPPAGA to conduct a comprehensive review of the Department of Corrections programs and services. This report is one of a series and examines department academic and vocational

education, substance abuse treatment, and sex offender treatment programs. These programs are intended to reduce the likelihood of recidivism and improve public safety through preparing inmates for release and reentry into society.

Background

The Department of Corrections protects the public by incarcerating and supervising inmates and rehabilitating offenders through work, programs and treatment services. As of June 30, 2006, the department housed 88,576 inmates in 128 facilities throughout the state. The majority of these inmates enter Florida's correctional system lacking basic educational and employment skills, and many have substance abuse and mental health problems. The department screens inmates entering the system, and has determined that over two-thirds (68%) have less than ninth grade literacy proficiency and most were unemployed before incarceration; over 60% of the inmates also have a history of substance abuse, and 16% have been diagnosed with some form of mental illness.

Since most (90%) inmates are eventually released from prison, rehabilitative programs and treatment services can prepare inmates for their successful return to society. Given the high economic and social costs of incarceration, strategic investment in prison-based, rehabilitative programs can protect public

interest by helping reduce the risk that former inmates will commit new crimes. National studies have shown that in-prison programs that teach marketable skills and change inmates' criminal behavior can help offenders prepare for a law-abiding life after release.

The department provides four primary types of rehabilitative programs.

- Academic education programs are provided at 58 of the department's facilities. These programs include Mandatory Literacy, Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, and special education. The Mandatory Literacy Program is a 150-hour literacy training program required by law for all inmates with two or more years remaining on their sentence who score below a ninth grade reading level or higher.¹ The remaining academic programs are not provided to all inmates. Adult Basic Education (ABE) provides basic reading, writing, and math skills through the 8.9 grade level. General Education Development (GED) is a high school equivalency degree program for inmates who score at the ninth grade level or higher. Special education services are provided to inmates with disabilities who are eligible to receive special services required by state and federal law.
- Vocational education courses are offered in 34 institutions. These programs provide training leading to certification in 32 occupational areas. These occupations range from lower-skill jobs such as construction trades, to more high-skill positions in computer programming and architectural drafting.
- Substance abuse treatment programs are provided in 27 institutions. The department offers three types of treatment. Modality 1 is an intensive 4- to 6-month outpatient program, while Modality 2 is a 9- to 12-month long residential therapeutic community program. The third type of program—Program Center based—is a 9- to 18-month residential therapeutic

community program at three work release centers offering a continuum of substance abuse and educational services focusing on relapse prevention and re-entry skills.

- Sex offender treatment programs provide cognitive-behavioral therapy for willingly participating inmates diagnosed with a sexual disorder.

In Fiscal Year 2006-07, the Legislature appropriated over \$2.1 billion to the Department of Corrections; of this, \$36.4 million or 1.7% of the agency budget, was allocated to correctional education and substance abuse programs.² The department was unable to identify the level of funds allocated to sex offender treatment within the department's health services budget.

Findings

While most inmates who enter prison are identified as needing education and/or substance abuse treatment programs, the department currently provides these programs to a relatively small percentage of inmates, and most are subsequently released without receiving these services. Those inmates who do complete the GED, vocational education, and substance programs generally have successful outcomes in terms of program completion and lower recidivism. However, 90% of inmates who are enrolled in adult basic education do not successfully complete the program, often for reasons within the department's control. While Florida's treatment model for sex offenders is consistent with national standards, the program is voluntary, serves relatively few inmates, and allocation of treatment is not based on a validated risk assessment instrument.

¹ Effective June 30, 2006, rule change lowered the threshold to sixth grade.

² In comparison, five other states (California, Colorado, Georgia, New York, and Texas) reported allocating between 2.5% and 4% of their corrections appropriations to educational programs.

Educational Programs

Most inmates are identified with educational deficits, but programs serve only a small portion of eligible inmate population

The department identifies the educational status of inmates who enter the prison system through screening done at its reception centers. Inmates take the Tests of Adult Basic Education, which identifies their education grade level. Subsequent assessments are conducted whenever inmates are transferred to a new facility, and at regularly scheduled intervals.

These tests indicated that the median test score of inmates who entered prison during Fiscal Year 2005-06 was 6.6 (equivalent to a sixth grade education). Overall, approximately 65% of the prison population at June 30, 2006, had been screened as eligible for educational programming. As available resources permit, inmates with test scores below 9.0 grade level are placed in Adult Basic Education classes, and offenders with scores of 9.0 or above may be placed in GED preparatory or vocational programs.

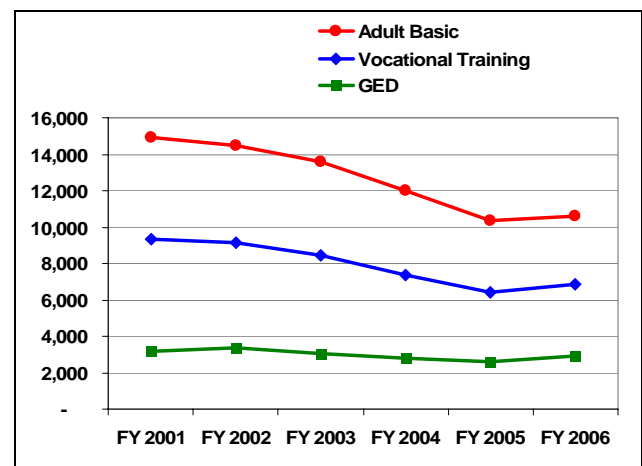
Due to limited slots in programs, most inmates are released without their education skills deficits being addressed. The department reports that of the 33,348 inmate releases in Fiscal Year 2005-06,

- approximately 65% left with scores below the ninth grade level;
- 11,987 inmates did not participate in academic programs for which they were eligible prior to release; and
- 8,816 inmates eligible for vocational training did not receive it prior to release.

A primary factor contributing to this low participation is that the department has experienced significant reductions in its education budget in recent years, which has affected its ability to deliver program services.

Since Fiscal Year 2000-01, the department's educational budget has decreased by 24% while the inmate population has increased by 24%. These budget cuts, which corresponded to the national recession and significant state revenue shortfalls, resulted in substantial decreases in the number of academic (31%) and vocational (47%) teachers. The department reports that as of June 30, 2006, it had 6,864 slots in its education programs that served 8% of the inmate population at any given time. As shown in Exhibit 1, the number of participants declined 26% across the department's three educational programs between Fiscal Year 2000-01 to 2005-06.

**Exhibit 1
Prison Education Program Participation Has Declined 26% Since 2001**



Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Over this period, the department has also increased the class sizes and increased use of inmate teaching assistants.³

³ Inmate teaching assistants are supervised by an individual certified academic teacher. Inmates who possess at least a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma and have received academic and practical training in various instructional methods from certified teachers provide instruction to inmates. There are 11 established inmate teaching assistance programs that produced 199 GED graduates in Fiscal Year 2005-06.

While few inmates complete basic education, those who complete other programs have better post-release outcomes

Three key measures of the success of rehabilitative programs are (1) completion, (2) obtaining employment after release, and (3) reduced recidivism. Our analysis showed that while inmates participating in GED and vocational education programs had high completion rates, most inmates in adult basic education failed to complete these programs within two years, often because they were transferred. Inmates that earned a GED or vocational certificate had greater post-release job success than inmates who did not complete these programs, and graduates of some educational programs had significantly lower recidivism rates than non-completers.

While GED and vocational participants had positive completion rates, most adult basic education participants failed to complete programs. We examined completion rates over the 2004-2006 time period for inmates who enrolled in adult basic education, GED and vocational training classes during the third quarter in 2004. We found that while participants in GED and vocational programs

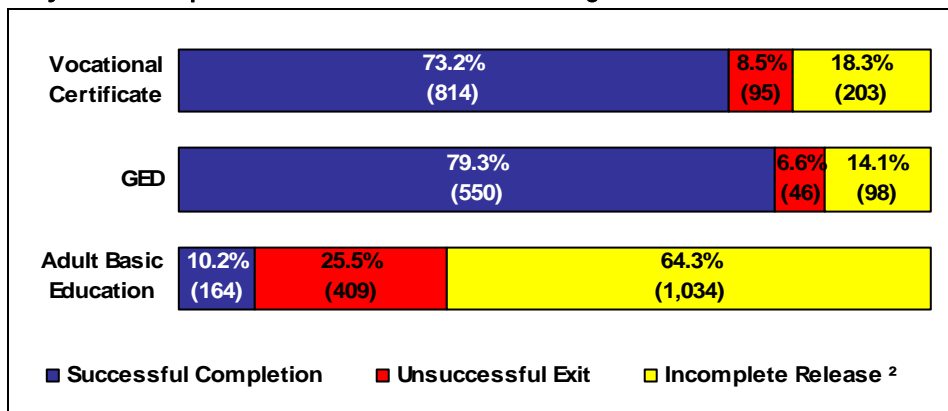
had high completion rates, inmates in adult basic education generally either failed to complete program requirements or left the program for administrative reasons, and were released from prison before completing the program.⁴

As shown in Exhibit 2, approximately three-quarters of participating inmates completed GED courses (79%) and vocational courses (73%), over the two-year period. The Florida Department of Education reports that 90% of the inmates who took the GED exam achieved a passing grade, exceeding the overall 67% statewide passing rate in Fiscal Year 2005-06.

However, only 10% of adult basic education students completed their courses over the two-year period. This lower success rate can be attributed to program length, inmate demographic and behavioral characteristics, and department operations. First, it often takes inmates longer to complete adult basic education than other programs. The adult basic education program serves inmates with low educational levels (those with Tests of Adult Basic Education scores ranging from 0.0 to 8.9) as well as those requiring English as a Second Language instruction and most

⁴ See Appendix A for more information about our methodology.

**Exhibit 2
While Most Enrolled Inmates Completed GED and Vocational Programs, Only 10% Completed Adult Basic Education Programs¹**



¹ Unreleased inmates with administrative exit codes were excluded from the above calculation because they are still eligible and have an opportunity to complete the program. See Appendix A for more information about our methodology.

² The Incomplete Release classification is used for program participants who exited the program for administrative reasons and were subsequently released from prison without program completion.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data for the period third quarter of 2004 through third quarter of 2006.

inmates with special education needs. Inmates must attain a 9.0 Tests of Adult Basic Education grade level score to successfully complete the program, which may require more than two years of instruction, particularly for inmates at the lower educational levels.

In contrast, inmates typically can complete the GED and vocational training courses within two years. Inmates complete the GED program when they earn a GED certificate, and most inmates complete vocational training in nine to 40 weeks. As adult basic education classes take longer, there is a greater chance for students to drop out, be discharged from the program for bad behavior, or be transferred to another institution for administrative reasons.

Second, the lower completion rate for the adult basic education program can also be attributed to certain inmate demographic and behavioral characteristics. On average, inmates who did not complete the adult basic education program had more disciplinary reports, had spent more time in prison, had a higher number of drug offenses, and were more likely to have high custody classifications than inmates who completed.⁵ As compliant behavior is a condition of program participation, some inmates do not complete because they are removed for their disruptive behavior. For example, over a quarter of the inmates in adult basic education were removed from the program due to behavioral problems and refusal to participate in the classes.

Third, department operations cause some inmates to be removed before they can complete the program. For example, over 64% of the inmates in adult basic education were released from prison before completing the program. This occurred because the department moves inmates to meet a security or institutional need or transfers inmates to another facility for other reasons, such as inmate requests or medical treatment needs. Some inmates are unable to re-enroll to complete the program before their release from prison.

⁵ These factors are also associated with higher recidivism, according to the Department of Corrections in *Recidivism Report: Inmates Released from Florida Prisons—July 1995 to June 2001*, July 2003.

Prior OPPAGA reports have discussed these problems and recommended that the department take steps to avoid transferring inmates who are nearing completion to help avoid program disruptions.⁶ The department has taken some steps to implement these recommendations. For example, education staff reported that they have improved communication with classification officers to avoid transferring inmate in education programs unless there is an overriding cause. However, attrition rates are still high, particularly for the adult basic education program, and more action should be taken to resolve this problem. For example, the department should track and report data on reasons for program interruptions by transfer, which would improve management staff awareness about inmate transfers that interrupt program completion.

Education program completion linked to post-release success. Consistent with national research, inmates who complete some education programs have higher employment rates upon release than other former inmates. Such inmates also have lower recidivism.

Data from the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) show that inmates who had earned a GED or high school diploma were 9.3% more likely to be employed than other inmates, while those who earned a vocational certificate were 17.9% more likely to be employed than other ex-convicts.^{7, 8}

As shown in Exhibit 3, inmates that completed a GED or vocational program had lower recidivism rates than those who did not complete these programs. These differences were statistically significant for vocational training programs when controlling for

⁶ *Review of the Department of Corrections*, OPPAGA [Report No. 00-23](#), December 2000. *Correction Education and Rehabilitative Programs Significantly Reduced*, OPPAGA [Report No. 04-59](#), August 2004.

⁷ *Annual Outcomes Report – Fall 2004 Data*, Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program, October 2005. FETPIP data refer only to GED and vocational certificate earners.

⁸ "What Are the Economic Effects of Earning a GED in Prison?", *National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy*, Volume 7 Issue D, September 2005.

variables that predict recidivism for both males and females on two recidivism measures.⁹ Male inmates who earned a GED also were statistically less likely to return to supervision or prison. However, we found no statistically significant differences in recidivism rates among inmates who completed adult basic education program and those who did not complete these programs. (See Appendix B for more information about our methodology and statistical results.)

**Exhibit 3
Inmates Who Completed Vocational Training and GED Programs Had Lower Recidivism Rates**

| Program Type | Two-Year Re-Offense Rates ¹ | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------|
| | Non-Completers | Completers |
| Vocational Training | Males | |
| Return to Prison | 18.9% | 13.8% |
| Return to Supervision or Prison | 37.8% | 27.6% |
| Vocational Training | Females | |
| Return to Prison | 9.3% | 6.6% |
| Return to Supervision or Prison | 27.0% | 19.6% |
| GED | Males | |
| Return to Supervision or Prison | 36.4% | 29.8% |

¹ Only statistically significant differences at the p<0.05 level in logistic regression models are reported; see Appendix B for full results.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Substance Abuse Treatment

Although two-thirds of inmates are eligible for substance abuse programs, most do not receive treatment

Approximately two-thirds of persons admitted to Florida prisons have substance abuse problems, and during Fiscal Year 2005-06, over a quarter (29.7%) of new admissions were for drug crimes. National research indicates that drug treatment programs within prisons can facilitate inmates’ successful return to society

⁹ According to the Department of Corrections in *Recidivism Report: Inmates Released from Florida Prisons—July 1995 to June 2001*, July 2003, factors that affect recidivism include prior recidivism, age, race, ethnicity, education level, custody level, time spent in prison, number of disciplinary reports, supervision after release, number of weapons crimes, number of drug crimes, number of property crimes, and burglary, robbery, homicide, sex/lewdness, and other violent crime as primary offense.

and reduce future crimes that would likely be committed to support drug habits. These programs are intended to help inmates change not only their physical addiction but also their thinking and actions, including learning how to avoid circumstances that lead to resumed substance abuse and criminal behavior.¹⁰

The department screens all inmates during the admission process to determine if they have drug and alcohol abuse treatment needs. This screening process assigns a score to each inmate based on the severity of their addiction, previous treatment history, criminal history, and the sentencing authority’s treatment recommendations. The screening score is used with the inmate’s forecast release date to calculate their statewide priority ranking for substance abuse services.¹¹ Inmates are placed in treatment programs as slots become available, and those who are placed in programs are required to participate.¹² The department reports that on June 30, 2006, 56,392 inmates had been identified as eligible for substance abuse treatment.

However, most eligible inmates are subsequently released without receiving substance abuse treatment. During Fiscal Year 2005-06, the department released 24,284 inmates who were identified as having significant substance abuse problems. Of those, 19,725 inmates (81%) did not receive treatment while incarcerated.

Similar to the educational programs, the number of slots in its substance abuse programs in recent years were reduced by the department due to reductions in state and federal funding; (the department’s allocation for these programs declined by 43% between Fiscal Years 2000-01 and 2006-07). As shown in Exhibit 4, while the number of inmates with identified substance abuse treatment needs increased substantially over this period, available treatment slots declined by over half,

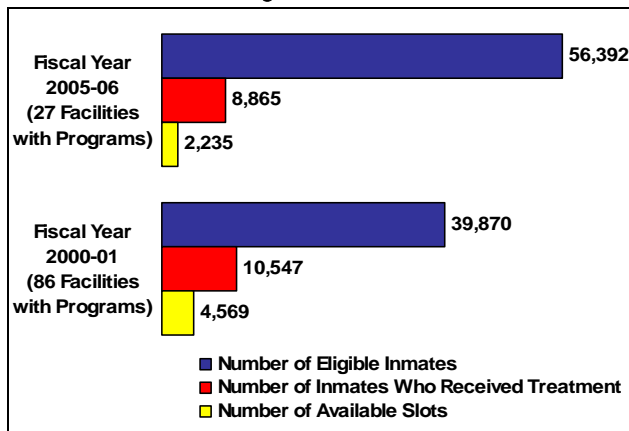
¹⁰ The department contracts for most substance abuse programs; FTE are central office staff that monitor contracts and staff that operate specialized treatment programs at Broward and Zephyrhills for inmates with co-occurring disorders.

¹¹ Inmates with life or death sentences are excluded from getting a substance abuse ranking.

¹² Rule 33-507.001(2), F.A.C.

and the number of inmates receiving programs fell from 10,547 to 8,865. Further, as Exhibit 5 shows, a higher percentage of inmates were served in shorter-term outpatient programs, less effective in reducing recidivism (also see Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 4
While the Number of Inmates Needing Substance Abuse Treatment Has Increased, Available Slots and the Number Receiving Treatment Have Declined

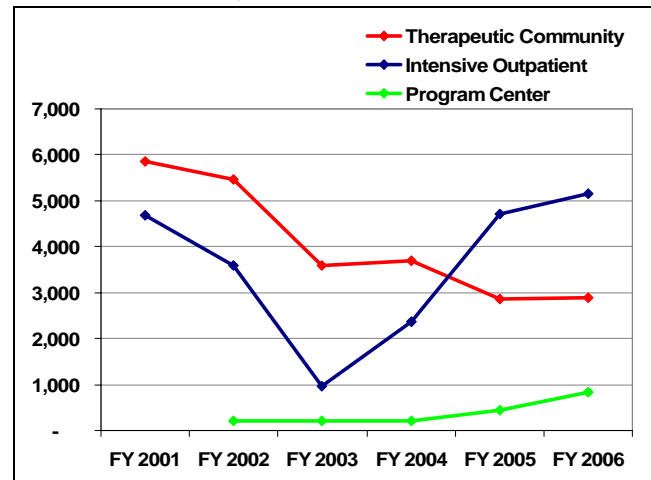


Source: Department of Corrections and OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

A challenge in funding substance abuse treatment programs is that the availability of federal grant funding for these programs has fluctuated over the past years. For example, funding for one federal grant program—Residential Substance Abuse Treatment—was approximately \$1 million in 2001, \$0.8 million in 2005, and less than \$150,000 in 2006. These funds are generally awarded only to start-up programs as these grants are to be used as seed money to begin and administer a new program for no more than four years.¹³ As a result, state funding requirements for programs tend to increase over time, and the department often discontinues programs when grants expire. While the department may receive subsequent federal grants to begin new programs, this can disrupt inmate treatment as several months may elapse between the closing of an old program and full implementation of new programs.

¹³ The federal Byrne grant and the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program grant are administered in Florida by the Department of Law Enforcement.

Exhibit 5
Substance Abuse Treatment Participation Has Declined 16% and Shifted to Shorter Term, Less Effective Programs



Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Most participating inmates complete substance abuse treatment, and some post-release outcomes are positive

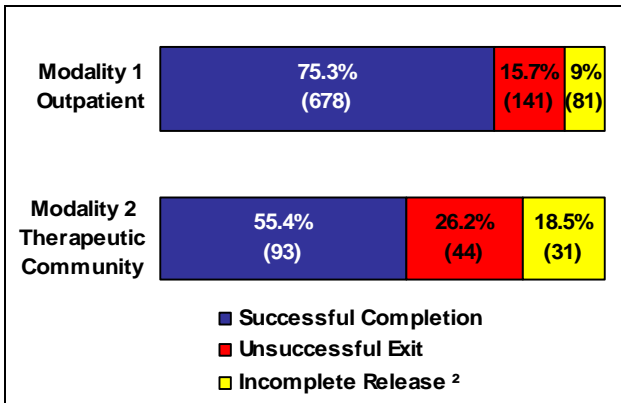
Key measures of substance abuse treatment success—program completion and recidivism—are generally positive. Most offenders participating in substance abuse treatment complete their programs successfully, although inmates attending therapeutic communities have lower completion rates than those participating in the outpatient program model. Inmates who complete some types of programs also have lower recidivism rates than those who fail to complete.

Inmates generally complete substance abuse treatment, although therapeutic community programs have lower completions. Our analysis of program completion rates showed that most inmates successfully completed these programs over a two-year time period.¹⁴ As shown in Exhibit 6, three-quarters of the inmates in outpatient substance abuse treatment (Modality 1) completed their programs successfully, as did just over half of the inmates in inpatient therapeutic

¹⁴ To determine program completion rates, OPPAGA looked at the outcome for a cohort entering programs in the third quarter in 2004 at the end of the same quarter in 2006. See Appendix A for more information about our methodology.

communities (Modality 2). Due to an insufficient number of participants in the department’s data, we were unable to identify completion rates for its substance abuse program centers.

**Exhibit 6
Most Inmates Enrolled in 2004 Completed Substance Abuse Treatment Programs¹**



¹ Unreleased inmates with administrative exit codes were excluded from the above calculation because they are still eligible and have an opportunity to complete the program. See Appendix A for more information about our methodology.

² The Incomplete Release classification is used for program participants who exited the program for administrative reasons and were subsequently released from prison without program completion.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

The department attributes the lower completion rates in the therapeutic community program to program rule violations. Inmates in therapeutic community treatment are considered to be in treatment 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and disruptive behavior will result in an unsuccessful exit. Inmates who failed to complete this program may have been more disruptive than those served in the outpatient treatment settings.

Inmates that complete substance abuse treatment had lower recidivism rates than inmates who did not complete. As shown in Exhibit 7, males who completed substance abuse treatment programs had lower recidivism rates of returning to prison than those inmates who participated but did not complete the programs. These differences were statistically significant when controlling for variables that predict recidivism. However, we found no statistically significant outcomes for female inmates, and we

found no difference in return to supervision or prison outcomes for intensive outpatient participants.

**Exhibit 7
Male Substance Abuse Program Completers Had Lower Recidivism Rates Than Non-Completers**

| Treatment Program | Two-Year Re-Offense Rates ¹ | |
|---|--|------------|
| | Non-Completers | Completers |
| Intensive Outpatient (Modality 1) | Males | |
| Return to Prison | 21.8% | 16.1% |
| Therapeutic Community (Modality 2) | Males | |
| Return to Prison | 19.9% | 15.2% |
| Return to Supervision or Prison | 39.0% | 30.9% |

¹ Only statistically significant differences at the p<0.05 level in logistic regression models are reported; see Appendix A for full results.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Rehabilitative programs may produce cost savings and help reduce inmate idleness and disciplinary problems

In addition to lower recidivism, education and substance abuse treatment programs tend to have two additional positive benefits—cost savings and prison idleness reduction. Our analysis of inmate releases from Fiscal Years 1996 through 2001 suggests there may be recidivism cost savings associated with program completions. Subsequently, of all inmates completing education and substance abuse programs, 550 fewer returned to supervision and 485 fewer returned to prison within the 24-month follow-up period. In Fiscal Year 2005-06, it cost the state approximately \$19,000 per year to incarcerate an inmate and \$2,310 per year to supervise an offender.¹⁵ However, data on cost per successful program completion is not available. As a result, while we can conclude that fewer offenders return to prison or supervision as a result of rehabilitative program completion, a more comprehensive analysis is required to determine whether these gains are offset by the cost of the programs.

¹⁵ The department reports that the Fiscal Year 2005-06 per diem cost per inmate for all department facilities was \$52.06 and the daily supervision cost per inmate, excluding electronic monitoring, was \$6.33.

In addition to potential cost savings, correctional rehabilitative programs and work assignments keep inmates occupied. Effective inmate management is essential to maintaining control of correctional institutions. Inmate work and program assignments reduce disciplinary problems and violence against correctional officers and other inmates. However, the department does not have enough program or work slots to keep all inmates busy. Since 2000, the inmate population has steadily increased, but the number of work and program assignments has decreased, as shown in Exhibit 8. The work and program assignments are deficient by 31,118 slots.

**Exhibit 8
Number of Inmates Needing Assignments
Has Tripled**

| Assignment Status | Number of Prisoners as of | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | June 2000 | June 2006 |
| Total prison population | 71,233 | 88,576 |
| Prisoners available for assignment | 55,476 | 70,665 |
| Work/program assignment available | 44,995 | 39,547 |
| Total additional assignments needed | 10,481 | 31,118 |
| Idleness rate | 18% | 44% |

Source: Department of Corrections.

The department reports that inmates assigned to programs receive fewer disciplinary reports, which are indicative of their behavior and institutional adjustment, than all other inmates.

In Fiscal Year 2005-06, inmates earning GED or vocational certificates received 6% and 23% fewer disciplinary reports respectively than all other inmates. Also, inmates completing substance abuse treatment receive 33% less disciplinary reports than all other inmates. Inmates receiving disciplinary reports represent a significant cost to the state, as the department calculates that each report carries an associated average cost of \$912.¹⁶

¹⁶ This amount represents administrative cost and the cost of extended release date due to loss of gain-time.

Sex Offender Treatment

While recent legislation in Florida has focused on monitoring sex offenders released from prison or placed under community supervision, it does not address the large number of sex offenders who are housed in state prisons.¹⁷ In Fiscal Year 2005-06, the Department of Corrections reported that 11,454 inmates were classified as sex offenders, making up nearly 13% of the total inmate population.¹⁸ Of these persons, 7,405 were statutorily designated sex offenders and predators.¹⁹

Mental health experts consider sex crimes to be a behavioral problem that cannot be “cured” but must be actively managed over the offenders’ lifetime. While sex offenders released from prison have generally low recidivism rates, studies have shown that institutional sex offender treatment programs that follow national standards can be successful in reducing recidivism once offenders are released.^{20, 21}

¹⁷ For example, the Jessica Lunsford Act, Ch. 2005-28, *Laws of Florida*.

¹⁸ As defined by the department, “sex offenders” include inmates who intended, attempted or completed an act of a sexual nature, with the exception of certain acts, including acts relating to prostitution, nude or semi-nude adult entertainment, or public exposure (e.g., public urination, sunbathing, swimming, mooning, and streaking).

¹⁹ Florida statutes classify offenders as “sex offenders” if they meet the statutory definitions enumerated in s. 944.606-7, *F.S.*; as “sexual predators” defined in s. 775.21, *F.S.*; or as “sexually violent predators” defined in s. 394.912(10), *F.S.*

²⁰ The Department of Corrections reports lower recidivism rates for sex offenders than the general inmate population. [Recidivism Report: Inmates Released from Florida Prisons—July 1995 to June 2001](#), Department of Corrections, July 2003.

²¹ National research indicates that quality treatment can reduce recommitment for a sexual offense on average by approximately 10% to 17%. Offenders who complete treatment are less likely to recommit sexual offenses than offenders who refuse or do not complete treatment.

The department's sex offender treatment program is consistent with national standards, but serves a minority of identified offenders

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers publishes nationally recognized standards for the treatment of sex offenders. These standards advocate a cognitive-behavioral approach, which focuses on relapse prevention and teaches the offender to control his or her thoughts and behaviors to prevent future offending. Participants learn to monitor their deviant desires and avoid situations in which they may commit crimes.

The department's sex offender treatment program is consistent with national standards. Mental health specialists at each institution are responsible for providing cognitive-behavioral therapy for eligible sex offenders, who are treated in small groups in one-hour sessions, once a week for 20 to 26 weeks. The goal of the program is to begin the process of treatment and behavior management, which will continue in community-based treatment programs after inmates are released.

However, the department's program serves only a small percentage of inmates who are classified as sex offenders. During Fiscal Year 2005-06, the department treated 399 inmates, or 3% of the 11,454 inmates classified as sex offenders. While some of the remaining offenders may not need treatment, the department's ability to allocate treatment resources to those who pose the highest risk to public safety are constrained by two factors. First, the department only serves those inmates diagnosed with a sexual disorder who voluntarily accept treatment. Second, it does not prioritize sex offenders for treatment using a risk assessment instrument.

Treatment is available only to inmates diagnosed with a sexual disorder and who are willing to be treated. Department policy specifies that only inmates who have a specific sexual disorder, as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, are eligible to receive treatment. Sexual disorders include exhibitionism, pedophilia, and voyeurism. Department policies also require

that inmates admit to having engaged in harmful sexual behavior and show willingness to be treated. These policies result in most sex offenders not receiving treatment because relatively few sex offender inmates both meet diagnostic criteria for a sexual disorder and are amenable to treatment. In Fiscal Year 2005-06, of the 11,454 inmates classified as sex offenders, only 1,350 (12%) were diagnosed with a clinical sexual disorder. Additionally, while the department offers treatment to all eligible sex offenders, many refuse to participate. Of the 37 diagnosed sex offenders released during Fiscal Year 2005-06, 9 were treated during their incarceration.²²

Research indicates that some sex offenders benefit from treatment even if they do not meet the clinical threshold of a diagnosed sexual disorder. Inmates who are not diagnosed with a sexual disorder, but who have committed sexually violent crimes, pose a risk to public safety. Cognitive behavioral treatment for such sexual offenders can enhance the control of dangerous behaviors and desires associated with committing sex offenses, such as rage, sexual compulsion, and deviant fantasies. For example, the motives of offenders convicted of adult rape tend to be related to power, not sexual desire. A convicted rapist may not show symptoms of a psychiatric sexual disorder, but he may benefit from cognitive-behavioral treatment and may be a greater risk of committing a violent sexual act upon release than, for example, a sex offender diagnosed with voyeurism.

The department does not use a validated risk assessment instrument to allocate sex offender treatment. Given its limited resources, the department should prioritize its treatment programs to sex offenders who pose the greatest risk of re-offending; such screening is also recommended by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. Criteria that should be included in risk assessments include offenders' history, clinical diagnoses, and tests

²² The department reports that of the remaining 28 sex offenders who did not receive treatment 12 refused treatment, 14 were ineligible to receive treatment, and 2 offenders were eligible for treatment but the records were unclear as to whether treatment was provided or declined.

using risk assessment instruments with research validity.²³

The department currently screens all inmates classified as sex offenders to determine if they should be diagnosed with a sexual disorder. This clinical evaluation includes conducting personal interviews with inmates and reviewing documentation to gain detailed information about the inmates' behavior, personal victimizations, relationships with family, and details regarding their sexual preferences.²⁴ Inmates diagnosed with a sexual disorder are put on a waiting list or offered treatment immediately if their remaining prison term is less than two years.²⁵

However, the department does not prioritize its waiting list according to risk level. As a result, treatment for sexually violent offenders may not be provided to those inmates who pose the greatest public safety threat. To address this, the department should adopt an actuarial risk assessment instrument that would predict the likelihood an offender will commit a new sex offense and identify treatment options. Several such instruments exist, which generally consider a variety of factors such as age at first offense and prior records to assess long-term recidivism potential, and generate a quantitative score which is scaled to indicate the recidivism likelihood. Evaluations of these instruments have shown that they are reasonably accurate in predicting long-term recidivism risk for sex offenders. Using this approach would allow the department to allocate its limited treatment resources to incarcerated sex offenders who pose the highest risk to the public. The approach would also be useful to the department in estimating treatment costs and benefits.

²³ Risk assessment is the process of predicting the probability that a sex offender will commit another sex crime. Valid and reliable instruments used in other state prisons include Structured Risk Assessment (Static-99), Minnesota Sex Offender Screening Tool-Revised (MnSOST-R) and the Sex Offender Risk Appraisal Guide (SORAG). These are often used in conjunction with clinical evaluations.

²⁴ The department reviews inmates with sentences relating to sexually violent crimes for post-release civil commitment review. However, this review is for statutory eligibility for referral, not a risk assessment.

²⁵ The department provides services as inmates approach release to prepare them for transition to a community-based treatment program.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the department provide the Legislature options for increasing levels of educational, substance abuse, and sex offender programs, which have been demonstrated to improve post-release outcomes and reduce costly recidivism.
- We recommend that the department develop a monthly report identifying and categorizing reasons why inmate participation in education and substance abuse treatment is interrupted. The report should categorize disruption reasons including transfers for security, disciplinary action, health care, population management, work assignment change, program closures, and any other movement reasons. This report would improve management staff awareness about inmate transfers that interrupt education and substance abuse program completion.
- We recommend that the department conduct longitudinal cost-benefit analyses of its education, substance abuse, and, if feasible, sex offender treatment programs. These studies should assess outcomes of cohorts of inmates that participate in its various programs, and track these inmates for various lengths of time after release such as one year, three years, and five years. These analyses would help identify those programs that show the greatest return on investment in terms of improving ex-inmate employment outcomes and minimizing recidivism.
- We recommend that the department provide the Legislature a proposal for using validated risk assessment instruments to allocate incarcerated sex offender treatment, including the estimated costs and benefits.

Agency Response

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Corrections for review and response. The chief of staff's written response is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix C, on page 19.

Appendix A

Data and Methodology for Program Completions Analysis

We calculated the education and substance abuse program completion rates for a cohort of inmates during a two-year time period. In addition, we analyzed the cohort completion data to find out if there were differences between completers and non-completers that may have influenced completion outcome.

Data and study population

The Department of Corrections provided data on inmates newly enrolled in educational programs (adult basic education, GED, and vocational training) and substance abuse programs (Modality 1, Modality 2, and Program Center) in July 1 through September 30, 2004, including inmates' demographic and program status data through September 30, 2006. There were 3,632 inmates enrolled in education programs and 1,158 inmates enrolled in substance abuse treatment programs. Program variables included program type, exit status codes, educational certificates earned with the corresponding dates, and release from prison dates. Demographic and institutional variables indicated sex, race, ethnicity, age, custody level, months incarcerated, disciplinary reports, and primary offense.

Method of analysis

We used the department's enrollment status definitions, information about certificate earnings, and release information to create a new variable indicating program outcomes. Within each program enrollment, we counted an inmate as a "successful completion" if they had at least one record with a program exit status code for successful exit or attainment of a GED or vocational training certificate (for education programs). We counted as "unsuccessful exit" enrolled inmates with a program exit status code for unsuccessful exit. We counted as "incomplete releases" enrolled inmates with a program exit status code for administrative exits and a prison release date. We counted as "incomplete, but not released" enrolled inmates with a program exit status code for administrative exits and no prison release date. We excluded from our calculations those inmates classified with an administrative exit who had not been released from prison as these inmates were still eligible to complete a program.

We conducted bivariate analysis on the program completion variables and factors known by the department to predict recidivism in order to determine whether statistically significant associations exist between recidivism predictors and program completion outcome.²⁶ We coded categorical recidivism predictor variables and the program outcome variables into dichotomous variables to compare the outcomes. We used the chi-square statistic to measure statistical significance. We also compared means differences with the t-test to measure statistical significance for five of the recidivism predictor variables that were continuous measures. We used a 0.05 confidence level for all statistical tests, which is the most commonly accepted standard in social sciences for determining statistically significant differences.

Statistical results

The valid percentages from the new program outcome variable represent the completion ratios used in our findings, as shown in Table A-1.

²⁶ [Recidivism Report: Inmates Released from Florida Prisons—July 1995 to June 2001](#), Department of Corrections, July 2003.

**Table A-1
Program Completion Results**

| Program Cohort | Successful Completion | | Unsuccessful Exit | | Incomplete Releases (Released Without Completion Due to Administrative Exit) | | Enrolled or Admin Exit and Still in Prison |
|--|-----------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|--|-------|--|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| Education | | | | | | | |
| ABE (1,607) | 164 | 10.2% | 409 | 25.5% | 1,034 | 64.3% | 733 |
| GED (694) | 550 | 79.3% | 46 | 6.6% | 98 | 14.1% | 37 |
| Vocational Training (1,112) | 814 | 73.2% | 95 | 8.5% | 203 | 18.3% | 176 |
| Substance Abuse | | | | | | | |
| Modality 1 - Intensive Outpatient (900) | 678 | 75.3% | 141 | 15.7% | 81 | 9.0% | 43 |
| Modality 2 - Therapeutic Community (168) | 93 | 55.4% | 44 | 26.2% | 31 | 18.5% | 5 |
| Program Center (Females only) (46) | 41 | 89.1% | 2 | 4.3% | 3 | 6.5% | 2 |

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

As shown in Table A-2, our analysis found statistically significant differences between program completers and non-completers on some variables known to be recidivism predictors, confirming some associations of recidivism predictors with program completion. This finding required us to analyze program completion effect on recidivism while holding constant recidivism predictors in a logistic regression model (see Appendix B).

**Table A-2
Findings of Bivariate Analysis Comparing Recidivism Predictors with Program Completion**

| Program | Recidivism Predictor Variables (Reporting only results statistically significant at p<0.05 confidence level) | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--------|---|
| | Case N | Males | Case N | Females |
| Adult Basic Education | 2,026 | Low Custody (+) Last TAFE Score (+) Race (Black) (-) High Custody (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) Months Incarcerated (-) Drug Offenses (-) | 314 | Age (Younger) (+) Last TAFE Score (+) Race (Black) (-) Drug Offenses (-) |
| GED | 684 | Sex Offender (+) Property Offenses (+) Race (Black) (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) Drug Offenses (-) | 47 | Property Offenses (+) |
| Vocational Training | 1,122 | Age (Older) (+) Last TAFE Score (+) Race (Black) (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) Burglary (-) Weapons Offenses (-) | 166 | Prior Prison Terms (-) |
| Intensive Outpatient (Modality 1) | 893 | Age (Older) (+) Low Custody (+) Months Incarcerated (+) High Custody (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) | 50 | Low Custody (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) |
| Therapeutic Community (Modality 2) | 150 | High Custody (-) Disciplinary Reports (-) | 23 | (No significant associations found) |
| Program Center | 0 | (NA) | 48 | Low Custody (-) Property Offenses (+) |

(+) Indicates more completers had this characteristic or completers had a higher mean of this characteristic.

(-) Indicates fewer completers had this characteristic or completers had a lower mean of this characteristic.

NOTE: See Table B-2 in Appendix B for explanation of recidivism predictor variables.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Appendix B

Comparing Recidivism of Inmates Completing Education and Substance Abuse Treatment Programs

The Department of Corrections reports that inmates who complete rehabilitative programs recidivate (return to crime) less than inmates who fail to complete these programs.²⁷ However, the department has not analyzed whether lower recidivism might be due to differences between completers and non-completers in terms of factors known to predict recidivism. Our analysis examined whether inmates who complete rehabilitative programs have lower recidivism rates than inmates who fail to complete these programs when these factors are considered. Consistent with the general recidivism literature, the department has documented recidivism predictors in released Florida inmates, including gender, age, race, ethnicity, prior incarceration, criminal history, misbehavior in prison, education level, sentence length, and post-release supervision.²⁸

Data

The Department of Corrections' Bureau of Research and Data Analysis provided data on recidivism; inmate characteristics; enrollment, exit, and completion for education and substance abuse treatment programs; and education/vocational training certificates obtained by inmates.

Study population

The inmates in our analysis were released during Fiscal Years 1996 through 2002 and had participated in educational or substance abuse rehabilitation programs while in prison. The information on the released inmates' recidivism was available through January 2004. The data file provided by the department contained information on 106,603 prison releases for 96,126 inmates. We analyzed only inmate releases through Fiscal Year 2001, so that all cases had a minimum post-release follow-up of two years.

Table B-1 reports the numbers of inmates who participated in and completed each of the six types of rehabilitative programs we analyzed.²⁹ For this analysis, we classified inmates as non-completers if they did not complete the program for any reason, whether due to inmate failure or administrative exits.

Table B-1 also shows that many inmates participated in more than one type of program. The table shows the total number of inmates who participated in each program as well as the number of inmates who participated *only* in that program. Generally, 54% – 64% of males and 58% – 69% of females participated in at least one additional program. GED participants had higher program participation overlaps, with 75% of males and 84% of females participating in another program. This confirms the need to control for participation in additional programs when comparing recidivism rates of completers and non-completers within a specific program type.

²⁷ [Analysis of the Impact of Inmate Programs upon Recidivism](#), Department of Corrections, January 2001.

²⁸ [Recidivism Report: Inmates Released from Florida Prisons—July 1995 to June 2001](#), Department of Corrections, July 2003.

²⁹ Program Centers were established late in the data period analyzed, presenting only 39 male and 90 female participants, so we excluded these from the analysis.

Table B-1
Most Inmates Participated in Multiple Rehabilitation Programs (Inmates Released Fiscal Years 1996–2000)¹

| Program Type | Males | | | Females | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Total Participants | Program Completers | Only This Program | Total Participants | Program Completers | Only This Program |
| Education: | | | | | | |
| Adult Basic | 9,635 | 1,677 | 4,059 | 1,080 | 94 | 338 |
| GED | 11,480 | 7,870 | 2,897 | 779 | 512 | 121 |
| Vocational Training | 13,474 | 7,663 | 4,904 | 1,720 | 816 | 706 |
| Substance Abuse Treatment: | | | | | | |
| Modality 1 | 5,478 | 2,242 | 2,292 | 1,022 | 454 | 356 |
| Modality 2 | 14,486 | 6,374 | 6,697 | 2,101 | 673 | 880 |
| Modality 3 | 5,497 | 3,088 | 2,247 | 669 | 251 | 173 |

¹ Counts of completers and single program participants are included in total participants.
 Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data.

Method of analysis

Our analysis used two recidivism measures: (1) a new conviction resulting in *readmission to prison* within two years of release and (2) a new conviction resulting in *readmission to supervision or prison* within two years of release. Neither measure includes technical violations of post-release supervision conditions. We compared recidivism rates for program completers and non-completers within each program type and on each recidivism measure. For each inmate release, we classified an inmate as a participant in a program type if the inmate had any exit record with a program course code the department categorizes in that type. Within each program type, we classified an inmate as a program completer if they had at least one record with a department program exit status code for completion. We also classified inmates as completers if they obtained a GED or vocational training certificate, during their prison term. We analyzed male and female inmates separately because they differ substantially in recidivism rates, effects of predictor variables on recidivism rates, and available opportunities for programs.³⁰

We used the chi-square statistic to assess whether recidivism rate differences for completers and non-completers were statistically different from random chance with a 95% probability (p<0.05). In addition, we used logistic regression models to control for differences in characteristics associated with recidivism between completers and non-completers. For each program type analyzed, the data included only inmates who participated in that program type. However, to control for the overlap of participation in multiple program types, we included variables indicating whether an inmate participated in each other type of program. Table B-2 reports variables used in our regression models.

³⁰ For example, a higher percentage of female inmates might be exposed to programs or to multiple programs due to confinement in relatively fewer facilities.

**Table B-2
Variables Used in Logistic Regression Models¹**

| Variable | Description |
|--|---|
| Dependent Variables | |
| Re-offense within 2 years resulting in <i>prison</i> sentence | Indicates whether release was convicted of an offense committed on a date within 24 months of prison release for which a <i>prison</i> sentence was imposed. |
| Re-offense within 2 years resulting in <i>prison or supervision</i> sentence | Indicates whether release was convicted of an offense committed on a date within 24 months of prison release for which a <i>prison or supervision</i> sentence was imposed. |
| Re-offense within 3 years resulting in <i>prison</i> sentence ² | Indicates whether release was convicted of an offense committed on a date within 36 months of prison release for which a <i>prison</i> sentence was imposed. |
| Independent Variables: Demographics | |
| Age | Years of age at prison release. |
| Black ³ | Indicates that inmate is black. |
| Hispanic ³ | Indicates that inmate is self-described as Hispanic on a race or ethnicity data element. |
| Independent Variables: Criminal History | |
| Prior Prison Terms | Number of prior original prison commitments not including the prison commitment from which inmate was last released, excluding returns to prison for technical violations of post-release supervision conditions. |
| Time Served | Number of months from prison admission to first release on commitment from which inmate was last released. |
| Worst Offense: Homicide ³ | Most serious offense type ever committed by the inmate, ranking from homicide as highest through burglary as lowest in the order listed. "Other violent" includes non-sexual battery, assault, etc. |
| Worst Offense: Sex ³ | |
| Worst Offense: Robbery ³ | |
| Worst Offense: Other Violent ³ | |
| Worst Offense: Burglary ³ | |
| Property Offenses | Number of convictions for offenses of each type inmate ever received. |
| Drug Offenses | |
| Weapons Offenses | |
| Independent Variables: Prison Experience | |
| High Custody ³ | Indicates that inmate was classified as "high" custody at time of release. |
| Low Custody ³ | Indicates that inmate was classified as low or community custody at time of release. "Community" custody includes all and only inmates at work release centers. |
| Disciplinary Reports | Number of disciplinary reports inmate received during commitment from which last released. |
| Supervision Post Release ³ | Indicates that inmate was on supervision following release. |
| Education Level | Grade equivalent from last Tests for Adult Basic Education (TABE) score recorded. |
| Test Variables: Program Participation and Completion | |
| Adult Basic Education | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed an adult basic education program. |
| GED | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed a GED program. |
| Vocational Training | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed a vocational training program. |
| Modality 1 | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed a Modality 1 intensive out-patient substance abuse treatment program. |
| Modality 2 | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed a Modality 2 in-patient therapeutic community substance abuse treatment program. |
| Modality 3 | Indicates that inmate participated in and whether the inmate completed a Modality 3 outpatient relapse prevention and transitional program. |

¹ See Table A-2 for details on strength and direction of predictor relationships to recidivism measures. These differ for males and females and depend on which measure is used.

² Used only where warranted to analyze narrower recidivism measure on longer follow-up period (male GED and vocational training analysis).

³ Dichotomous (two-category) predictor variables.

Statistical results

Table B-3 shows the results of our analysis. Generally, the recidivism rates produced from our analysis approximated those reported by the department for re-offenses committed within two years of release that resulted in a new *prison or supervision sentence*.³¹ In five of six program types, our analysis found larger differences between completers and non-completers than reported by the department. However, our analysis found a smaller difference between recidivism rates of completers and non-completers for female GED participants than reported by the department.

As Table B-3 indicates, our analysis found that base recidivism rates were lower and statistically significant for males who completed all program types, except substance abuse Modality 3 on readmission to prison, than for those who did not complete. We only found statistically significant, lower base recidivism rates for females who completed vocational training or therapeutic community treatment programs, compared with those who did not complete.

However, Table B-3 also reports which recidivism rate differences are attributable to program completion, while holding other recidivism predictors constant and controlling for participation in other programs. We present only statistically significant results in our report, with one caveat. We did *not* find significant results from the logistic regression model of readmission to prison on the *two-year follow-up* for male vocational training completers. However, results from recidivism analyses may depend on which follow-up period is measured. Where differences were statistically significant on the broader measure at two years (return to supervision or prison) but not for the narrower measure (return to prison only), we reanalyzed the data for the narrower measure with a three-year follow-up period. This was only necessary for male inmates participating in two program types: GED and vocational training. We report that the two-year difference for male vocational training completers is genuine because our analysis of the same measure on the three-year follow-up was statistically significant. The male GED completer analysis of readmission to prison was still not significant three years after release, so we did not report that two-year difference as significant.

³¹ The department's Bureau of Research and Data Analysis confirms this is the recidivism measure used for their report.

**Table B-3
Comparisons of Recidivism Rates for Major Rehabilitative Programs in Florida Prisons**

| Prison Releases Analyzed | FY 96-97 (N=18,414) | | FY 96 - FY00 (N = 33,917) | | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------|---|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| | Readmitted to Prison or Supervision within 2 Years for New Offense | | Conviction Within 2 Years Resulting in Readmission to Prison or Supervision | | Conviction Within 2 Years Resulting in Readmission to Prison Only | |
| Program Completed | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Males | | | | | | |
| Adult Basic | NR | NR | 39.7% | 32.8% ¹ | 20.7% | 17.5% ¹ |
| GED | 34.9% | 30.5% | 36.4% | 29.8% ² | 17.8% | 13.9% ¹ |
| Vocational Training | 35.2% | 27.0% | 37.8% | 27.6% ² | 18.9% | 13.8% ³ |
| Modality 1 | NR | NR | 39.2% | 31.4% ¹ | 21.8% | 16.1% ² |
| Modality 2 | 34.9% | 32.1% | 39.0% | 30.9% ² | 19.9% | 15.2% ² |
| Modality 3 | NR | NR | 30.7% | 26.8% ¹ | 13.0% | 12.5% |
| Females | | | | | | |
| Adult Basic | NR | NR | 28.0% | 28.7% | 9.9% | 14.9% |
| GED | 26.4% | 20.5% | 22.8% | 21.1% | 9.0% | 5.5% |
| Vocational Training | 27.1% | 20.1% | 27.0% | 19.6% ² | 9.3% | 6.6% ² |
| Modality 1 | NR | NR | 28.5% | 27.1% | 10.7% | 8.6% |
| Modality 2 | 26.3% | 24.5% | 29.7% | 21.2% ¹ | 11.1% | 8.3% ¹ |
| Modality 3 | NR | NR | 26.6% | 20.3% | 8.6% | 8.8% |

NR – not reported.

¹ Base rates statistically significant using chi-square test at p<0.05.

² Statistically significant based on entry of the completion indicator in logistic regression model at p<0.05.

³ Not statistically significant at the two-year follow-up, but confirmed as statistically significant at the three-year follow-up based on entry of the completion indicator in logistic regression at p<0.05.

Source: Fiscal Year 1996-97 - *Analysis of the Impact of Inmate Programs Upon Recidivism*, Department of Corrections, January 2001.
Fiscal Years 1996 through 2000 - OPPAGA analysis of Department of Corrections data conducted December 2006.

Appendix C



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February 19, 2007

Gary R. VanLandingham, Director
Office of Program Policy & Analysis &
Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
Claude Pepper Building
111 West Madison Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Director VanLandingham:

Thank you for the opportunity to review OPPAGA's draft report on academic and vocational education, substance abuse treatment and sex offender treatment programs within the Department of Corrections. The Department concurs with the recommendations contained in the report. In fact, the Department has submitted a Legislative Budget Request for FY 2007-2008 which, if funded, will address the main focus of your findings and recommendations.

The growth of Florida's state prison population is exacerbated by the significant number of those who leave Florida state prisons only to return less than three years later. With evidence-based programs, Florida can educate, train, and assist inmates into becoming productive, tax paying members of society. Consequently, Florida can further reduce its low crime rate and provide its citizens with a better degree of public safety.

The Department has made reducing recidivism a priority, and appreciates the opportunity to work with your staff on this report. The Department welcomes the chance to further work with you and the Legislature on these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Prudom".

Richard Prudom,
Chief of Staff

The Florida Legislature
Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability



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