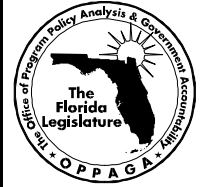




Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



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Follow-Up Report on the Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment Program Administered by the Department of Corrections

Abstract

- In response to our initial report, the Department of Corrections has taken steps to improve program data collection, improve inmate treatment completion, and monitor private provider compliance with contract requirements.
- However, the Department has not implemented a process to collect reliable data on inmate treatment needs nor has the Department conducted an evaluation of its substance abuse treatment programs.
- Therefore, it has not been determined whether the substance abuse treatment programs are effective in changing inmate behaviors.

Purpose

In accordance with s. 11.45(7)(f), F.S., this follow-up report informs the Legislature of actions taken by the Department of Corrections in response to Report No. 94-12, Performance Audit of the Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment Program, issued on November 9, 1994. This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the Department has addressed our findings and recommendations.

Background

In the late 1980s, Florida's correctional system experienced dramatic growth in the number of offenders incarcerated for alcohol-related and drug-related crimes. To address the problem of offenders with substance abuse problems, the Department of Corrections designed and implemented an array of different substance abuse treatment options. The Department's Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment

Program consisted of six components. Tier 1 was an education component while the remaining five components (Tier 2, Tier 3, Drug Treatment Centers, Day/Night Treatment, and Tier 4) provided varied degrees of treatment.

To identify and place offenders with substance abuse problems into treatment, the Department established assessment procedures at all of the inmate reception centers. All inmates undergo an assessment to determine the severity of their drug addiction and their readiness for treatment. Placement into one of the six program components by Department classification staff can occur at any time during the inmate's incarceration.

Prior Findings

In our prior review, we reported a number of findings related to the Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment Program:

- **Finding 1** - The Department of Corrections had not developed a process to collect reliable data to identify the number of inmates who should receive substance abuse treatment each year, nor the specific types of treatment they need.
- **Finding 2** - Most inmates served in the program either received substance abuse education or dropped out of treatment. As a result, they may not have received the level of services needed to facilitate their rehabilitation.
- **Finding 3.1** - The Department used a combination of private providers and Department employees to provide substance abuse treatment.
- **Finding 3.2** - The Department had not monitored the performance of private providers in accordance with contract requirements.
- **Finding 4** - The Department had not established a system as required by law to evaluate the Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment Program.

Current Status

Since the release of our report, the Department has made several changes to the program to address our findings. The Department's Substance Abuse Program Office has revised its mission statement, philosophy of treatment, goals and objectives. Further, the Department has standardized its treatment forms and modified the treatment participation database to improve the consistency of data collection. The Department has also improved private provider monitoring procedures. The Department, however, has not yet implemented a process to collect reliable data on inmate treatment needs and readiness for treatment. In addition, the Department has not evaluated the substance abuse treatment program. Therefore, it has not been determined whether the substance abuse treatment programs are effective in changing inmate behaviors.

Actions Taken or Not Taken

Finding 1 - Substance Abuse Treatment Program Data.

The Department has complied with our recommendation to collect reliable information on the number of inmates requiring treatment but has not collected reliable data to identify inmate treatment needs or their readiness for treatment.

Number of Inmates Requiring Treatment. The Department has developed standardized forms to collect information on inmates in treatment and has enhanced its data collection and entry system. The Department has also initiated a monitoring process to validate the reliability of substance abuse treatment data. The Department's enhanced database has improved its ability to identify and track the number of offenders needing treatment.

Inmate Treatment Needs. The Department has not fully complied with our recommendation to develop a process to collect reliable and consistent data on inmate substance abuse treatment needs or their readiness for treatment. The Department has identified and validated an assessment instrument for identifying inmate substance abuse treatment needs. However, the Department has not begun to use the instrument and has targeted April 1997 as the date for agency-wide implementation.

Finding 2 - Treatment Completion. The Department has complied with our recommendation to identify incentives and

disincentives to inmate treatment completion. For example, the Department has segregated program participants from the general inmate population and has given treatment completers first priority for work release placement. The average completion rate for substance abuse treatment programs has increased from approximately 25% in calendar year 1993 to 62% in fiscal year 1995-96.

Finding 3.1 - Service Delivery by Private Contractors.

The Department has complied with our recommendation to review its use of private contractors by conducting an analysis of programs provided by private contractors and Department staff, including an analysis of cost and enrollment and completion rates. The study found that while private contractor treatment slots were slightly more expensive, they had higher completion rates. Department staff concluded that contracting with private providers was more cost effective because providers could hire and train addictions professionals at a lower cost than the Department.

Finding 3.2 - Monitoring Private Contractors.

The Department has complied with our recommendation to improve its monitoring of private providers by developing a comprehensive monitoring procedures manual and hiring regional managers to monitor all treatment programs a minimum of twice a year. Under this system, the Department has canceled contracts with two providers for not filling vacant staff positions.

Finding 4 - Evaluation. The Department has complied with our recommendation to develop more specific performance measures for the substance abuse treatment program. The Department has developed goals and objectives for the program, a system to collect data on inputs, outputs, and outcomes, and procedures to verify the accuracy and completeness of the data.

However, the Department will be unable to comply with our recommendation to conduct an evaluation of the program and report its results to the Legislature by January 1, 1998. Without such an evaluation, the Legislature will not have reliable outcome information upon which to base decisions about the continued funding of the Institutional Substance Abuse Treatment Program. According to Department staff, the Department will use a consultant to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, but a timeline for conducting that evaluation has not been set.

This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report may be obtained by telephone (904/488-1023 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (904/487-3804), in person (Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St.), or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, P.O. Box 1735, Tallahassee, FL 32302). Web site: <http://www.state.fl.us/oppaga/>

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