



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

DANIEL H. HEYNS
DIRECTOR

CONTACT:
Russ Marlan
Michigan Department of Corrections
517-373-6391

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Michigan Department of Corrections announces prison closure and other reforms

LANSING- To bring Michigan's corrections system into a more sustainable fiscal position and ensure public safety, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) today announced a series of reforms. They are:

- Closure of the Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit.
- Utilize the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to explore potential savings and options related to operation of the Woodland Center Correctional Facility in Whitmore Lake.
- Utilize the RFP process to explore potential savings and options related to management of the prisoner health care system.
- Utilize the RFP process to explore potential savings and options related to management of the prisoner mental health care system.

“These decisions are part of our strategy to improve operations, increase efficiency and regain fiscal control,” said Daniel H. Heyns, Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections. “Our core mission is ensuring public safety and these changes will help us focus on protecting Michigan's citizens while achieving the greatest value for their tax dollars.”

Heyns further recognized the bearing these initiatives will have on MDOC staff.

“I know these decisions will likely create questions and concern with Department employees affected by these changes,” said Heyns. “We will do our best to minimize impact to the extremely professional and dedicated staff who work hard every day keeping Michigan's citizens safe.”

The Michigan prison population has now decreased for the last four consecutive years. Prison intake and total statewide felony dispositions are down in 2011 for the fourth year in a row. The number of parole and probation violators being sentenced to prison is also down. The prison population continues to decline in

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2011 by an average of 23 inmates per week and the MDOC now has approximately 700 open and available beds throughout the prison system.

As the prison population has declined, the MDOC has closed 14 correctional facilities (7 prisons and 7 camps) over the last five years with the most recent being the Florence Crane Correctional Facility in Coldwater in May 2011.

As the prisoner population continues to drop, the MDOC is now in a position to consolidate available open beds, utilize previously closed beds and close an entire correctional facility which will produce greater savings than leaving sections or housing units closed throughout the system.

The medium-security Mound Correctional Facility has an operation cost of \$32.6 million a year and has 324 employees. The target date for this closure will be January 7, 2012.

Mound Correctional Facility meets the criteria the MDOC has established for the selection of prison closings as the facility has one of the highest operational costs of any medium-security prison in the state (\$86.37 per prisoner, per day). It also sits in the middle of a densely populated urban setting which presents some distinctive custody and security issues.

Mound is also located within driving distance of five other correctional facilities which will continue to operate. This will lessen the negative impact to employees. In addition, Mound is located within the largest city in the state and an economically diverse region. This will produce a less significant negative impact to the local economy than with other isolated, stand-alone correctional facilities.

The Fiscal Year 2012 budget requires the MDOC to utilize funding to ensure more cost effective housing of prisoners. The budget language compels the MDOC to explore the use of public-private partnerships, the use of privately-owned facilities and the use of state facilities by third-party contractors.

The Fiscal Year 2012 budget also requires the MDOC to achieve savings through competitively bidding facility operations or other measures to reduce the custody, treatment, clinical, and administrative costs associated with the housing of prisoners.

To that end, the Department will utilize the RFP process to explore potential savings and options related to operation of the Woodland Center Correctional Facility and management of prisoner health care and mental health care services. (more)

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Woodland Center Correctional Facility houses prisoners with serious mental health issues, costs \$34.7 million a year to operate and has 346 employees.

Putting these operations out for competitive bid will allow the MDOC to see if there is a more effective way of providing prisoner health and mental health services.

A number of other states already have systems where private contractors provide the complete correctional health care and mental health care services. These states would include Pennsylvania and Florida which have recently issued RFPs to create such a system.

The MDOC currently has approximately 1,300 employees working in prisoner health care and mental health care services.

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