



# Staff Safety

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## 2023 Annual Report to the Legislature

*As required by RCW 72.09.680*

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This report is the twelfth annual report to the Legislature as directed by Engrossed Senate Bill 5907 (2011) and contains information on employee safety concerns and mitigation strategies in the Department of Corrections.

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## *2023 Annual Report to the Legislature*

### Foreword

*“It is the intent of the legislature to promote safe state correctional facilities. Following the tragic murder of Officer Jayme Biendl, the Governor and Department of Corrections requested the National Institute of Corrections to review safety procedures at the Monroe Reformatory. While the report found that Monroe Reformatory is a safe institution, it recommends changes that would enhance safety.*

*The legislature recognized that operating safe institutions requires ongoing efforts to address areas where improvements can be made to enhance the safety of state correctional facilities. This act addresses ways to increase safety at state correctional facilities and implements changes recommended in the report of the National Institute of Corrections.”*

Legislative Declaration, RCW 72.09.680 [2011 c 252 §1]

## Executive Summary

### Background

Following the murder of Officer Jayme Biendl in 2011, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) was asked to review systems, policies, and procedures and submit recommendations to mitigate safety and security vulnerabilities at the Washington State Reformatory (a unit of the Monroe Correctional Complex).

The NIC findings and recommendations led to the introduction of Engrossed Senate Bill 5907 (ESB 5907), at the request of Governor Gregoire, with the intent to promote safer prisons. ESB 5907 was signed into law (RCW 72.09) on May 5, 2011.

### Report Overview

The Department of Corrections (DOC) promotes a culture that inspires each employee to take personal responsibility for all employees' safety and facility/office security, both foundational elements of a public safety mission. In addition, the department encourages all employees' initiative to actively discover and address security and safety concerns and deficiencies as well as continual monitoring for safety and security improvements in all work areas, practices, procedures, policies, and physical plant layout.

In this twelfth annual report to the Legislature, the Department communicates the implementation status of legislative mandates to incorporate the recommendations made and our dedication to the safety of all employees, incarcerated individuals, and members of the public.

### Commitment to Safety

All citizens expect to be safe and protected in their communities. Governor Inslee has made community safety a priority as recognized in Results Washington Goal 4: *Healthy and Safe Communities*. The Department's mission is to improve public safety by positively changing lives and a core value is dedicated to all people's safety. The Department maintains a key goal to enhance safer operations and measures improvements with outcome-based management practices including employee safety and the safety of all individuals under the Department's jurisdiction, operating humane facilities, providing basic needs, ensuring safe environments, and managing emergencies. The Department promotes a culture of employee safety and facility/office security and remains sincerely committed to, and actively engaged in, improving employee, individual, and community safety.

# Prison Safety

## Security Advisory Committees

The Security Advisory Committees are comprised of local and statewide committees that support and encourage employees to take the initiative in identifying and reporting employee safety concerns and facility security gaps as well as provide ideas to address them.

Department employees continue to suggest solutions to everyday challenges and actively engage in the process to increase their own safety as well as the safety of others. The success of this approach can be attributed to the support received from all levels of the department. By incorporating multidisciplinary employees from all job classifications, the submittals are broad and diverse, the work is progressive and impactful, and the resolutions successful.

**Table 1** provides a summary of the security concerns and suggestions submitted to date. (Note: table represents a snapshot of data from multiple sources and is not mean to total across rows.)

**Table 1. Security Concerns & Suggestions\***

Type	Total Submitted	Total Completed	Total Pending	Denied/Dismissed
Concerns & Suggestions Received (statewide + local)	5,007	3,091	116	1,578**
Local Concerns	4,745	2,979	103	1,429
Statewide Concerns	262	112	13	149

\* As of October 1, 2023

\*\* Includes concerns and suggestions returned to local safety committees

## Local Security Advisory Committees

Local Security Advisory Committees are active in all 11 prisons and meet regularly. These committees are chaired by the captain, the senior custody employee, and include employees from a variety of disciplines who review and discuss security concerns and suggestions that have been submitted at the local facility level.

When a local security suggestion is submitted by an employee to the facility's security specialist(s), the suggestion is queued for review by the Local Security Advisory Committee. Using a multidisciplinary approach, local committees examine and discuss each suggestion focusing on how the suggestion enhances (directly or indirectly) employee safety and security while also considering any unintended consequences on other areas of the facility and/or the possibility of statewide impacts (positive and negative).

Each local committee's work has proven to be extremely effective. This forum for reviewing employee-initiated security suggestions emphasizes the strong local commitment to safety and security through the exchange of ideas, involvement of all employee and program areas, and facilitates a greater understanding of how all employees contribute to safer operations of the facility and public safety overall.

## Statewide Security Advisory Committee

In some cases, a Local Security Advisory Committee determines a security suggestion may have statewide impact, requires a change to department policy, or the costs to implement the suggestion are beyond facility budget capacity. In these circumstances, the suggestion is forwarded to the Statewide Security Advisory Committee for review and consideration.

As required by RCW 72.09.680, the Statewide Security Advisory Committee meets to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions forwarded from local committees that may affect department policy or require legislative approval and funding. If a safety and security concern is approved for implementation but requires funding, the appropriate assistant secretary is notified for consideration of inclusion in their division specific budget and legislative priorities. Committee work includes evaluating suggestions, making recommendations, and acting on safety and security concerns impacting statewide policies and practices. In addition, the Statewide Security Advisory Committee assists in the development of safety curriculum presented to employee as part of Annual In-Service training for the Prison Divisions.

## Prison Divisions' Training

### Prison Safety Series Curriculum

The DOC promotes a culture that encourages personal responsibility for safety and security in prisons and has invested in extensive employee safety and security training programs. The department is charged with developing training curriculum regarding employee safety and security for all employees working in total confinement correctional facilities. The content, discussions, and activities delivered through new employee and annual in-service training target strategies for improving personal safety, the safety of others, and the safety and security of the workplace as required by RCW 72.09.684. At a minimum, the training is expected to address the following issues: *security routines, physical plant layout, individual movement and program area coverage, and situational awareness and de-escalation techniques.*

Over the next year, Prison Divisions' employee safety and security annual in-service training will provide employees with training focused on the relationship between individual employee behaviors, department values, and workplace security and safety. Staff participate in an 'action plan' activity to identify job skills that they need to practice and how they can use them to improve security practices. The curriculum includes a discussion on violence and manipulation and what prevention measures are in place in the department and what indicators they should be aware of. The training also includes discussing stress and resiliency and the available resources that are intended to build a healthier and more resilient workforce.

The department considers the input of the Statewide Security Advisory Committee in developing annual in-service staff safety curriculum. The curriculum for this series was developed by a multidisciplinary team, reviewed by the Statewide Security Advisory Committee, and will be delivered to all prisons' employees through mandatory training.

## Reentry Center Safety

The department has made important strides to enhance the safety and security of our Reentry Centers including the addition of a specific Staff Safety and Security Specialist assigned to the Reentry Division.

In 2022, a Sergeant/Program Manager reoccurring meeting was established which has helped promote communication and collaboration between leadership among the Reentry Centers.

The Staff Safety and Security Specialist along with facility leadership has made accomplishments in the following areas:

- ✓ Purchased WRAP restraint systems for each Reentry Center which has improved crisis management while prioritizing the well-being of employees and residents
- ✓ Began conducting security audits of all Reentry Centers
- ✓ Deployed Automated External Defibrillators (AED) in Reentry Centers
- ✓ Issued personal carry Narcan for all Reentry Center employees and provide associated training

The Reentry Center Staff Safety and Security Specialist also participates in the Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee and has assisted with the implementation of many field and reentry center staff safety and security improvements.

## Community Corrections Safety

The Community Corrections Division (CCD) continues to update policies and procedures aligned with evidence-based supervision models. The ongoing review and implementation of changes is done with a focus on employee safety and office security while maintaining accountability of those individuals supervised in the community.

In 2022, CCD established an Officer Safety Workgroup to review the tools, knowledge, and skills employees need to perform their work in a safe and effective manner. Throughout 2023, this workgroup continued to review and offer changes to policy, practice, and procedures in the following areas:

- Use of Force Training
- Arming Process
- Professional Attire
- Critical Incident Response
- Deadly Force Review Board and Return to Work Protocols

## Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee

In 2023, the Statewide Community Corrections Security Advisory Committee continues to meet to evaluate safety and security concerns and suggestions that may affect department policy, budget, and workload. The

committee is co-chaired by the CCD Program Administrator and a representative of the Washington Federation of State Employees. The committee membership is comprised of CCD Security Specialists and CCD employees from each of the Community Corrections' sections representing a variety of job classifications. The primary task of the committee is to review and develop recommendations, propose solutions, and evaluate best practices related to employee safety and office security in Community Corrections. Additionally, the committee assists in the development of employee safety and office security related curriculum presented to employees as part of the annual in-service training for employees in CCD.

In 2023, the CCD Security Advisory Committee worked to implement several staff safety improvements, including:

- ✓ Pouches allowing employees to carry their issued Narcan
- ✓ Trauma and Peer support training
- ✓ Standardized vehicle equipment
- ✓ Alternate means of communication for use in remote areas of the state
- ✓ Created an electronic method to collect and track security concerns