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Key Points of Report

A Review of Department of Criminal Justice Inmate Transportation

February 2000

Overall Conclusion

The Department of Criminal Justice (Department) can take steps now to reduce future inmate transportation costs by revising the method of receiving and releasing offenders. For example, the Department could save approximately \$235,000 per year by releasing male offenders from two additional facilities. Additional savings could result from releasing offenders from more release points and transferring offenders directly from transfer facilities to their assigned units. Implementation costs would reduce these savings. Lack of relative data and unreliability of existing data limit the accuracy of projected cost savings.

The Department spent \$13.9 million in fiscal year 1998 transporting offenders from the county where convicted, between prison units, and for release. We looked at the intake and release portions of this transportation system.

Key Facts and Findings

- Most offenders travel from prisons throughout the State to Huntsville to be released. Multiple release locations could reduce overall transportation costs. For example, releasing offenders at the Robertson and Darrington units could save an estimated \$235,000 each year. Some of these savings would be needed to pay for implementing multiple release sites.
- Most offenders go to Huntsville before being assigned to a unit. Limited capacity and untimely information prevent decentralization of initial unit assignment; however, as new units are opened, offenders could be moved directly from transfer facilities to their assigned prison units.
- Data for Inmate Transportation vehicles is inaccurate and incomplete. This lack limits the ability to determine cost savings and means management may be making decisions based on inaccurate data.

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This audit was conducted in accordance with Government Code, Sections 321.0132, 321.0133, and 325.012.

Executive Summary

The Department of Criminal Justice (Department) can take steps now to reduce future inmate transportation costs. The agency estimates it spent \$13.9 million in fiscal year 1998 to move offenders into and out of the prison system. The Department currently uses a centralized intake and release system in which the majority of offenders travel to Huntsville before reaching their destination.

Using regional facilities to admit and release offenders from the system could reduce future transportation costs. By releasing male offenders from two additional regional facilities and adjusting current vehicle schedules, the Department could reduce transportation costs by a minimum of \$235,000 a year. Some of these funds could be used to pay for the staff and other expenses incurred in establishing multiple release sites. While this estimate is based on the agency's best available data, we found this data was not accurate or complete so actual funds available for regional release operations may vary.

The Department does not currently have the real-time information needed to assign offenders to prison units on a regional basis. The agency is developing a new offender management system that should allow the agency to better manage bed availability and become more efficient.

Multiple Release Locations Could Reduce Transportation Costs

Releasing offenders at regional locations as well as Huntsville would reduce occupancy on agency vehicles. Many offenders travel hundreds of miles to Huntsville from prison units throughout the State to be released. While reducing the number of offenders on a bus will not change transportation costs under existing schedules, adjustments to routes, types of vehicles, and frequency of travel would lower total costs. For example, releasing offenders at the Robertson and Darrington units would save an estimated

\$235,000 a year by removing 20 percent of offenders moving for release from vehicles and reducing the number of trips. To implement regional sites, the Department would need to use some of the transportation cost savings for additional staff, document delivery, and other related costs.

Limited Capacity Prevents Decentralization of Initial Prison Assignment

Currently, limited capacity and untimely information prevent the Department from assigning offenders to a prison unit at multiple locations. Offenders can stay at transfer facilities a maximum of two years before they must be moved into a prison unit. Limited capacity forces the Department to temporarily house offenders in Huntsville at two older units that have limited use other than temporary housing. When capacity allows, offenders should be moved directly from transfer facilities to their assigned prison. The opening of new units should facilitate a pilot program for this procedure.

The Department is developing an offender information management system and upgrading computer networks to enable personal computers to share resources and provide real-time offender information. This system should provide the timely information needed to better manage bed space and offender intake.

Transportation Cost Information is Inaccurate and Incomplete

Maintenance, mileage, and fuel usage data for Inmate Transportation vehicles is inaccurate and incomplete and limits management's ability to evaluate fleet performance, set cost-effective rates for county reimbursement, and determine whether to contract for out-of-state extradition. The Department does not

Executive Summary

evaluate average fuel efficiency, cost of fuel, or maintenance on a regular basis. In addition, the Department does not analyze route occupancy levels to increase occupancy and decrease the number of trips. Evaluating information needs and revising data collection and reporting would allow the Department to monitor performance toward goals such as decreased mileage, increased occupancy, and increased fuel efficiency.

Auditor's Summary of Management's Responses

Management generally agrees with the recommendations, but believes that the lack of community support prohibits the decentralization of release. In addition, the lack of available bed capacity prevents the Department from revising the current method of initial unit assignment. The Department agrees that accurate costs are important considerations and will develop edits within the Fleet Management System to improve the

accuracy of vehicle cost information. The Department recognizes that improved automation will enable management to increase the efficiency of operations.

Summary of Objective and Scope

The objective of this review was to analyze the intake and release systems at the Department of Criminal Justice as recommended by the Sunset Advisory Commission. Specifically, the Sunset Advisory Commission recommended that the State Auditor's Office take a comprehensive look at the costs and efficiencies of the current intake and release systems in light of the development of transfer facilities and the expansion of unit locations. We reviewed the intake and release processes for male offenders in Institutional Division Prison units, including intake from the county jails and the centralized initial unit assignment and release processes.

Modifying the Offender Release System Could Reduce Amount of Travel and Associated Costs

By establishing multiple release locations, the Department could reduce its overall offender transportation cost. The Department reports that it spent \$13.9 million in fiscal year 1998 transporting 461,812 offenders 4.4 million miles. Many of these offenders are traveling from prison units all over the State to be released from Huntsville. By establishing more release locations, the Department could achieve the following three benefits.

Reduce the overall number of miles that offenders travel. Releasing male offenders from multiple units would reduce the number of offenders on Department vehicles, which would allow the Department to consolidate some of its routes.

Release Services Received

Routine

Release certificate
Gate money
Bus voucher
Fingerprints
Photograph
Street clothes
Remaining money in bank account
Paper property

Special

Electronic monitor
DNA testing
Medical care plan
10-day prescription supply
Sex offender registration

For example, releasing offenders at the Robertson and Darrington units as well as from Huntsville would save an estimated \$235,000 a year by removing 20 percent of offenders moving for release from vehicles. Some of these funds could be used to establish the regional release facilities and pay for related costs such as additional staffing and the cost of document delivery.

Offenders who do not require special services at release would make better candidates for regional release (see text box). While all offenders receive certain basic services at release, some offenders require additional services that may be difficult and costly to duplicate at multiple sites. Appendix 2 provides more information on the release process.

Use the cheapest method to transport offenders during release. Although they are a small portion of our total sample, several offenders traveled long distances to Huntsville only to return to the same area after release. For example, we noted two offenders assigned to West Texas prisons who rode a Department bus to Huntsville and returned to El Paso on public buses. Multiple release sites would give the Department the flexibility to release from a site closer to the offender's county of conviction and reduce public transportation expense.

Increase the amount of bed space available in Huntsville for offenders in transit. Releasing offenders outside of Huntsville would increase available space at the Walls and Holliday units where offenders stay before they are released. Offenders travel for several reasons, including admission, release, and medical and court appointments. If they do not reach their final destination in one trip, offenders spend the night in beds designated for transient offenders at each of the hub units. These units have a limited number of beds for offenders in transit.

Traditionally, the Department released all offenders from Huntsville because prison units were concentrated in East Texas. According to the Sunset Advisory

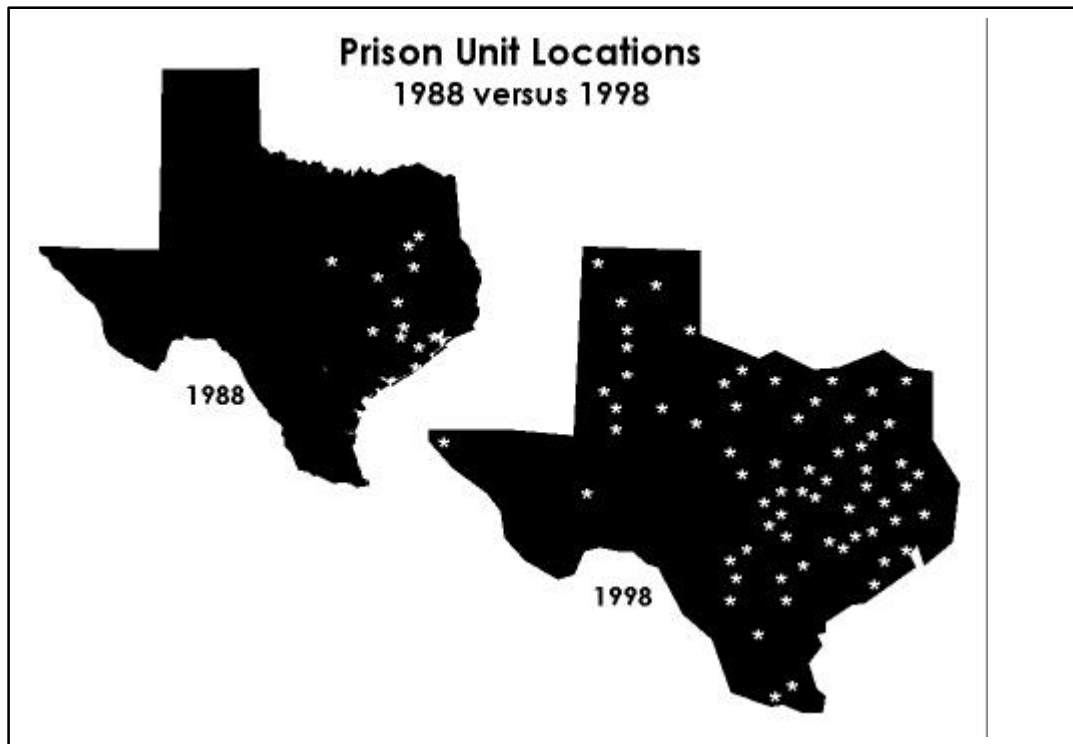
Commission's 1998 Staff Report, between 1988 and 1997 the Department grew from 40,000 to nearly 140,000 offenders and 29 to 107 correctional facilities. The units are no longer concentrated in East Texas, but the Department has not modified its release process. (See Figure 1.)

Recommendation:

Release from additional units those male offenders who have routine release needs. Criteria for determining release units should include:

- Location across the State
- Capacity to house offenders temporarily
- Availability of staff to process releases
- Relative location of public transportation
- Community support

Figure 1



Source: Sunset Advisory Commission

Releasing offenders at most units would reduce the costs of implementation. The Department could consider piloting one or two units as alternative release sites. During this pilot period, the Department could develop and standardize the process so that other units can transition to the new release process smoothly.

After implementing multiple release sites, evaluate the occupancy on existing routes and reduce the number of routes that transport few offenders.

Once better information is available, evaluate whether it is more cost-effective to release offenders at a unit close to their assigned unit or one close to their parole officer's county.

Continue to send offenders to Huntsville for release if they are being released to another government entity such as law enforcement offices from other states. This will provide the other entities with a single pick-up point.

Management's Response:

While we are not necessarily opposed to developing multiple-release locations, we are unable to do so at this time. The Agency has attempted to release offenders from a location other than Huntsville in the past and encountered strong local opposition. Before attempting this again, we will seek Legislative direction.

Also, if multiple-release locations were implemented at this time, we would not achieve the desired transportation savings. A lack of available bed space and automated offender transfer information would limit the successfulness of reducing routes. As noted in your audit, the Department is addressing the automation of offender information through the implementation of the Offender Information Management Re-engineering Project. Applications for the intake, release, and transportation scheduling may be completed by the 2004-2005 biennium.

Section 2:

The Department Does Not Currently Have the Bed Space or Information Needed to Decentralize Offender Intake

The Department lacks the available bed space and real-time information needed to decentralize initial unit assignment. The Department currently operates the prison system at 98 percent capacity, making intake dependent on the number of releases. This situation forces the Department to temporarily house offenders in Huntsville at two older prisons that have limited use other than temporary housing.

Offenders requiring a higher level of supervision or special services and those who have been in transfer facilities for the two-year limit must enter the prison system. The Department transports offenders from its 28 transfer facilities to Huntsville to receive their prison assignment. Offenders wait at two older units in beds that, because of legal requirements, cannot be used for long-term offender housing. Here,

the State Classification Committee reviews offender information and assigns a unit based on unit security levels, the offender's needs, and available bed space.

The Department does not have enough available bed space for the number of offenders entering the system. By law, offenders cannot remain at a transfer facility for more than two years. To accommodate the many offenders who must leave a transfer facility, the Department moves offenders to the Goree and Byrd units in Huntsville where there is more temporary housing space. However, as new units are opened, there will be a period when offenders could be transferred directly from transfer facilities to their assigned prison units. This would save the additional trip to Huntsville for many offenders.

If assignments were made at regional sites, some beds at these units would have to be set aside as transfer beds, thereby reducing total system capacity. Byrd and Goree are older units where total capacity is limited by the amount of support services the units can provide. Because of legal requirements, only a limited number of offenders can be housed at these units, leaving many beds empty. These empty beds give the Department the flexibility to house different custody levels on a temporary basis.

In addition, the lack of real-time offender information or the ability to share documents electronically also limits the Department's options for decentralizing the intake process. The most current information available about the offender is maintained on a hand-written "travel" card. The information on the Department's mainframe is often as much as two days behind the information on the offender's travel card. Untimely information prevents the Department from knowing what units have immediate bed openings, which beds have already been assigned, and the current status of each offender.

The inability to share documents electronically seriously hinders the Department's ability to communicate offender unit assignments and prevents decentralization of the assignment process. If many people were to assign offenders to a prison unit, the lack of real-time data could result in several offenders assigned to the same bed.

The Department is addressing the lack of real-time offender information through the Offender Information Management Re-engineering (OIMR) Project. The Department is developing an offender information management system and upgrading networks to enable computers to share resources. The network improvements and offender information management applications for parole and pre-release processes are scheduled to be in place by August 31, 2001. Applications for other processes, including intake, release, and transportation scheduling, will be deferred until the 2002-2003 or 2004-2005 biennium.

The Department expects that this new system will correct the lack of communication between PC-based systems and local area networks and enable prompt responses to information requests. The described system should provide the Department with the real-time information needed to maximize the efficiency of transferring offenders, share documents electronically, and manage bed availability.

Recommendation:

The Department should reevaluate the current centralized system of assigning offenders to prison units after the implementation of the Offender Information Management System.

As the opening of new prisons increases system capacity, the Department should pilot moving offenders directly from transfer facilities to their assigned prison.

Management's Response:

We agree. As noted in your audit, we do not have available bed capacity to achieve regional assignment of offenders. Regional assignment of offenders would eliminate our ability to use the 1639 transient beds at the Goree and Byrd Units due to Ruiz court requirements. To lease beds to replace these would cost approximately \$40 per day per bed or a total of \$23,601,600 per year. The completion of the Re-engineering project should give us the real time information needed to share documents electronically and efficiently manage the bed availability and offender transfers. Once this project is completed offenders can be transferred from reception centers to their permanent unit of assignment. The Department is currently moving offenders directly from transfer facilities to their unit of assignment to the extent possible.

Section 3:

Cost Information Is Inaccurate, and Other Available Information Is Not Routinely Used to Manage the Efficiency of Inmate Transportation

Inmate Transportation should evaluate its information needs and revise data collection and reporting to monitor its performance on goals such as decreased mileage, increased route occupancy, and increased fuel efficiency. Management does not evaluate average fuel efficiency, cost of fuel, or maintenance by vehicle on a regular basis. In addition, the Department does not analyze route occupancy levels to increase occupancy and decrease route frequency. Maintenance, mileage, and fuel use data for Inmate Transportation vehicles are inaccurate and incomplete. This data is used to calculate vehicle cost per mile, which means that the Department's cost information is also inaccurate. Inaccurate information limits management's ability to:

- Evaluate fleet performance.
- Analyze route occupancy levels to increase occupancy and decrease route frequency.
- Set cost-effective rates for county reimbursement.
- Determine whether to contract for out-of-state extradition.

Regular Review of Cost Data Would Improve Data Quality

Management does not review available data for accuracy. Inmate Transportation does not routinely check maintenance expenditures, fuel use, or mileage reports to ensure data is timely, complete, or reasonable. This data is entered into the Department's Fleet Management System (FMS), and the Financial Services Division uses it with other information to prepare the Inmate Transportation Cost Analysis. Because the data is not accurate, management relies on incorrect information for performance reporting.

For a sample of 38 buses (36 percent of total buses) and 22 vans (33 percent of total vans), we compared information in the FMS for maintenance costs, mileage, and fuel use to work orders and mileage logs and found:

- While the FMS accurately captured 93 percent of vehicle maintenance costs, information for 66 percent of buses and 36 percent of vans recorded in the FMS did not match work orders for the vehicles. Some of the errors found in the FMS were due to duplicate work orders (which the system had no safeguards to prevent), missing work orders, and duplicate entry of costs.
- The Department stores work orders by vehicle instead of by number, making it difficult to reconcile FMS information or determine if all work orders have been entered. In addition, no one reviews the data entry other than the person who entered it.
- Mileage recorded in vehicle logs was incomplete. State law requires that agencies document each use of a state vehicle, including date, mileage, and number of people travelling. Some vehicles did not have documentation for all vehicle trips, and several initial odometer readings did not match the final reading from the previous month. Information from the mileage report is entered into the FMS. The mileage recorded in the FMS did not match the mileage reports for 15 percent of the sample.
- Fuel efficiency, which we calculated for our sample using fuel use and mileage reports, ranged from 22 to 0.33 miles per gallon for buses and from 22 to 10 miles per gallon for vans. While the wide variation we found may be attributed to inaccurate mileage data, management does not review fuel efficiency to set a standard for comparison or to check the accuracy of reported data.

Recommendation:

Management should regularly review cost information recorded in the FMS for inconsistent or unreasonable data. The following data should be reviewed:

- A comparison of fuel efficiency by vehicle for similar vehicles

- Average cost of fuel by vehicle
- A comparison of vehicle mileage to ensure all mileage reports have been submitted

Someone other than the offenders who enter the data should review the work for accuracy.

Source documents should be retained and stored in a manner that aids the tracing of the audit trail and recreation of lost data. For example, work orders should be filed in work order number.

Inmate Transportation management should convey the importance of accurate data and recognize individuals who consistently report accurate data.

Edit checks should be programmed into the FMS to prevent duplicate entry of work orders and highlight possible data problems such as fuel costs outside a certain range and missing mileage reports. The system could also calculate miles per gallon to identify vehicles with values outside a certain range.

Management's Response:

We agree that accurate vehicle and fuel costs are important considerations in the management of the fleet.

An action plan will be developed involving Fleet Management, Financial Services and Data Services to develop edits within the Fleet Management system to identify missing work orders, duplicate entry of work orders, problems with fuel entries and missing mileage reports. The action plan with target dates for completion will be forwarded to you by February 15, 2000.

Section 3-B:

Use of Available Data Would Help Manage Inmate Transportation

Inmate Transportation does not routinely use transportation cost data to manage the efficiency of inmate transportation. Management does not evaluate fuel efficiency, cost of fuel, or maintenance expenses by vehicle on a regular basis or analyze individual route occupancy levels to increase occupancy and decrease route frequency. The Financial Services Division prepares a quarterly Inmate Transportation Cost Analysis using data from the Fleet Management System. This report is not used for planning, setting reimbursement rates, or tracking fleet performance and costs. Information recorded in the field, including route occupancy, staffing, and mileage, is not shared with Inmate Transportation management in Huntsville. This is due in part to the Department's inability to capture information and share documents electronically.

Reimbursement Rates for Counties that Transport State Offenders	
1 - 3 offenders	\$0.50 per mile
4 - 12 offenders	\$1.50 per mile
13+ offenders	\$3.00 per mile

Source: Department of Criminal Justice

Vehicle run sheets, which contain a substantial amount of information, are retained at the transportation hubs, but they are not used for decision-making. After each trip, drivers record information including destinations, drivers' names, mileage, time, and the number of offenders picked up and dropped off at each destination. This information would be useful for evaluating route occupancy and staffing to determine scheduling frequency.

Government Code, Section 500.006, allows county sheriffs to transport offenders to the Department's Institutional

Division "if the sheriff is able to perform the service as economically as if the service were performed by the division." The Department reimburses sheriffs for transporting county offenders using established rates (see text box). However, while the Department computes an average cost per mile for vehicles, it does not calculate the average cost per offender. The cost per offender by route would be a better measure to evaluate county sheriff transportation rates and to use to identify routes with low occupancy.

Recommendation:

Inmate Transportation should evaluate its information needs and revise data collection and reporting so that it can monitor performance and better achieve goals such as decreased mileage, increased occupancy, and increased fuel efficiency. The Department should determine what information is useful for managing fleet performance and cost-efficient to collect. Data that is not used should no longer be collected.

Information such as vehicle occupancy and staffing should be recorded and used for forecasting and planning.

Management's Response:

Inmate Transportation does not use fuel or maintenance costs in managing operations; however, TDCJ does use these costs in evaluating vehicle repairs and the identification of vehicles for replacement. We do agree that seat capacity, route frequency, and miles traveled should be analyzed and considered in economizing the offender transportation. This is now being done to the extent possible. Several routes have been modified as a result. Achievements will be limited until the implementation of the Offender Information Re-engineering Project. The Department has recognized that improved automation will enable management to increase the efficiency of operations.

Issues for Further Study

During the course of our work, we noted areas where the Department could reduce future transportation costs during the intake process. These areas include (1) the selection of offenders for transportation to an intake facility and (2) the distances offenders travel from their county of conviction to an intake facility.

Review Opportunities for Grouping Offenders by Location for Admission

The Department must accept a convicted felon from a county within 45 days of receiving the offender's proof of conviction and he is "paper ready." To stay within the 45-day limit, the Department admits offenders to an intake facility on a "first-come, first-served" basis, selecting offenders who are closest to the end of the 45-day period. Limited capacity currently prevents the Department from grouping offenders by location. However, because grouping offenders would increase vehicle occupancy and require fewer trips to collect offenders from county jails, the Department should review the feasibility of picking up offenders from counties in groups when capacity allows.

Review the Intake System Configuration to Minimize the Distance Most Offenders Travel to Intake Facilities

Many times, the intake facility closest to the offender's location will not have an available bed and the offender will be diverted to the second closest intake facility. As a result, the Department may travel additional miles to bring offenders to intake facilities. For example, the Department reports that 80 percent of offenders are convicted in counties whose nearest intake facilities would be the Holliday or Gurney units. However, these two facilities are capable of handling only 50 percent of the intake. Therefore, the Department should review the current intake configuration to determine if changes could decrease intake transportation costs.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Objective

The objective of the review was to analyze the intake and release systems at the Department of Criminal Justice as recommended by the Sunset Advisory Commission. Specifically, the Sunset Advisory Commission recommended that the State Auditor's Office take a comprehensive look at the costs and efficiencies of the current intake and release systems in light of the development of transfer facilities and the expansion of unit locations.

Scope

The scope of this review included the intake and release processes for male offenders in Institutional Division prison units, including intake from the county jails and the centralized initial unit assignment and release processes.

Methodology

The review consisted of gaining an understanding of the intake and release processes through interviews with management and staff and reviewing information collected on the cost of transportation.

We reviewed the movement of male offenders released from or assigned to units between August 1998 and February 1999. We analyzed operational data and relevant reports and documentation including the following:

- Texas Administrative Code
- Texas Government Code
- Various management reports from the Department
- Agency documents, memoranda, and publications
- Policy and procedure manuals and user handbooks
- Deloitte & Touche Consulting Group's report entitled *Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Offender Information Management Reengineering, Phase IIb Business Process Reengineering Final Report*

We interviewed management and staff at several divisions of the Department of Criminal Justice including the Institutional Division, Transportation and Supply, and Financial Services.

We conducted the following procedures and tests:

- Review of documentation relating to vehicle costs including maintenance work orders and mileage reports
- Review of the Department's Fleet Management System for tracking vehicle costs
- Review of the Department's offender scheduling and program documentation

Other Information

We conducted fieldwork from July 1999 to November 1999. The review was conducted according to generally accepted government auditing standards. To achieve the assignment's objectives, we relied extensively on computer processed data. Our review of system controls and the results of tests showed an error rate that casts doubt on the data's validity. However, when these data are viewed in context with other available resources, we believe the opinions, conclusions, and recommendations in this report are valid.

The following members of the State Auditor's Office performed the review:

- Paige Buechley, MPAff, MBA (Project Manager)
- Thomas Byrnes, MBA
- Worth Ferguson, CPA (Quality Control Reviewer)
- Julie Ivie, CIA (Audit Manager)
- Craig Kinton, CPA (Audit Director)

Summary of Intake and Release Processes

Intake Process

(See Figure 2 on page 18 for a depiction of the intake and release processes.)

Intake from County Jails - After an offender is convicted of a felony, the county sends the Department a packet containing the offender's conviction records. This information includes:

- A copy of the judgment completed on a standardized felony judgment form
- A copy of any order revoking community supervision and imposing sentence
- A summary of the offense
- A copy of the victim impact statement, if required
- A copy of the record of arrest for each offense
- A copy of the indictment or information for each offense
- A copy of a pre-sentence or post-sentence investigation report

The date the Department receives complete proof of conviction is entered into the State Ready System. Offenders remain at the county jail until selected for transport to one of four intake facilities. The Department determines available space in the intake facilities by examining system capacity. The Department then selects offenders for admission on a "first-come, first-served" basis, selecting offenders who have been paper-ready the longest. When selected for admission, the offender either will be transported directly to the intake facility by the county sheriff or will be transported to a catchment center, which is a central delivery point for county sheriffs to bring in their offenders.

Inmate Transportation staff members schedule county offenders for transport manually using sheets that group the counties by catchment center and intake facility. If there are more incoming offenders in a county than beds at the nearest intake facility, the offenders will be diverted to the next closest intake facility with available beds.

When all the offenders at the counties have been scheduled, staff enters the weekday, the county, and the number of offenders scheduled to transfer to each intake facility into the scheduling system. After all offenders have been scheduled, Admissions staff sends each county a fax with the offenders' names and day of the week they are scheduled to be picked up. The counties call during the week to confirm the day and time.

Intake Processing at Intake Facility - Processing takes between four days and two weeks and includes photographs and ID, a medical examination, a mental health screening, educational testing, and diagnostic interviews. There is also an initial screening to obtain family, educational, and criminal history to verify the information from the county and determine if the offender has any medical problems that need immediate attention. If there is an urgent medical need, the intake staff will contact

the medical staff to have the offender moved. Offenders may be recommended for additional evaluation depending on the test results.

The intake staff photographs and prepares identification and travel cards for the offenders. The Department takes the offender's fingerprints for verification with Department of Public Safety, for the FBI, and for the offender's prison travel card.

After offenders complete the intake process, they are usually moved to a transfer facility to await assignment to a prison unit. Offenders with special needs and those who have been at the transfer facility the longest are assigned to a prison unit first. By law, the Department can house offenders at transfer facilities for a maximum of two years before the offender must enter a prison unit.

Initial Unit Assignment - When there is available bed space in the prison system, the offender will transfer to the Goree or Byrd units in Huntsville for initial unit assignment. A committee consisting of representatives from the State Classification Committee, security staff, and treatment staff assigns offenders to an initial prison unit based on security, offenders' needs, and available bed space. Assignments are based on a number of characteristics, including age; type of offense; criminal history; and medical, educational, and work-related needs.

After the offender is assigned, he is transferred to the unit. There, the Unit Classification Committee evaluates him and establishes a custody level and work assignment.

Release Process

Transfers to Release Facility - After approved for release, most male offenders move to either the Walls Unit or Holliday Unit in Huntsville to await release. Offenders may travel through a system of transportation hubs instead of traveling directly to Huntsville from their assigned units. Six transportation hubs serve surrounding units and are used to hold offenders for transport out of the hub region. On the day of release, offenders go through the release process at the Walls Unit. There are usually two releases each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The Department provides offenders with basic and special services upon release.

Conditions of Release - The law requires that the Department provide an offender with his discharge or release papers when he is released. The releasing officer reads the release provisions as well as any special conditions related to the offender's release. Special condition documents outline additional directives, such as a requirement to register as a sex offender.

The Parole Division in Austin enters the results of the Board of Pardons and Paroles' decisions, including any special conditions, into the computer system that generates the certificates. The approval information is retrieved at the Release Office in Huntsville where the certificates are printed. Offenders released on parole must sign a parole certificate. There are approximately 2,500 certificates issued each month at the Release Office.

The Release Office prints five copies of the certificate and delivers the offender's certificate to the Classification and Record Section shortly before the offender's release. This section sets the specific release date for offenders released on parole, enters the discharge date on the certificates, and returns the certificates to the Release Office where they are filed until the offenders are released.

Bus Voucher and Gate Money Check - By law, offenders receive cash and transportation upon release from prison. The Department provides a check for \$100 or \$50 depending on the type of release. Offenders also receive a voucher for public transportation to the county determined by the Board of Pardons and Parole.

When an offender is released on parole or mandatory supervision, the offender is entitled to receive \$100 and transportation to the location where the offender is required to report to a parole officer. The offender receives \$50 on his release from the prison and \$50 on initially reporting to a parole officer. If an offender is not required to report to a parole officer, the Department provides the offender with \$100 and transportation to the location of his residence, or a transit point if the offender's residence is outside Texas.

The bus voucher has no monetary value and expires in 60 days. The voucher can only be exchanged at the specified bus station for a ticket.

Street Clothes - Offenders receive a pair of pants and a shirt from an inventory of men's clothes. Offenders change out of their prison uniform into street clothes before they leave the prison.

Fingerprints - During the release process, staff members fingerprint the offenders. The thumbprints are sent to the Records Office to be matched to the prints on file.

Photograph - Staff photographs the offender if his photograph is over five years old. The photograph is taken with a digital camera and stored electronically.

Inmate Trust Fund Check - The Inmate Trust Fund Section closes the offender's bank account three days in advance of the release date. The checks and statements are printed and sent to the Walls unit for distribution to the offender.

Medical Plan and 10-day supply of medication - Offenders receiving medical care are entitled to a 10-day supply of medication and information on continuing the care that they received in prison. Department staff dispenses medication and medical referrals.

Prescriptions are brought to the Walls unit for distribution to the offenders. Medical referrals are prepared for offenders receiving medical care who do not have a doctor outside the prison system. For example, the offenders released to Harris County are referred to the Ben Taub Hospital to refill their prescriptions.

Sex Offender Registration and DNA Testing - Those offenders convicted of certain sexual offenses (about 50 each week) are required to register and provide a sample of their DNA. Department staff is responsible for filling out the Department of Public Safety sex offender registration form by hand and providing instructions on local

registration during the release process. Staff also obtains DNA samples.

Electronic Monitor - Offenders convicted for certain crimes are required to be fitted with an electronic monitor and register with the local law enforcement office. Staff members attach the electronic monitors to offenders and give instructions on their operation and care.

Public Bus Transportation - The offenders leave the Walls Unit and walk two blocks to the bus station. When there are a large number of releases, the Department requests additional buses to transport the offenders to their counties of residence. The Department provides transportation for special needs offenders who cannot ride a public bus to their destination.

Figure 2: The offender intake and release processes for the Department of Criminal Justice.

