



# Iowa Corrections Strategic Plan



**Iowa Department of Corrections**



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**As set in Iowa Code (904.102):**  
**The Iowa department of corrections is established to be responsible for the control, treatment, and rehabilitation of offenders committed under law**

## Overview

The Department has developed a strategic plan that is designed to take Iowa from having a good correctional agency to a national leader in how a state can do corrections. It will require focusing on 3 core priorities and 5 target areas. Both the core priorities and the target areas will be understandable, actionable, and measurable so that all team members can clearly see how their work is contributing towards the desired goals. By focusing on these priorities and target areas, the department can accomplish its 5-year goal of creating a **10% increase in the Reentry Success Rate**. Currently, the RSR is 60.2%. By the end of FY2026, the department’s RSR **will** be at least 70%. Not only will the department be accomplishing its mission of making Iowa safer, but it will also move Iowa from a RSR of 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation to the top 10 in the country.

**Our Vision:** ————— An Iowa with no more victims

**Our Mission:** ————— Creating Opportunities for Safer Communities

**Guiding Principles:** ———

- Creating Opportunities for Success is our Goal
- Reentry is our Process
- Evidence Based Practices are our Tools
- Staff is our Most Important Asset

## The 3 Core Priorities

These 3 Core Priorities are foundational for the department, but if not specifically measured, can go overlooked or stagnated. Each of these three core priorities have symbiotic relationships with one another. When improvements are made in one of the core priorities, it leads to improvements in the other two. If we can identify, set goals, measure progress and make improvements in these three priorities, the department’s mission can be accomplished.

The 3 Core Priorities are:

- Security & Safety
- Treatment & Programing
- Reentry





The 3 Core Priorities are each tied to the Governor’s priorities for 2024:

- Security & Safety -Priority 4 (Health and Well-Being)
  - Key performance indicator identified as, “Overcapacity of prison population” to measure overall prison population.
  - Key performance indicator identifies as, “Staff Vacancies” to measure staff numbers in Prison and Community Based Corrections.
- Treatment & Programing – Priority 4 (Health and Well-Being)
- Reentry – Priority 2 (Preparing Next-Gen workforce) and Priority 5 (Holding Government Accountable)
  - Key performance indicator identified as, “Department of Corrections requests to release review to Board of Parole” to measure Prison release to community supervision.

### Strategic Plan- Visuals

The department’s strategic plan is similar to a map that helps lead to a destination. In this case, the destination is a safer Iowa by the RSR reaching 70% in the state.

The Strategic plan is the map that gets the department closer to this destination.



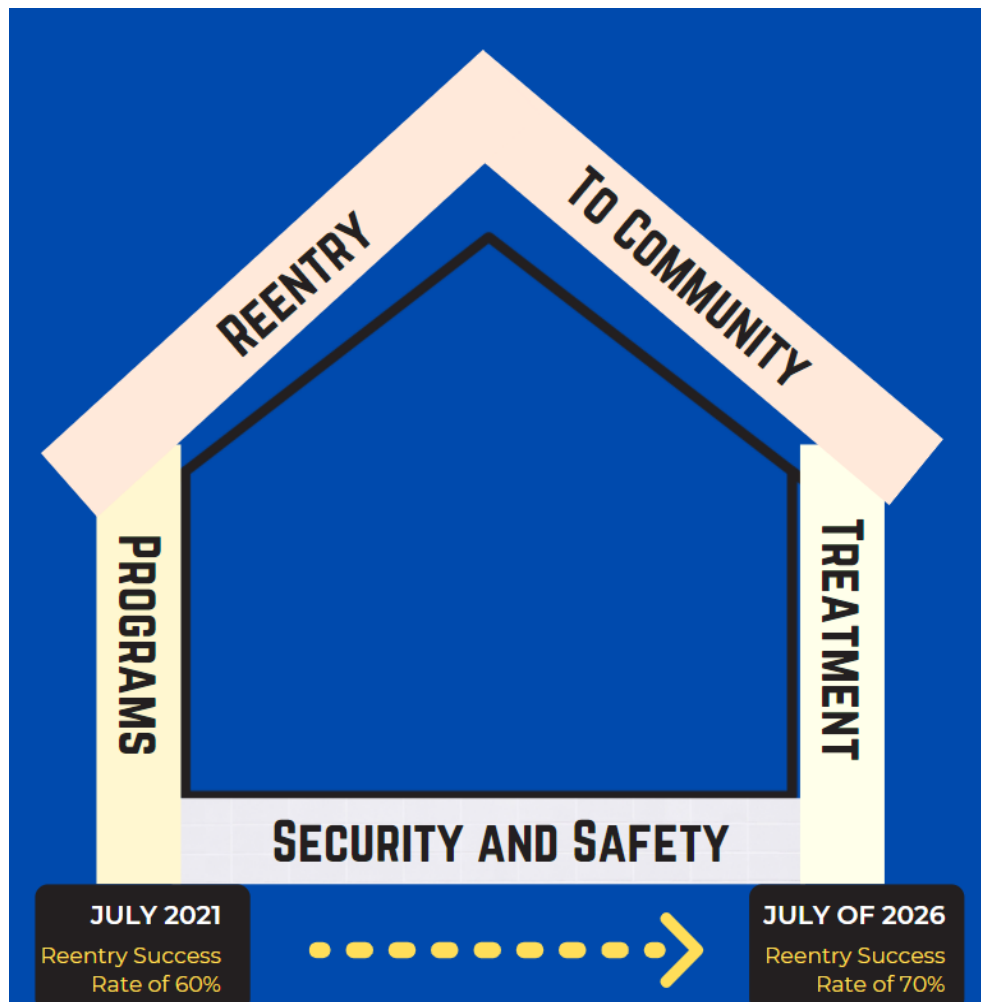


To understand the fundamental core priorities, the construction of a house produces an effective visual.

First, the foundation must be laid, and it must be sound and strong. In the department's case, the foundation is **security and safety**.

Then the walls can be constructed. They stand on the foundation, and will allow for the roof to be supported. In this case, the walls are **Treatment & Programs**.

Finally, the roof is a critically important piece of the house, and sets upon the walls which set upon the foundation. In this case, the roof is the department's mission of making Iowa safer through **successful reentry** to the community for those that leave prison.





While taking specific steps to improve upon the 3 core priorities will be important, the department will also focus on 5 very specific target areas that will individually fuel improvements that will feed into the 3 core priorities. These target areas will be clear, actionable, achievable, and measurable.

The 5 Target Areas:

1. Train and Empower
2. Reduce Risk & Increase Protective Factors
3. Reduce Barriers
4. Continuous Quality Improvement
5. Reducing racial disparities and increasing a diverse workforce

Further in the plan, definitions of the 5 target areas will be explored. Progress towards goals shall be tracked on a quarterly basis. Quarterly progress updates will be made available to the entire department.

Using the house visual, the target areas make up the contents of the house. These are the areas of focus for future programs, initiatives, and goals for the department.





# The Three Core Priorities

*Defined, Quantified, Goals*

## Security and Safety

### *Defined*

In the world of corrections, these words hold significant meaning.

In corrections, security means focusing on dangers, threats, and vulnerabilities. This term applies to both the staff members that comprise the department, and also the individuals incarcerated and community clients that the staff are charged with overseeing. A safe and secure environment must be present in order for us to effect positive change in the individuals we incarcerate.

Safety means planning for, and taking the necessary steps to ensure risks are mitigated and that both staff and individuals under correctional supervision are kept safe from potential dangers or physical risks.

In order to operate correctional institutions and community-based corrections operations, both security and safety must be understood, prioritized, and tracked.

### *Goals*

The goals in these two areas need to be measurable and achievable, with benchmarks along the way to work towards.

#### *Security Goals:*

- Reduce assaults on Staff
- Reduce assaults on Inmates
- Reduce Contraband

#### *Safety Goals:*

- Reduce workplace injuries
- Reduce OSHA citations

- Increase and improve the accuracy in identifying and disrupting STG operations.
- Identification will be measured through CIRs and DRs. and STG operations.

### *Measures*

Each of these goals is relatively easy to track. Once a baseline has been established, a quantified goal can be developed to be aimed for by each year for the next 5 years. This should include tracking for CBC and institutions.

### *Data*

*Reduce Assaults on Staff:* The number of staff assaults did increase in FY2021 compared to FY2020 however, the majority of this increase was attributable to staff assaults where no serious injury were sustained or throwing substances. In FY2021 Department made a variety of safety and security enhancements and FY22 and FY23 show staff assaults continuing to decrease. Those enhances include but are not limited to:

- The hiring of a Prison Safety and Security Director
- Hiring an external review team to thoroughly investigate and advise safety and security enhancements Department wide
- Implementation of a job assignment screening matrix



Table #: Number of Institution Staff Assaulted by Assault Type

Assault Type	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Serious Injury	6	9	15	11	5
No Serious Injury	71	65	137	125	128
Throwing Substances	30	45	80	72	54
Total Number of Staff Assaulted	107	119	232	208	187

Source: Critical Incident Reports

*Reduce the Number of Inmate Assaults:* Assaults are tracked through the DOC's Critical Incident Reports database. While the number of assaults involving inmates did increase in FY2021, it is important to note that this time period observed was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic which was quite difficult for Corrections agencies who manage congregate populations. The DOC is committed to reviewing preexisting safety and security issues, and making improvements where appropriate.

Table #: Number of Inmate on Inmate Assault Incidents - Serious Injury Only

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Inmate Incidents	19	12	18	14	9

Source: Critical Incident Reports

*Reduce Contraband:* Data indicate the number of rule violations for serious contraband is at the lowest point observed within the last four fiscal years, however, is higher than in FY2017. Contraband can pose safety concerns for both inmates and staff and the DOC continues to work to develop new and innovative strategies to detect and remove contraband in prison facilities. In FY23 we did see this number decrease.

Table #: Rules Violated for Serious Contraband

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Rules Violated for Serious Contraband	3,298	3,079	3,349	3,875	2,991

Source: ICON

*Reduce Workplace Injuries:* In FY2022 the number of Life Safety Violations were at their lowest point observed in the last five fiscal years. The number of serious injuries, accidents, or offender deaths in FY2020 and FY2021 have remained stable however, were higher than historically.

Table #: Life Safety Incidents

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of Life Safety Violations <sup>1</sup>	767	802	575	214	483
Number of Serious Injuries, Accidents, or Offender Deaths <sup>2</sup>	270	307	309	362	276

\* Source: I3 Measures 49400-002 and 003 Data

<sup>1</sup> Prison, Community-Based Corrections, and Central Office.

<sup>2</sup> Prison, Community-Based Corrections, Central Office, and IPI.





*Reduce OSHA Citations:* Reducing the number of OSHA citations is most appropriately measured by examining the number of safety trainings completed for prison staff. In FY2020, the IDOC transitioned to Learning Management System Platforms (LMS). As a result of the change in the LMS, data reporting is limited to FY2021 figures. Many of the DOC's safety courses are taken once annually, annual reporting, as opposed to quarterly reporting are provided. The department will continue to track and monitor these outcomes over time to ensure progress towards safety course completions in order to reduce OSHA citations. In FY2021, IDOC staff in total, completed 5,388 unique safety courses. In FY22, that number increased to 7,646 and 7,576 in FY23.

Table #: Number of Safety Training Completions

	FY21	FY22	FY23
Safety Trainings Completed	5,388	7,646	7,576

## Treatment and Programing

### *Defined*

With over 90% of those incarcerated returning to their community, the department has a duty to work with every individual incarcerated to treat their underlying issues that caused their behavior that resulted in their incarceration. Community-based supervision has a duty to address problematic behavior for our higher risk community supervised individuals through treatment and dosage to increase the likelihood they will not re-offend and can remain in the community.

Treatment means ensuring that underlying behaviors that make someone act in certain ways are being explored and addressed with every inmate. This might take the form of counseling sessions or psychiatric help from one of the many staff trained in such areas.

Programming means providing evidence-based, high-quality classes, interventions, and programs to the inmates that will allow them to explore, understand, and improve the deficits in their overall behavior as citizens.

### *Goals*

Increase the number of inmates receiving some form of behavioral intervention

Reduce the number of inmates leaving prison without having completed any programming

Reduce the percentage of clients under community supervision that have a need for treatment or programming and are not receiving the intervention or proper dosage

### *Measures*

Each of these goals should be trackable with current data. The way the data is categorized may need refinement before it clearly captures the statistics that will allow everyone to see progress towards the goal. Once a baseline is established, benchmarks should be developed to focus the efforts of staff towards the goal.

### *Data*

*Increase the number of individuals incarcerated receiving some form of core programming:* Examining data relating to prison closures, over the course of the last five-years, the proportion of prison closures who exit prison having received and completed core programming has increased by nearly 20%. Knowing that treatment helps to reduce recidivism indicates that the Department is moving in the right direction to prepare those leaving prison for community integration, and subsequently reducing the recidivism rate.



Table X: Percentage of Prison Closures who Complete Programming Prior to Prison Exit

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
% of Prison Exits Completing Core Programming	46.3%	49.9%	50.3%	59.9%	66.2%	71.0%	75.2%

Source: ICON (Central Office/Ticket Requests V.3 queries 11339)

Reduce the percentage of clients under community supervision that have a **need** for treatment or programming **and are** receiving the intervention or proper dosage.

## Reentry

### Defined

In corrections, reentry means the transition time from incarceration back into the community. It can also mean a transition from community supervision time to successful completion of supervision requirements. When combining CBC clients with the inmate population, preparing anyone with correctional supervision for successful re-entry is fundamental to the goal of safer communities. Successful reentry can also lead to a decrease in the number of inmates in the prisons overall, thereby reducing the staff to inmate ratio (which improves security/safety) and freeing up more resources to be focused on each individual under supervision (a greater amount of treatment/programming).

Additionally, CBC districts' clients are primarily being supervised on probation supervision (the majority of which are successful). If one considers being placed on probation supervision as "entering" the criminal justice system, then reentry efforts should also pertain to those on probation supervision as well. To that end, the department should track the outcomes for those on probation in measuring its re-entry goals.

### Goals

Reduce the number of parolees revoked to prison for technical violations and those with new arrests.  
 Increase the percentage of inmates leaving prison with a job in the community within 1 month of release  
 Increase the percentage of clients on probation supervision that successfully complete their supervision.

### Measures

Once baselines are established for each goal, benchmarks should be set on each of the reintegration goals. As with the other three core priorities, the Strategic Plan Scorecard should be updated monthly and progress shared to all staff across the department.

### Data

Reduce the number of parolees revoked to prison for a technical violation and those with new arrests.

In FY2023 the overall recidivism rate was reduced by nearly 2.7%, and the proportion of those who successfully reentered the community following prison closure, who do not return to prison within three-years, was approximately 65.7%. The Department reports several implementation efforts which are believed to contribute to the reduction, which include but are not limited to:

- Prioritizing institutional and community-based treatment for high-risk individuals
- Continued utilization of program inventories to ensure provided programs are evidence-based
- Improved and aligned reentry practices
- Increased access to education and educational opportunities
- Building capacity within apprenticeship programs
- Training staff in core correctional practices (CCP)
  - Enhanced case management training



The Department also reports that while the number of prison returns for new arrests has largely remained stable over the five-year period, the number of technical violations in FY2020 was the highest observed within the three-year period, however declined in FY2021. Findings in FY2020 however, may be related, in-part, to impacts of COVID-19. During the height of the pandemic, criminal court proceedings were paused for a short period creating a backlog of criminal court case reviews. In FY2021, these figures did however, decline, and individuals under community supervision were equally to be revoked to prison for a new arrest or technical violation.

- There have been a series of implementation efforts developed to help reduce technical violations to prison. In FY2020, the Department implemented a practice of added review of revocations, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, to thoroughly screen those who needed to be revoked to prison versus those who could be managed in the community.
- Additionally, the Department implemented a response matrix used to guide decision making when revocation decisions are considered, exploring whether options could be implored to safely manage an individual in the community.

Table #: Successful Integration Rate

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
New Charge	21.1%	20.8%	19.8%	18.0%	19.2%
Technical Violation	17.8%	19.8%	18.9%	19.0%	15.1%
Overall Recidivism Rate	38.9%	40.6%	38.7%	37.0%	34.3%
Successful Integration Rate	61.1%	59.4%	61.3%	63.0%	65.7%

In regards to increasing employment outcomes for those reentering the community, over the course of the last three-years, the Department has seen a steady employment rate for those employed after three-years of prison release from FY19 to FY23 ranging from a 30-32% employment percentage rate.

Table #: Percent of Individuals Employed After Three-Years Following Prison Release

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
% Of Population Employed	31.0%	31.6%	30.1%	31.8%	31.4%

Source: Iowa WorkForce Development

*Increase the percentage of clients on probation supervision that successfully complete their supervision.*

- Measure: Count of community-based corrections successful and unsuccessful supervision completions.
- Measure Results: Findings indicate that the number of successful community-based corrections has largely remained stable over the time-period observed, with successful completions comprising about 70% to 72% of all CBC supervision completions.

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
CBC Successful Completions	17,462	16,834	16,863	16,621
% Successful	69.54%	71.73%	69.59%	69.93%
CBC Completions Total	25,111	23,469	24,232	23,765

Source: Iowa Justice Data Warehouse (JDW); Field and Residential State-Region Closures



## The Five Target Areas

This section will define, address how to quantify, and set goals for the following target areas:



**Train and Empower**



**Continuous Quality Improvement**



**Reduce Risk & Increase Protective Factors**



**Reduce Racial Disparities and Increase a Diverse Workforce**



**Reduce Barriers**

### Train and Empower

#### *Defined*

The strength of the department is found in the staff that it is composed of. In order to effectively accomplish the 3 core priorities, leadership needs to make it essential that staff are trained effectively and empowered.

#### *Goals*

It is the goal of the department that staff are empowered to execute their duties, motivated to execute those duties in accordance with the department’s policies and strategic plan, and trained to effectively contribute towards the goals and mission of the department.

#### *Measures*

Ways to track whether or not employees feel empowered: survey of all employees periodically. Survey will need to be short and questions crafted carefully. From the initial survey, a baseline can be created to be measured against.

Train: Not only should the number of hours spent in training be tracked, and goals should be set on increasing training in priority areas, but also the quality of the training needs to be tracked. The survey at the end of each training needs to be aggregated and incorporated into a quarterly report. Staff would utilize a CQI form to ensure that the training is being delivered with fidelity. It looks at things such as training credentials, following the curriculum, etc. Additionally, a baseline proficiency would be established in specific practices and tracked for improvement over time.



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## **Reduce Risk & Increase Protective Factors**

### *Defined*

To understand risk reduction, one must understand how Corrections defines risk.

Risk- the likelihood that an individual will violate the terms of their supervision or commit a new crime in the community.

Risk factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. A person's risk can be calculated using assessments that consider certain factors related to an individual. These may include time since their last crime, number of crimes, economic factors, social factors, etc.

Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events to risk factors.

### *Goals*

With proper programming and placement efforts, skill-building to attain adequate employment, and positive peer groups, people's risk factors can actually be reduced over time (thus leading to protective factors). It will be the goal of the department to make efforts to reduce an individual's risk by focusing on making sure clients and individuals incarcerated are being placed in the right treatment program that address multiple risk factors, attain employment/education, are getting necessary medical/mental health treatment, and measuring their outcomes. Staff will appropriately identify existing protective factors, reinforcing those and working to decrease barriers that makes reentry challenging while also helping justice involved individuals in building protective factors such as meaningful employment and positive peers.

### *Measures*

With current data, a baseline shall be developed to quantify (one for CBC one for prison) the number of people that need treatment, and what percentage of them are getting it. Then benchmarks can be set to increase the number that need treatment, and are getting it.

We can also track the reduction of risk and increase in protective factors by aggregating risk scores for districts and institutions and, over time, tracking the increase or decrease in risk scores in the macro.

### *Data*

The Treatment and Programming section of this report tracks the number of individuals under community supervision who have a need for treatment and are receiving interventions at the proper dosage. For additional information regarding progress towards this strategic priority, please see the data elements reporting the number of individuals who need treatment, receive it, and receive it at adequate dosage.

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## **Reduce Barriers**

### *Defined*

With over 90% of those incarcerated returning to the community, and with over 30,000 people at any time being on correctional supervision in the community, it is a priority for the department to identify, develop plans to address, and implement strategies to reduce the barriers that clients and/or inmates face that reduce the likelihood of successful rehabilitation or reintegration.

### *Goals*

One of the largest barriers faced by reentering citizens is obtaining a state identification or driver's license. This major barrier, as it is foundational to so many other barriers, will be the sole focus in tracking the reduction of barriers. It shall be the goal that every individual leaving an institution, within 5 years, has either a state ID or DL before exiting.



Additionally, the state should set a goal of increasing the number of probation and parolees that attain employment in the community while on parole/probation supervision.

#### *Measures*

Incorporate a “Received State ID” and “Received State DL” checkbox into the ICON exit screen that will be checked or unchecked for each inmate leaving an institution. Work to increase this rate over time.

The DOC should also work with IWD and CBCs to develop a way to track employment outcomes (either for certain groups of clients, samples, or all clients). Increase this rate over time.

#### *Data*

The Reentry section of the strategic plan acknowledges the DOC’s commitment to increasing the percentage of inmates employed in the community after prison release. The DOC is partnering with IWD to explore the extent to which individuals leaving prison are employed within three-years. The findings of those outcomes can be found within the Reentry section of this report.

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## **Continuous Quality Improvement**

### *Defined*

The department utilizes various programs and tools both in CBC and institutions. These programs and tools, while essential to our work, can only be as effective as the quality at which they are administered.

For example, if a DRAOR, a risk-calculation tool, is only administered at a 75% effectiveness, the scores that are calculated based on the assessment are only partially reliable. Over time, this can have compounding impacts on the system as these tools are what help identify placements, supervision levels, and treatments. Similarly, if a treatment program is only being administered with 75% fidelity, the program cannot be expected to result in the desired outcomes of the treatment over time.

Thus, the department will be making continuous quality improvement a target area. This means focusing on assessing the quality of the tools and programs we are using and providing, and taking efforts to improve this quality over time.

### *Goals*

The goal is simple but essential: Assess current quality of tools and programs, and develop benchmarks for improvement.

### *Measures*

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## **Reduce Racial Disparities, Increase a Diverse Workforce, Improve Work Culture**

### *Racial Disparities - Defined*

In Iowa, certain racial groups are incarcerated at disparate rates when compared to their share of the state population. Iowa's population is less than four percent African-American, and the State prison population is about twenty-five percent African-American.

While the Iowa DOC has little control over the criminal activity that individuals engage in that leads them to incarceration, it does have the duty and responsibility to ensure that while incarcerated, there are no patterns of discriminate or disproportionate treatment of any groups of individuals under the department's supervision.

Under the direction of DOC leadership, several actions and activities have been implemented to bolster culture, staff training, knowledge, and resources to promote a more robust correctional system.

The below goals describe some of the current and future activities of the department to promote fairness through both the racial disparity report, training, diverse workforce, and culture.



*Racial Disparities - Goals*

Continue to track data elements of individuals by race to determine fairness and transparency of DOC supervision practices. Data elements currently tracked and reported as part of the Racial Disparity Report include work assignments, intervention programs and assignments, electronic monitoring, classification, education attainment, apprenticeship services, discipline, and violations.

Examine additional data by race as requested by leadership, wardens, and district directors, which fall outside of the responsibilities of the annual Racial Disparity Report to further explore special topics where disproportionality may exist.

Require prison and community corrections leadership to submit an annual plan to assess and respond to disparity in their respective region.

*Racial Disparities - Measures*

The Racial Disparity Report will be provided to DOC leadership annually to continue ongoing assessment.

Additional elements following provision of the Racial Disparity Report will be examined to explore various special interest items of DOC leadership.

Prison and community-corrections will submit an annual plan to the agency’s Racial Disparity Council addressing plans to assess and respond to disparity in their particular region.

*Racial Disparities - Data*

Compared to state-level census data, staff hiring for those who are Hispanic and of Other races (largely including those who are American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and/or of two or more races) have been underrepresented, and the population of those hired who identify as White have been overrepresented compared to statewide populations.

Additionally, compared to statewide populations, the population of men hired by the Department is higher than the proportion of the statewide population, and the hiring of women is underrepresented. Of the Department’s staffing population, individuals who are white are overrepresented while individuals who are Hispanic or of Other races are underrepresented compared to state-populations. In recent years, the proportion of the DOC staff population who are African-American are proportional to statewide figures.

The DOC’s population of staff employed indicate men are overrepresented, and women are underrepresented compared to statewide population figures.

Table #: Staff Hiring and Population Data

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	State Population
White	82%	89%	89%	84.31%	82%	85%
African-American	10%	5%	5%	5.32%	9%	4%
Hispanic	5%	3%	3%	4.26%	6%	6%
Other	3%	3%	3%	6.12%	3%	5%
Male	60%	58%	71%	67.60%	55%	50%
Female	40%	42%	29%	32.40%	45%	50%
Total Staff Hired	306	301	176	414	376	1,253

White	92%	91%	92%	91.51%		85%
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African-American	4%	4%	4%	3.22%	90%	4%
Hispanic	3%	3%	3%	2.99%	4%	6%
Other	1%	2%	1%	2.27%	3%	5%
Male	68%	68%	68%	67.60%	67%	50%
Female	32%	32%	32%	32.40%	33%	50%
Total Staff Population	2,562	2,587	2,530	2,543	2531	--

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#### *Training and Disparities - Goals*

Create effective, thoughtful, respectful, and intentional in-person and online training for all IDOC staff that encourages reflection and provides action strategies to combat barriers and improve knowledge, recognition, and awareness.

Expand participants' knowledge of diversity and promote a deeper understanding of unconscious bias and its impact.

All IDOC staff should have an opportunity in training to receive a historical perspective in order to fully understand the history of mass incarceration and how it has impacted the criminal justice system, the community and the outcome of a successful reintegration back into the community.

#### *Training and Disparities - Measures*

The IDOC utilizes a learning platform that allows us to evaluate and measure our training through formative and summative assessments and participant surveys. The Learning Center will use the results to continue to update and improve training in order to make sure department staff are meeting learning goals and objectives.

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#### *Expanding a Diverse Workforce - Goals*

Increasing recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotional efforts for all populations and cultures.

#### *Expanding a Diverse Workforce - Measures*

Compare past 5 years data points against recent efforts and data in hiring practices, retention, and promotion to demonstrate an increase diverse workforce

Create universal exit survey to be created by HR for use across all of DOC to learn lessons and look at important trends to improve leadership/culture of IDOC

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#### *Improving Work Culture-Goals*

Increasing staff morale and developing a culture of trust and transparency

#### *Improving Work Culture-Measures*

Compare the last 5 years of vacancies (reductions)

Compare the last 5 years of average length of service

Create a survey to be distributed once a year to improve retention

Director conducts feedback forums

Develop a new staff mentoring program





Create universal exit survey to be created by HR for use across all of DOC to learn lessons and look at important trends to improve leadership/culture of IDOC

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