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Report Highlights

Transitional Work Program

Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Audit Control # 40140066

Performance Audit Services • April 2016

Why We Conducted This Audit

This report provides the results of our performance audit of the Transitional Work Program (TWP) administered by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections – Corrections Services (Corrections).

During fiscal year 2015, approximately 8,700 offenders participated in TWP and Corrections received \$19.8 million from state general funds to oversee the program. The purpose of this audit was to evaluate Corrections' oversight of the TWP and to identify benefits of the program.

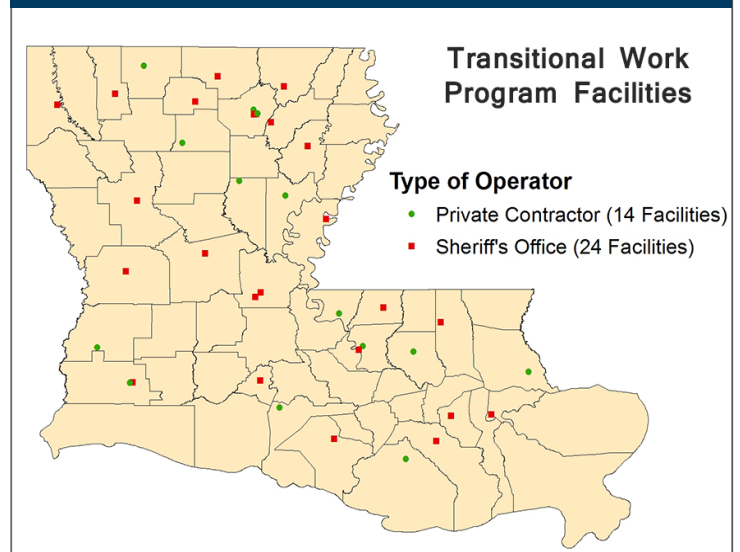
What We Found

TWP facilities are administered by either local sheriffs or private companies and monitored by Corrections. As of June 2015, there were 27 providers operating 38 facilities throughout Louisiana. Strong oversight of the TWP is critical as there are public safety risks associated with the offender population and many beneficiaries of the program.

The state benefits by paying a reduced per diem that results in savings of approximately \$12.1 million per year for offenders that participate in TWP, and recidivism rates of offenders who participate in TWP are lower than offenders who do not. Offenders benefit by learning work skills and participating businesses benefit from reduced labor costs. Program providers also receive a benefit as they receive a per diem from the state, which totaled \$15.5 million in calendar year 2015; commissary sales, which totaled \$4.1 million in calendar year 2015; and 64% of offenders' wages for room and board, which totaled \$35.5 million in calendar year 2015. Overall, we found that Corrections needs to strengthen its oversight of TWP in the areas discussed below.

- **Nearly half of TWP slots are not filled. If TWP facilities operated at capacity, the state could save an additional \$7 million a year.** As of June 2015, there were a total of 5,278 approved TWP slots for the 38 TWP facilities. However, 2,015 (38%) of the approved slots were not filled. Although this can be due to offenders choosing not to participate, seasonal employment, or facilities using the beds to house non-TWP offenders, it is also because until recently Corrections did not have a consistent or systematic process for screening state offenders housed in local jails to identify those eligible for TWP.
- **Corrections does not ensure that providers notify it prior to transferring offenders to a different TWP facility or back to a local jail.** As a result, Corrections does not know where all TWP offenders are located on

Locations of TWP Facilities, as of December 2015



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information received from Corrections.

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Transitional Work Program

Department of Public Safety and Corrections

What We Found (Cont.)

a daily basis. When an offender participating in TWP is either transferred to another TWP or back into regular incarceration, the TWP facility is required by Corrections' *Standard Operating Procedures* to notify the department via fax or email prior to the transfer occurring so they can update the CAJUN system. However, Corrections management does not enforce this policy.

- **Corrections needs to develop additional procedures to ensure that offenders participating in TWP are supervised at all times.** During fiscal years 2013 through 2015, offenders escaped 254 times.
- **Corrections does not ensure that providers deduct restitution and other obligations TWP offenders owe from their wages, as required by law and internal policy.** As a result, providers only deducted .05% (\$19,184 out of \$38.8 million) of total restitution and obligations owed from offenders including \$5 million dollars owed to victims and \$29 million in supervision fees owed to Corrections during calendar year 2015.
- **Corrections does not limit the amount an offender can spend on commissary purchases or cash allowances which limits the offender's ability to accumulate savings and pay other required obligations such as restitution.** During calendar year 2015, offenders spent \$6.4 million on commissary items and cash allowances. The chart below shows all offender deductions for calendar year 2015.

Offender Paycheck Deductions by Type* Calendar Year 2015		
Type	Amount	Percentage
Room and Board	\$35,523,662	78.94%
Commissary (e.g., candy, greeting cards, energy drinks, tobacco, etc.)	4,138,466	9.20
Cash Allowance	2,271,457	5.05
Child Support	726,267	1.61
Family Funds (i.e., money sent to family voluntarily)	1,843,911	4.10
Medical	478,984	1.06
Court-ordered Restitution and other financial obligations	19,184	0.04
Total	\$45,001,931	100%
*This exhibit does not include federal and state taxes, Medicare, or Social Security deducted from offender paychecks. **TWP offenders are responsible for paying co-pays for medical visits and prescription medications. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using self-reported data from TWP facilities provided to Corrections in their monthly report.		

- **Although Corrections conducted all required monitoring of TWP providers in 2014 and 2015, we identified weaknesses in its monitoring process.** For example, Corrections does not conduct follow-up visits on critical or repeat findings identified during its monitoring visits.
- **Corrections does not require that TWP providers offer rehabilitation programs that could help reduce recidivism rates.** On average TWP providers offered only three rehabilitation programs compared to local jails, who offered seven, and state institutions, who offered 61 during calendar year 2015.