



AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION'S CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES CONTRABAND INTERDICTION EFFORTS (AUDIT REPORT N° 21-01, JANUARY 2023)

Introduction

Reducing the prevalence of controlled substances (hereafter, *controlled substances or drugs*) in California's prison system is an ongoing challenge for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (the department). Our audit analyzed the department's controlled substances contraband interdiction efforts at four prisons from March 1, 2019, through January 7, 2022. This fact sheet presents highlights from the public version of our report, which we published in January 2023. Despite strategies the department has

implemented, drugs have continued to enter California's prison system. The weaknesses within the department's drug interdiction program allow drugs to continue to enter California's prison system. This situation has prevailed despite the department having implemented COVID-19 response efforts and having suspended in-person visiting, beginning March 2020, to mitigate potential exposure to COVID-19. As Figure 1 shows, drugs continued to enter prisons, with a notable increase for uncontrolled drug discoveries.

Results

Chapter 1: Canines

Despite Recognizing That Canines Are Among the Most Effective Resources to Both Deter and Detect Drugs, the Department Underuses Its Canine Program

- Canine teams were not always available to conduct frequent searches at their assigned prisons
- The department did not regularly use canines to search prison property, including mail rooms

Chapter 2: Electronic Drug Detection Devices

The Department Acknowledges the Usefulness of Electronic Devices in Detecting Drugs, yet Only Uses Them in Limited Circumstances

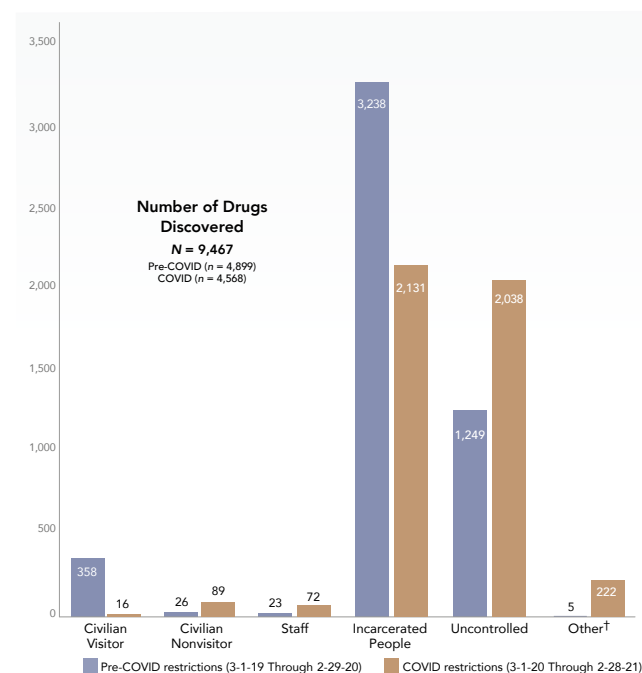
- Despite evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of electronic drug detection devices, the department did not use the devices to screen for drugs at most State prisons

Chapter 3: Entrance Searches

The Department's Screening Process at Prison Entry Checkpoints Is Inadequate to Prevent Drugs From Being Introduced Onto Prison Grounds

- The department's entrance screening process was inadequate for discovering drugs, both in policy and in practice
- The absence of effective measures to stop drugs from entering the prisons risked the health and safety of departmental staff and incarcerated people

Figure 1. Total Number of Individual Drugs Discovered Before and During Suspended Visitation Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic*



*The major drugs discovery log data that the department provided to the Office of the Inspector General (the OIG) included several errors, and the reliability of the data is further discussed in Chapter 7 of our report. For purposes of our audit, we made some adjustments to these data to more accurately reflect drug discoveries. We caution that these numbers may still not be accurate.

† At Prison B, a manager reported that staff erroneously reported 227 drug items (five during the pre-COVID restrictions period and 222 during the COVID restrictions period) discovered as recovered from staff when the items should have been reported as recovered from an incarcerated person. We did not perform procedures to validate the source of discovery; however, we reclassified the stated error as Other due to uncertainty.

Source: Major drugs discovery log data maintained by the department's Division of Adult Institutions and provided by the department's Office of Research. The data covered the period from March 2019 to February 2021.



Table 1. Observations of Staff Searched at Pedestrian Entrances

| Prison | Shift Change/ Off-Peak | Location | Number of People Processed (approximate) | Duration of Each Search |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|--|----------------------------|
| Prison A | Shift Change | Main Entrance | 160 | 1–2 seconds |
| | Shift Change | Main Entrance | 230 | 2–3 seconds |
| | Off-Peak | Main Entrance | 25 | 8 seconds |
| Prison C | Shift Change | Main Entrance | 105 | 2–8 seconds |
| | Shift Change | MSF | 8 | 5–10 seconds |
| | Shift Change | Main Entrance | 129 | 8–10 seconds |
| | Off-Peak | Main Entrance | 10 | 8–10 seconds |
| Prison D | Shift Change | SHU Entrance | 43 | 2–3 seconds |
| | Shift Change | GP Entrance | 55 | <5 seconds |
| | Off-Peak | GP Entrance | 7 | 10 seconds |
| Approximate Total Number of People Processed | | | 772 | |

Notes: Shift change, for the purposes of this audit, is a period of approximately 45 minutes before the beginning of the work shifts starting at 6:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m.

Off-Peak is anytime outside the shift change period. SHU is Security Housing Unit. MSF is Minimum Support Facility. GP is General Population.

Source: The OIG's observations at pedestrian entrances for Prison A, Prison C, and Prison D. The department's COVID-19 pandemic policies precluded in-person inspections at Prison B.

Chapter 4: Cell Searches

Officers Did Not Conduct Cell and Bunk Area Searches as Often as Departmental Policy Required, and Most Searches They Did Conduct Were Unlikely to Discover Any Drugs That Might Have Been Present

- Officers did not conduct the minimum number of required daily cell and bunk area searches, reducing the likelihood of detecting drugs in housing units
- Officers did not always conduct thorough searches of incarcerated people's cells, often skipping crucial areas where incarcerated people could hide drugs

Table 2. Rate of Compliance and Supervisory Reviews on Required Daily Cell Searches

| Prison | Compliance With Daily Cell Searches | Evidence of Supervisory Review |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Prison A | 59% | 42% |
| Prison B | 28% | 36% |
| Prison C | 8% | No Documentation Provided* |
| Prison D | 88% | 99% |
| Overall Sample | 38% | 40% |

* According to management at Prison C, supervisory reviews were not documented on the cell search logs, but in a separate housing unit logbook. The prison did not respond to our request for the housing unit logbooks; therefore, we could not determine whether supervisory reviews had occurred.

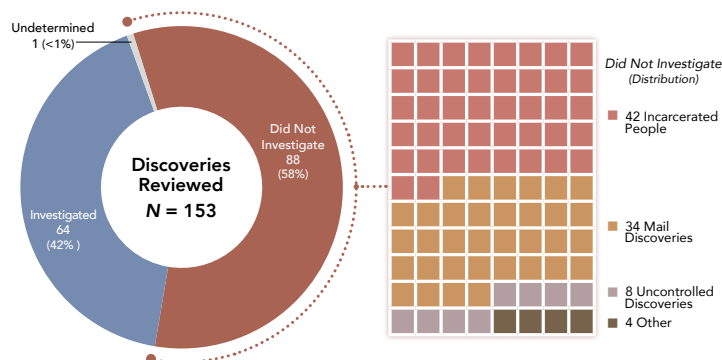
Source: The OIG's review of cell search records provided by the prisons.

Chapter 5: Investigations

The Department Does Not Consistently or Adequately Conduct Investigations to Determine the Sources of Drugs Discovered in Prisons

- Prison investigators generally conduct poor-quality investigations that rarely identify those suspected of bringing drugs into prisons
- The department has minimal policies and procedures for investigating the source of drug discoveries
- Although the department has specific procedures in place to investigate drug overdoses in prisons, medical staff rarely notify prison investigators of drug overdoses to ensure that investigations occur

Figure 2. Results of 153 Drug Discoveries Reviewed at Four Prisons



Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: The OIG's analysis of the department's investigations into the source of discovered drugs between March 2019 and February 2021 at Prison A, Prison B, Prison C, and Prison D.

Chapter 6: Work Change

Prison Staff Did Not Always Thoroughly Search Incarcerated Workers Reporting to and Returning From Work Assignments, Increasing the Risk of These Workers Moving Drugs Throughout Prisons

- As a result of the department's unclear policies and procedures, not all prisons require staff to search incarcerated workers who move to and from locations throughout the prisons

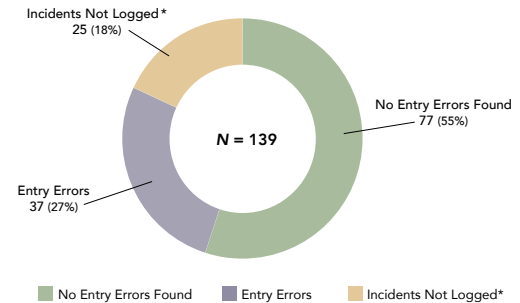


Chapter 7: Data Validation

The Department Could Not Accurately Quantify Its Discoveries of Drugs Because Its Data Collection and Quality Control Procedures Were Both Inadequate, Resulting in the Inclusion of Inaccurate Data in Its Statutorily Required Public Reports

- The data on drug discoveries that the department collects and provides to the general public and to stakeholders are inaccurate and misleading
- Departmental policy does not require staff to record in the major drugs discovery log several drugs identified as having a high potential for abuse and dependency; this lapse in gathering data prevents the department from monitoring controlled substance discovery activity

Figure 3. Data Validation Results of Four Prisons' Drug Discovery Data



*We identified three incidents that involved amphetamine, hydrocodone, and methadone hydrochloride. These substances do not fall under the major drug categories that the department required its staff to track.

Source: The OIG's review of sampled incidents at Prison A, Prison B, Prison C, and Prison D compared with data entries from the department's major drugs discovery log.

Recommendations

The department should:

Canines

- Develop and implement procedures to use canines to search the persons and personal property of visitors, and staff
- Develop and implement procedures to ensure that canine teams are available to conduct frequent searches at their assigned prisons
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to effectively use canines to conduct searches of visitors, staff, incarcerated people and their personal property, and to search prison grounds

Electronic Drug Detection Equipment

- Evaluate the cost-benefit analysis result of implementing electronic detection devices that can identify drugs in its interdiction efforts

Entrance Searches

- Develop policies and procedures that include a daily comprehensive search process of staff, and their belongings at the entrances to prisons' secured perimeters
- Provide regular training on how to conduct comprehensive searches at entrances to prisons' secured perimeters
- Employ the use of canines and drug detection devices that will assist staff to

detect and identify drugs at pedestrian and vehicle security checkpoints

Cell Searches

- Ensure that staff consistently complete and document required searches; supervisors document evidence of monitoring the search process, and the reasons when a search is not performed
- Implement routine training to provide custody staff with continuous reinforcement of skills and expectations for conducting effective cell searches

Investigations

- Establish clear, comprehensive, statewide policies and procedures for investigating drug discoveries that include investigating the source
- Develop a field guide to direct and guide prison investigations of drug discoveries
- Collaborate with California Correctional Health Care Services to develop privacy protocols that ensure prison investigators are informed of all suspected and confirmed overdoses
- Develop and conduct training for prison investigators on how to effectively investigate drug discoveries and identify the sources of those discoveries

Work Change

- Clarify when, and what search methods custody staff are required to use in searching incarcerated people at work change checkpoints and when they move into or out of high security risk areas
- Establish a quality control process to ensure that managers and supervisors monitor and verify compliance with the departmental search policy
- Use electronic contraband and drug detection devices to detect contraband and drugs at work change checkpoints

Data Validation

- Establish policies and procedures on how to properly enter drug discovery incidents into the major drugs discovery log
- Incorporate the controlled substances listed in Schedules I and II of federal and State laws into its major drugs discovery log reporting policy
- Implement a data quality control process and establish controls within the SharePoint application to reduce errors in data entry. Otherwise, utilize a database management system with integrated data controls