

The California Bottom Line

Prison rehabilitation cuts cost more than savings

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—Correctional Educational Association study

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The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) plans to cut \$250 million from education and rehabilitation programs, a decision which will cost the department more than it saves and make California's communities less safe. The projected savings of \$250 million are illusory because they lead to higher recidivism rates, increased prison violence, and the loss of economical in-house produced goods and services – so how are we really netting a savings of \$250 million?

Research shows CDCR rehabilitation program cuts cost millions.

These cuts will:

- Cost taxpayers \$115 million over the next two to three years because inmate population will grow by approximately 2,350;
- Increase risk for correctional officers and other CDCR employees because the prisons with the fewest educational programs tend to have the highest rate inmate violence;
- Force the state to spend thousands, if not millions, of dollars per year on market-rate prices for products and services such as printing, landscaping and janitorial that are now provided nearly free of charge by inmates in vocational programs.

Nearly 140,000 inmates released without rehabilitation

The state currently incarcerates about 170,000 people. In 2008, 138,876 inmates were paroled from state prison and returned to their communities. Similar parole numbers are expected in 2010. But only 14 percent of those released will have received any education or vocational training while incarcerated. Worse yet, CDCR plans to cut these crime-reducing programs by half so only about 7 percent of inmates will have access to programs to help them become employable after prison.

Inmate education represents only 2 percent of CDCR's \$13 billion annual budget and the department is preparing to cut the prison education budget in half, eliminating many vocational programs and gutting academic education. The state should avoid cutting programs that lower recidivism. The decisions to cut certain programs do not appear to be based on any evidence as to which classes are the most effective. The current plan is arbitrary, costly, and fails to take into account the consequences, which will result in increased risk to the people of California.

Rehabilitation reduction adds \$115 million in new expenses

In a widely circulated study conducted on the cost effectiveness of rehabilitation, the Correctional Educational Association concluded:

“...simply attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration by 29 percent. Translated into savings, every dollar spent on education returns more than two dollars to the citizens in reduced prison costs.”

Another study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that vocational programs save over \$13,000 per inmate participant.² Increased recidivism increases prison costs. It costs an average of \$49,000 annually to house each inmate in the State of California. CDCR estimates its rehabilitation program reductions will increase inmate population by 750 prisoners in 2009-2010 and 1000 more in 2010-2011.³

These increases in prisoners amount to \$85 million in additional costs over the next two years, eroding the savings from the \$250 million cut. Using CDCR data, SEIU Local 1000 projects a three-year increase in inmate population of 2,345 due to program cuts, representing \$115 million in additional costs.

Education programs cut prison violence by nearly 50 percent

Educational programs also help reduce costly and dangerous prison violence. A variety of experts agree that there is a connection between rehabilitation programs and prison violence. John Haviland, a warden at Solano State Prison, has commented publicly on the role that rehabilitation programs play in the reduction of prison violence.⁴ Barry Krisberg, the head of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and a member of the Governor's Expert Panel, has also noted that violence is less likely to erupt if programs are in place:

“Without (education) programs and without (rehabilitation) services, the tensions that exist to begin with are going to be exacerbated. The elected officials of California have been playing Russian roulette with the lives of the guards and the inmates in these prisons.”⁵

One of the worst riots in recent memory occurred at the California Institution for Men in Chino in August 2009, which left more than 250 inmates injured. Not surprisingly, Chino has a below average enrollment rate for both academic and vocational programs.⁶

Sol Irving, a former California prison warden who supports of expanding rehabilitation programs, claimed that prison riots “even the minor ones... are costly affairs” and that major disturbances can cost \$700,000.” According to Matthew Cate, the current CDCR secretary, the incident at Chino will “cost the taxpayers \$5 million to \$6 million.”⁷ During 2006 alone, CDCR had 397 riots or melees. Even a modest increase in the number of disturbances due to a reduction in programs could cost Californians millions of dollars. Local 1000's review of CDCR data shows a correlation between lack of education program and increased violence.

Here are some examples of savings realized by the vocational print shop at the California Institution for Men (CIM).

- In the first 10 months of 2009 CIM's print shop has provided the department with almost \$650,000 dollars worth of work.
- From 1997 to 2007, the CIM shop's inmate students produced over \$7.4 million dollars worth of printing services.
- An analysis of CIM cost avoidance reports show that the market rate for outside printing services costs anywhere from two to three times more than the in-house vocational printing jobs.

Less education equals more inmate violence

- The five CDCR facilities with the highest percentage of inmates in academic programming had an average in-prison violence rate of 4.9 incidents per 100 inmates (based on average daily population). The five facilities with the lowest percentage of inmates in academic programs had an average in-prison violence rate of 8.2 - nearly double the average for facilities with high percentages of inmates in programs.⁸
- The facilities with the highest rates of vocational programs for inmates exhibited an average violence rate of 3.9 incidents per 100 inmates. The average number of incidents was almost twice as high – 8.6 per 100 inmates – in CDCR facilities with the lowest rate of programs for prisoners.⁹

Inmate vocational student work saves California millions of dollars

Cuts to vocational programs also increase the cost of services and products. Currently, CDCR provides products and services such as printing, landscaping and janitorial functions at dramatically reduced cost through its vocational programs. The ability to purchase in-house products and services saves the department millions of dollars each year in service contracts and product expenditures. The shutdown of programs will force CDCR facilities to seek services and products from retail sellers and contractors, thereby greatly increasing operating costs.

Local 1000 has found similar cost savings from programs at other prisons.

- The janitorial program at California State Prison, Corcoran saves the state more than \$120,000 in costs annually, according to Jack Soares, a state prison vocational instructor.
- The vocational landscape/ gardening program at Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla "generated a cost savings of \$74,459 in 2008" according to Instructor Catherine Fowler.



These examples show a pattern that is likely true at other prisons. It appears that vocational programs save the state millions in cost avoidance each year. CDCR needs to do a comprehensive, system-wide analysis of exactly how

much money these programs save and offset that by how much the CDCR believes it's saving by the elimination of these programs.

The uncalculated damage of prison education cuts

CDCR administrators are failing to factor in the costs of increased recidivism, heightened prison violence and the loss of in-house produced goods and services when adopting this plan to cut prison education. Much of the \$250 million in projected savings evaporates when these additional factors are considered.

Education cuts will create other unforeseen problems – the cost of new crimes committed by thousands of unprepared inmates after their release. That danger to California's families has not yet been calculated.

With no net savings and more ex-prisoners returning to the community without job skills, we must conclude that these cuts are short sighted and detrimental to the citizens of California.

Documentation

1. Correctional Education Association <http://dpscs.md.gov/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/three-state-recidivism-study-summary.pdf>
2. Aos, Steve, Marna Miller, and Elizabeth Drake. "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates." Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006.
3. Schwarzenegger v. Plata et. al., Defendant's Response to Three Judge Court's October 21, 2009 Order, United States District Court. November 11, 2009 Exhibit 1
4. <http://witnessla.com/prison/2009/admin/prison-lifers-trained-as-drug-alcohol-counselors/>
5. Time Magazine <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1916427,00.html>
6. Academic and Vocational Programs: Data as of April 2009, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. April 2009. Note: We took the program participation rate for each facility and compared it to the overall programming average for academic and vocation for all CDCR facilities
7. www.theunion.com/article/20090812/WEBUPDATE/908129990/-/rss04
8. Academic and Vocational Programs: Data as of April 2009, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. April 2009. Note these figures were calculated by taking the five facilities with the lowest rates of programming (excluding Reception Centers) and top five programming facilities and averaging their assault and battery incident rates for both vocational and academic programs.
9. Ibid.



Service Employees International Union Local 1000 is the largest union of state employees, representing more than 96,000 state employees, including prison teachers and the overwhelming majority of white collar professionals, clerical workers, auditors, information technology professionals, planners, inspectors, printers, librarians, custodians, nurses and other health care professionals.