

Nebraska Department of Correctional Services 2024 Biennium Budget Strategic Plan Report

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Executive Summary

This report highlights the major focuses of the current Nebraska Department of Correctional Services' Strategic Plan. With a combined focus on the four key areas of People, Policies, Programs, and Physical Plant, NDCS puts itself in the best position to meet programmatic benchmarks, along with ensuring the most efficient use of allocated funds. In developing strategic goals and establishing appropriate benchmarks, NDCS can ensure it is doing its best to fulfill the mission of keeping people safe.

Without people, there is no way to fulfill the mission at NDCS or provide proper care and services to incarcerated individuals. To meet the well-known challenges of staffing in the agency, NDCS has focused on reducing the turnover rate by investing in enhanced training, onboarding, and professional development opportunities. Opportunities for growth, through programs like "First Level Leader" and "Leadership Academy," have proven beneficial in the development of staff, which can lead to better retention, fulfillment, and safer facilities.

Enhanced programming is a major focus area for how NDCS serves our incarcerated population. Both clinical and non-clinical programs are essential to rehabilitative efforts in preparing incarcerated individuals for reentry into our communities. NDCS utilizes evidence-based clinical programming and non-clinical programming to address behavioral changes and problem areas that impact recidivism. . By addressing issues through the utilization of evidence-based programs related to substance use, sex offense- specific treatment, and mental health treatment, we can address core issues that often coincide with criminal behavior and recidivism. The implementation of non-clinical programming provides programs that support incarcerated individuals, who may not have a formal mental health diagnosis, but have behavioral needs to address, such as the development of healthy-thinking patterns and proper coping skills.

Appropriate policies ensure that both incarcerated individuals and staff are kept safe. Policies that set the standard for how staff are to perform duties, along with institutional operations, create safer prisons. A focus on these policies has drastically reduced the number of serious assaults and use of force incidents. A focus on policies is essential for the entire agency, but especially in keeping people safe and ensuring programming for incarcerated individuals is delivered uninterrupted. Policies outlining everything from the proper number of cell searches to cleaning expectations are essential to keeping all staff and individuals in every facility safe.

Investment in the physical plant is essential to keeping operations running smoothly at NDCS facilities. NDCS is exploring better utilization of the physical plant space by identifying new program areas and better use of existing areas. Maintenance of existing facilities and space is also vital to ensuring the wellbeing of staff and incarcerated individuals. By immediately addressing physical plant cleanliness, repairs,

and other potential issues, NDCS can reduce safety incidents and emergencies across facilities.

Key Metrics

PEOPLE

Turnover

Fiscal Year	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Total Turnover	555	485	438	425	172

**Year-to-Date (YTD) July-November 2024*

Agency Turnover Rates by Fiscal Year (includes Protective Services)

The ability to retain trained correctional professionals committed to successful reintegration allows NDCS to keep the people who live and work at NDCS facilities safe.

Benchmark: NDCS has made considerable progress reducing the turnover rate, but we would like to see this number continue to decrease steadily each fiscal year.

Vacancies

Fiscal Year	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Total Protective Services Vacancies	1983	1054
Total Non-Protective Services Vacancies	2790	1436

**Year-to-Date (YTD) July-October 2024*

Vacancies by Fiscal Year

Vacancies are defined as open positions for which NDCS is actively recruiting for. For example, a vacancy that exists for 3 months will be included in all three months that the position remained vacant, although it is only representative of one vacant position.

Benchmark: NDCS would like to see these numbers decrease steadily each year. While the turnaround may not be as drastic as represented from FY 24-25, the expectation of a steady decrease annually is appropriate until numbers stabilize.

Overtime Expenditures

Fiscal Year	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Total Overtime Expenditure	\$18,840,864.72	\$10,158,223.63

**Year-to-Date (YTD) July-November 2024*

Overtime Expenditures by Fiscal Year

The availability of overtime hours for custody and unit management staff can be a positive benefit, but not when the hours become excessive and mandatory. When the level of required overtime interferes with an employee’s ability to balance work and personal lives, stress and fatigue can occur. As a result, overtime expenditures are a primary measure.

Benchmark: The goal is to see overtime expenditures decrease steadily each year, understanding that protective custody staff vacancies will be the driving force of overtime expenditure’s at NDCS.

PROGRAMS

Program Completions

Fiscal Year	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Number of Successful Completions	2441	1982	1825	2189	3771	2332

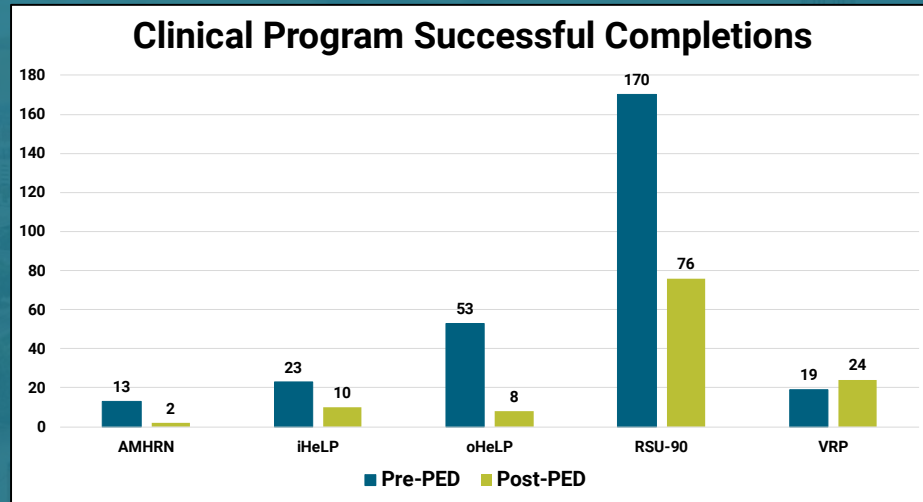
**Year-to-Date (YTD) July-November 2024*

Successful Program Completions by Fiscal Year

Incarcerated individuals who successfully complete treatment and evidence-based, non-clinical programs are less likely to commit crimes upon release. This outcome measures the number of successful completions in each of the following areas: sexual offense-specific treatment (iHeLP, oHeLP), violent offense-specific treatment (AMHRN, VRP), domestic violence programming (ACTV-NE, Choice, Change, Consequence), substance use treatment (residential, intensive outpatient, and outpatient), and evidence-based, non-clinical programming (MRT, T4C, GIR, 7 Habits, 5 Keys). Vocational Life Skills Programs are also essential to preparing incarcerated individuals to reenter communities, proving both job and other life skills that can enhance the chances of long-term success.

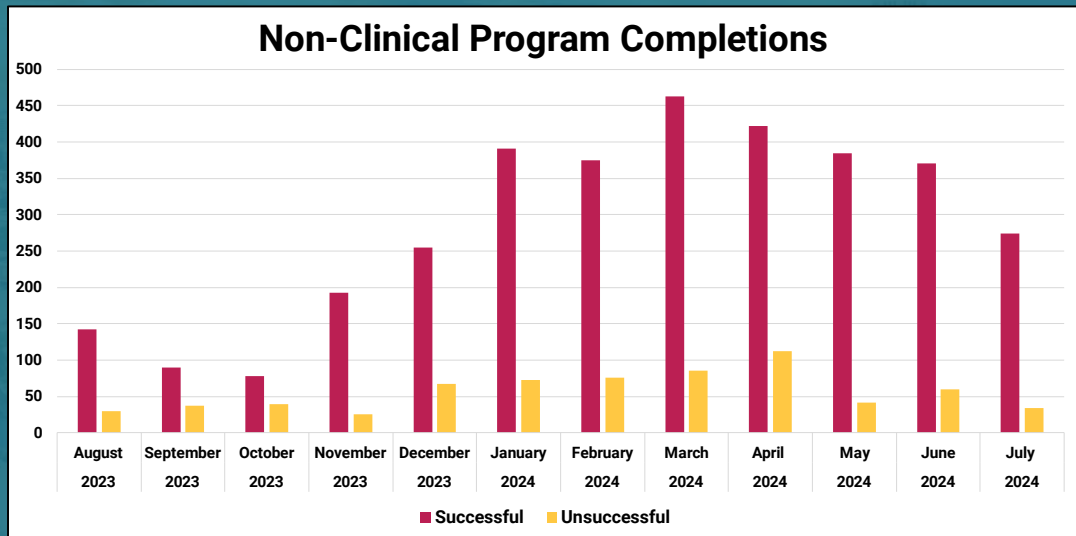
NOTE: Data reflect records entered into the electronic NICaMS system. Any paper record of program completion not entered into NICaMS are not included in these totals.

Clinical Programs



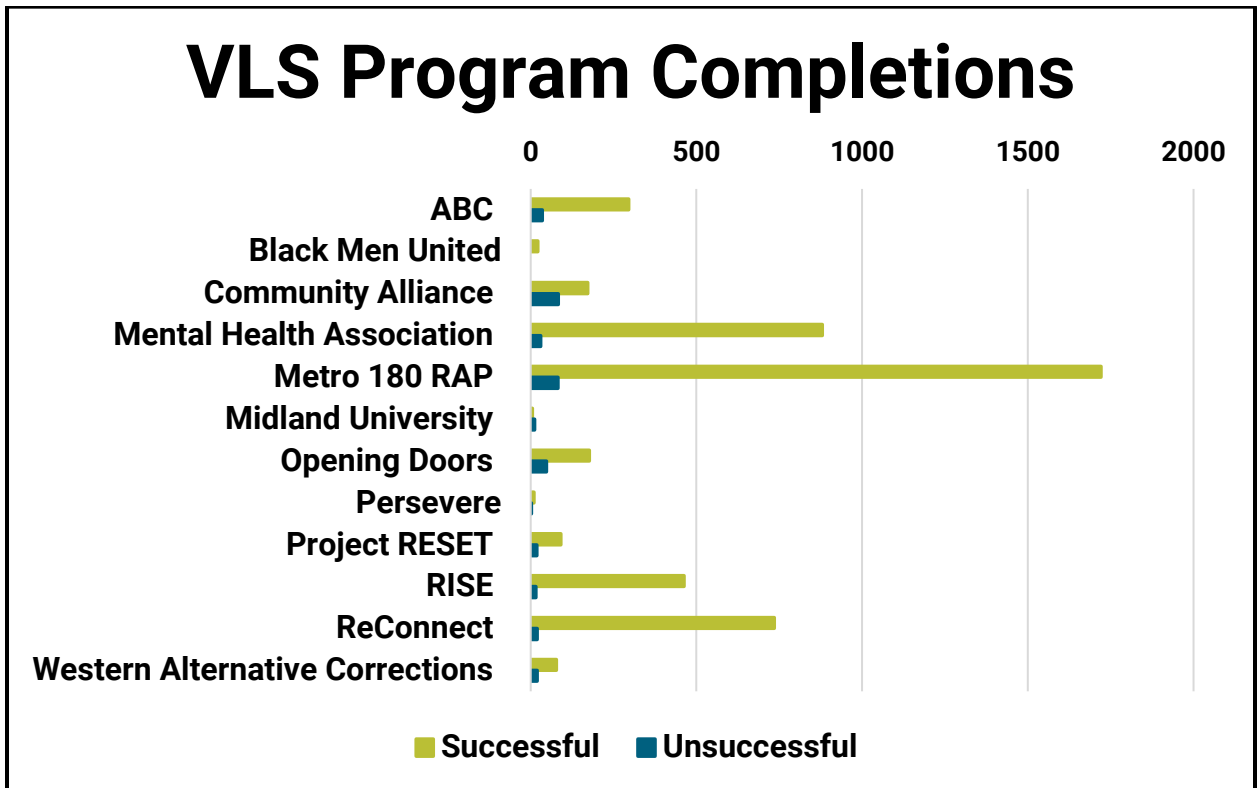
- VRP was discontinued as of January 2024
- Data collected from August 2023-July 2024

Non-Clinical Programs



- The above numbers represent a combination of the following programs: 7 Habits, Building Social Networks, Getting It Right, Ideas for Better Communication, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), Thinking 4 Change (T4C), Understanding and Reducing Angry Feelings, and Unlocking Your Thinking

- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and Thinking 4 Change (T4C) were discontinued as of 2024, with the exception of a small number of individuals who were in restrictive housing at the time.
- The shift to 5 Keys Programming was implemented in December 2023
- Data collected from August 2023-July 2024



- Data collected from August 2023-July 2024

Benchmarks: Establishing appropriate programming benchmarks may be fluid, as the needs of the population change and are unique to each incarcerated individual. NDCS strives to ensure that appropriate programming is being identified and offered in a timely manner to each incarcerated individual. High completion rates across programs demonstrate that incarcerated individuals view programming as an essential tool for successful reentry.

Parole Eligible Individuals

Fiscal Year	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Average Number of PEI	893	874	784	946	997	1086
Percentage of PEI by ADP	17%	16%	15%	17%	18%	18%

Average Number of Parole Eligible Individuals (PEI) and Percentage of Average Daily Population (ADP) by Fiscal Year

NOTE: This number is tracked quarterly and reported on the Quarterly Data Sheet. The Fiscal Year average is determined by taking the average of four quarters.

NOTE: These numbers do not take into account those individuals who were released on supervision but returned to a secure facility and were counted in the PEI total upon their return.

Benchmarks: A specific NDCS goal is to have no parole eligible individuals (PEI), who sought and engaged in programming, to be denied parole for the sole reason that they did not complete programming with NDCS. While NDCS does not make parole decisions, ensuring proper programming is identified and completed is a key part of the parole consideration process.

Mandatory Discharges

Fiscal Year of Release	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Number of Mandatory Discharges	340	352	272	340	372	372
Percent of Total Discharges	23%	23%	15%	15%	17%	17%

Mandatory Discharges and Percentage of Total Discharges by Fiscal Year

This outcome measures the number of corresponding individuals who were released at the end of their sentence with no supervision and the percentage of the total population released during the same time frame.

NOTE: These numbers do not consider those individuals who were released on supervision but returned to a secure facility and were ultimately discharged mandatorily at the end of their sentence.

Benchmarks: Some incarcerated individuals refuse programming, the goal is to have no individual who has sought programming mandatorily discharged without having completed programming.

Recidivism Rate

Fiscal Year of Release	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Recidivism Rate	31%	30%	30%	28%	28%
Success Rate	69%	70%	70%	72%	72%

Annual Recidivism and Corresponding Success Rates by Fiscal Year

Recidivism rate is a measurement of those individuals who leave prison and continue to commit crimes. Recidivism may be the most widely accepted measure of how successful prison systems are in preparing individuals for release back into society and reducing the likelihood they will reoffend. The Success Rate is reflective of the individuals who did not recidivate.

Benchmark: Earlier this year, Nebraska became the fourth state in the nation to launch Reentry 2030, a national initiative that brings together leaders across the country to improve reentry success for individuals exiting the prison system. As a participating state in Reentry 2030, NDCS is committed to setting bold, meaningful, and transparent reentry goals and tracking its progress on outcomes to drive systemic changes. NDCS's goals are centered around reentry success, education, employment, collaboration and supportive resources. Currently, nearly 72 percent of the people who are discharged from NDCS facilities remain in the community. This initiative aims to increase that success rate to 82 percent by 2030 for at least three years.

POLICIES

Serious Injury Assaults

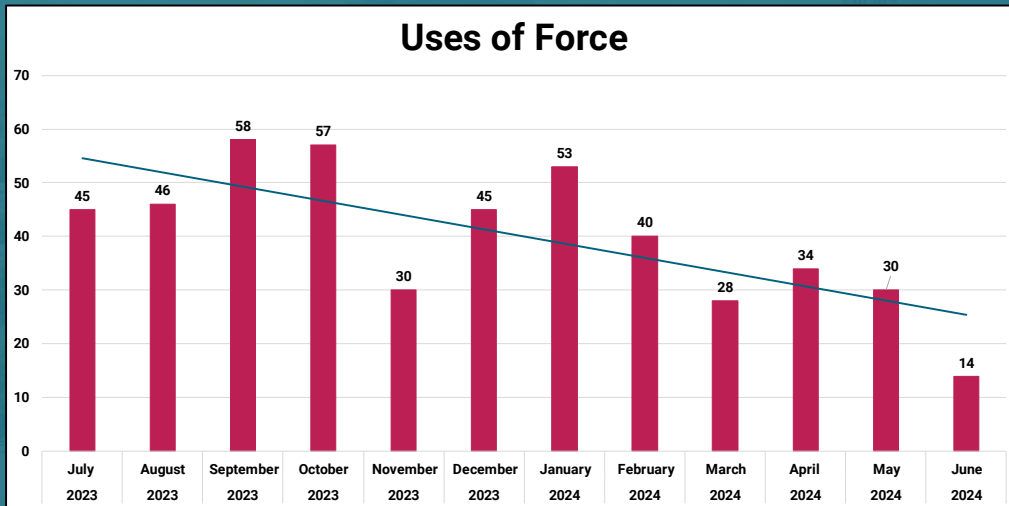
Fiscal Year	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Serious Injury Assaults	42	27	2

**Year-to-Date (YTD) July-October 2024*

Serious Injury Assaults by Fiscal Year

The number of serious injury assaults is an important performance metric to validate that proper policies are being utilized to address the safety of incarcerated individuals and staff.

Uses of Force



Updated as of 7/17/2024

Benchmark: NDCS has seen a steady decline of use of force incidents per month in its facilities since the beginning of the current year. It is the goal that NDCS continue to see a consistent reduction, or low levels of use of force incidents and serious injury assaults.

Operational Capacity vs. Design Capacity

NDCS uses two metrics – operational capacity and design capacity - to measure the overcrowding of its facilities. Operational Capacity refers to the total number of incarcerated individuals that a facility can hold, and design capacity refers to the number of incarcerated individuals a facility was designed to hold.

Average Daily Population and Capacity

Fiscal Year	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 YTD
Average Daily Population (ADP)	5516	5630	5879	5876
Percent of Operational Capacity	121%	117%	116%	116%
Percent of Design Capacity	151%	146%	145%	145%

*Year-to-Date (YTD) July-October 2024

Benchmark: A primary goal of NDCS is reducing the percentage of operational capacity to appropriate levels by exploring and addressing all internal and external factors contributing to overcrowding in its facilities. New design capacity will help with these efforts, along with the work of community stakeholders engaging in more effective practices to both reduce the population and increase the success rate upon release.

Daily Costs Per Inmate

Daily Costs Per Inmate by Facility

NDCS measures the daily cost per inmate across its facilities to determine where additional cost savings can be realized. The chart below shows how the costs across NDCS facilities can vary depending on the population being housed at each facility.

FY 2023	cost/day per inmate
Neb Corr Youth Facility	\$411.80
Tecumseh Corr Center	\$142.68
Community Corr Ctr LNK	\$93.24
Community Corr Ctr OMA	\$104.99
Neb State Penitentiary	\$158.17
Neb Corr Ctr for Women	\$193.92
RTC	\$165.30
Omaha Correctional Ctr	\$156.37
Work Ethic Camp	\$176.85

Benchmark: NDCS consistently explores funding tools that may assist in reducing the average daily costs of incarcerated individuals across facilities by utilizing cost saving measures, such as “opportunity-buys” and bulk food ordering.

Physical Plant of the New Prison Facility

The information below is a brief summary of the proposed use of programming space, and general design goals for the new prison, with a focus on best use of physical plant and resources.

Medium/ Max Facility	
Area	Quantity
Vocational Area	
* Vocational Labs	6

Minimum Facility	
Area	Quantity
Vocational Area	
* Vocational Lab	3

* Professional Vocational Labs	2
* Vocational Classroom	1
* Total Square foot	25,000
Kitchen	
* Culinary Art Classroom	1
* Total Square foot	352
Education	
* General Classrooms	7
* Multi- Purpose Rooms	5
* Classroom Square foot	20,625
** Support areas (instructor area)	3,336
** Total Area in Square ft	23,961
Housing Units	
* Max Units multi- purpose rooms	8
* Med Units multi- purpose rooms	8
* Total Square foot	9,312

* General Classrooms	4
* Total Square foot	9,312

Housing Units

There are no programming areas in the housing units. It is encouraged that these incarcerated individuals leave their housing unit for programming opportunities.

CSI Area	
Maximum/ Medium	
* Total Square foot	25,200
Minimum	
* Total Square foot	16,756

Design Features for Environmental Quality for Staff/Inmates

Improved acoustics

- We intend to use acoustic wall and ceiling panels. Some of these panels will have pictures printed onto them to give a normative feel to the spaces as well as lowering sound levels. This will reduce stress levels for staff and inmates.

Plentiful natural light/ Enhanced exterior views.

- With the use of solar tubes, clear stories, and larger windows we will be able to bring in ample natural light. This is done to increase the mental well-being of staff and inmates.

Enhanced indoor air quality.

- We intend to use air handler units that bring in outside air to ensure the air is recycled out of the building. This will allow for multiple air changes during the day. This will get any unwanted orders out of the space and will aid with inmate well-being.

Program spaces directly in housing units.

- Offering programming opportunity on the unit allows for separation of classifications which helps limit time spent in restraints or holding areas, improves morale for inmates, offers opportunities for specialized programming, and improves staffing levels by limiting movement. Improved morale and engagement with programs encourage a safer environment for both inmates and staff.