



# State Jail Evaluation Summary Report Dawson State Jail

October 2000

## Introduction

State Jail felony facilities were created in 1993 to house offenders convicted of certain felony offenses. The premise behind the concept was to provide low risk/high need offenders with a degree of rehabilitative programming in a community-based incarcerative setting. Since the State Jail Division (SJD) was established, several reviews have been completed. The Criminal Justice Policy Council has completed two reviews, which provide a broad overview of the implementation status of the facilities in concert with state law. Additionally, the Research, Evaluation and Development (RED) Unit began a review of the State Jail system beginning in January 2000.

The RED Unit review has been divided into two phases. The focus of Phase I was to provide administrators with a general assessment of the SJD operations and the division's ability to use information to engage in informed decision making. Phase II, which is the focus of this brief, is designed to evaluate specific state jail facility's program/facility utilization and operations. The project scope and research methodology is defined in a brief entitled "State Jail Review Methodology Brief", published by the RED Unit.

Individual reports will be prepared for 16 of the 17 state jail facilities. A review was not conducted at the Travis County Correctional Facility due to recent major program shifts. Also, a comprehensive report that consolidates utilization and operations of all facilities will be available. This report is organized into three major sections: facility utilization, facility operations and program utilization and operations. The Appendix of this report provides additional details regarding survey results.

## Dawson State Jail

The Dawson State Jail is a 2,144-bed co-gender facility located in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas. The facility has been operational since July 1997, and was originally managed by Corrections Corporation of America until June 1998. The facility is currently managed by Management & Training Corporation through a contractual agreement with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice State Jail Division (TDCJ-SJD). Dallas County is not part of the contractual agreement.

**Facility Utilization** State law provides for the State Jail Division, with the approval of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice, to designate one or more of its facilities as a substance abuse felony punishment facility, or use to house offenders eligible for confinement in a transfer facility. The Dawson facility is used to house both state jail confinees and TDCJ-Institutional Division (ID) offenders on transfer status. The overall utilization rate is 97%. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, 41% of the offenders at the Dawson State Jail are state jail confinees, and the remaining 59% are TDCJ-ID transfer offenders.

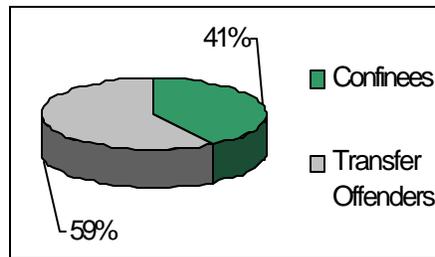


Figure 1: Average Dawson State Jail Population (August 1999 -- June 2000)

Offender demographic and offense information is presented in Chart 1. The information reflects offenders that were in the state jail on August 31, 2000.

Variable	Confinee Population	Transfer Population
<b>Average Age</b>	31.6	34.2
<b>Race:</b>		
White	35.1%	46.9%
Black	54.5%	46.9%
Hispanic	9.8%	12.1%
Other	.7%	0%
<b>Current Offense:</b>		
Substance Abuse	46.5%	30.8%
Property	49.3%	24.2%
Against a Person	.5%	39.2%
Other	4.2%	5.8%

- Possession accounted for 37% of the confinee substance abuse offenses.
- The major property offense categories for confinees were theft, forgery, burglary and unlawful use of a motor vehicle.
- The category "Against a Person" includes offenses such as kidnapping, murder, sexual assaults and robbery. Some of the confinee offenses were injury to a child and child abandonment.
- The category "Other" includes offenses such as failure to register as a sex offender, weapons offenses, evading arrest, escape, bail jumping and perjury.

Chart 1: Demographic and Offense Profile Data

Almost all of the confinees in the state jail are there as a result of a direct sentence (49%), or a revocation (51%). Only one confinee was serving "up-front" time. The average length of stay is just over one year, and the mode is approximately one year. The majority of the confinees (52%) are from Dallas

County, and there was a significant amount of confinees (13%) from Tarrant County. The remaining confinees are from all areas of the state. The Dawson facility is one of three state jails where females can be housed. Females comprise 69% of the confinee population.

**Facility Operations** Information reported in this section is reflective of analyses of survey data and personal interviews with both staff and offenders, which focus on facility operational issues. The staff survey was based in part on the *Prison Social Climate Survey* developed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Additional survey questions for staff and offenders were based on surveys developed in a National Institute of Corrections-supported research project on Audits of Popular Direct-Supervision Jails (NIC-013633, 1996). The responses to the survey questions were converted to a standard scale from 0 - 4. Using this scale, lower scores represent negative responses, and higher scores represent positive responses. Responses of "Don't Know" were coded as missing data and are not included in the scale responses. During a site visit conducted August 9-11,

2000 by the RED Unit review team, 40 staff members and eight confinees were interviewed and administered the survey. In addition, 605 confinees completed the self-report surveys, yielding a response rate of 67%.

Composite scores for each major section of the survey were computed by averaging all of the responses in each major area into one score. The computed score is an overall facility rating of all staff and offender survey questions. Composite ratings were also computed for facility operations, facility health, and programming. Charts 2 and 3 provide the composite scores for each of the major areas and the sub-sections that fall into each grouping. The Appendix provides the responses for all of the questions included in the survey.

**Overall Facility Rating** The overall facility rating for Dawson State Jail is slightly positive at 2.695, and the offender rating is low to moderate at 1.358. The staff rated programming the most positive, followed by facility health and facility operations. More detailed information on programming is provided

later in this report. Following are more detailed highlights on the facility operations. Again, the Appendix provides the responses for all of the questions included in the survey.

**Facility Operations**

The following are results from *facility staff members* when questioned about the facility safety, security and service quality.

- Facility operations received the lowest composite score.
- Service quality was the highest rated area, and safety was the lowest.
- Program staff indicated they feel the safest in the facility.
- Security staff indicated most strongly that not all staff feel safe.
- Sexual assaults rarely occur, but fighting between offenders and other acts of aggression are common.
- The building perimeter is thought to be secure.
- Most service areas fell into the "good" range.
- Staff members gave sanitation, health care and the commissary a "moderate" rating.

The following are results from *confinees* when questioned about the facility safety, security and service quality.

- Confinees had little concern about being housed in the same facility as ID transfer offenders.

Staff Survey	Security Staff	Support Service Staff	Program Staff	All Staff
OVERALL RATING				2.695
Facility Operations				2.370
Safety	1.95	2.05	2.38	2.06
Security	2.07	2.27	2.25	2.16
Service Quality	2.90	2.82	2.92	2.89
Facility Health				2.775
Commitment to Institution	2.22	2.36	3.00	2.42
Job Satisfaction	3.17	3.05	3.72	3.24
Stress	2.79	2.66	3.47	2.89
Management	2.46	2.39	2.99	2.55
Programming				3.030
Program Access	2.82	3.13	3.72	3.08
Program Quality	2.81	3.13	3.23	2.98

Offender Survey	Confinees
OVERALL RATING	1.358
Facility Operations	1.314
Safety	1.60
Facility Environment	1.31
Service Quality	1.00
Programming	1.419
Program Participation	1.31
Program Quality	1.54

Chart 2: Facility Operations Composite Score Summary

Chart 3: Facility Operations Composite Score Summary

- Confinees gave facility operations a "poor" rating.
- In general, confinees indicated that they do not feel safe in this facility.
- Confinees indicated that fights, threats of violence, and other acts of aggression occur often.
- Confinees feel they are not getting the programming they need.
- Confinees do not feel that the staff treats them with respect.
- Confinees feel that they do not have enough to do to keep them busy.
- Service quality was rated from "moderate" to "poor".
- Confinees rated maintenance the highest, and food services the lowest.

#### *Facility Health*

The following are results from *facility staff members* when questioned about their commitment to the institution, job satisfaction, stress levels, and management.

- The overall facility health rating was "good".
- Job satisfaction received the highest composite score within facility health.
- The program staff found their jobs the most satisfying, interesting and worthwhile.
- Staff members reported low to moderate stress levels.
- The ratings for management issues ranged from "moderate" to "good".
- The highest rated item was staff's understanding of policies and procedures.
- The lowest rated item was fair pay.
- Overall, staff members felt positively about how the facility was run.

#### *Programming*

The following are results from *facility staff members* when questioned about program access and quality for the confinees.

- Programming received the highest composite score.
- Staff gave a "good" rating to all program areas, except for offender access to substance abuse treatment, which was rated as "excellent".
- The community work program was rated the lowest, at "moderate".

- The chaplaincy program received the highest rating for quality.
- The community work program received the lowest rating for quality.

The following are results from *confinees* when questioned about program access and quality.

- Confinees rated program quality higher than program participation.
- Confinees rated program participation in vocational classes, life skills, substance abuse treatment, and recreation as "poor".
- The community work program and job readiness program received the lowest ratings for participation.
- The chaplaincy program received the highest rating for quality.
- Recreation received the lowest rating for quality.

#### **Program Utilization and Operations**

Texas Government Code Annotated, Article 507.001(b) states that the State Jail Division and the Community Justice Assistance Division shall develop and implement programs in state jail facilities, to include: *education, rehabilitation, work and recreation*. The law further requires the agency's administrative divisions to consult with the local Community Supervision and Corrections Departments (CSCDs) to maximize resources. Through interviews with staff, the intent of the law is reflected in the mission of the facility, which is "to provide the best treatment to minimize return of confinees back into the criminal justice system."

The Dallas County CSCD has little involvement with the programming offered at the facility. The CSCD Director stated that he had a good working relationship with previous management at the facility; however, the relationship with the current facility management is non-existent. The CSCD Director also stated that his working relationship with the State Jail Division staff is good, but his role is not clear as it relates to management and operation of the facilities in Dallas County. The CSCD Director and the Warden both believe it would be beneficial to establish a working relationship.

The State Jail Unit Monthly Report for the months of January, February and March 2000 were obtained by the RED Unit and analyzed to determine utilization rates.

Due to numerous documented data integrity issues, the only programs for which estimates for program utilization could be computed are the education and substance abuse programs. However, it should be noted that the facility does offer work and recreation programming for offenders as required by state law. Program information will be categorized according to state statute.

*Education* The education programming track at the Dawson State Jail is provided by Management & Training Corporation employees, and is coordinated by the Principal. The facility is required by contract to provide "a full range of academic and vocational programs" which must meet the Windham School District standards. The structure of programming is divided into three components: education classes, supplemental skills and vocational training. Confinees are eligible to participate in any or all of the programs. Priority placement is given to confinees whose levels of need have been clearly documented, and for whom an Individualized Treatment Plan has been completed. Program slots that are not filled by confinees are opened to ID transfer offenders.

Based on their level of need (e.g., GED, illiteracy), offenders are placed in education classes. The utilization rate of the education classes is 99%, with confinees occupying 59% of the slots. Of the total number of education slots available, males occupy 60%, and females occupy 40%. However, male confinees occupy a lower percentage of slots than female confinees. At the time of this evaluation, the Dawson facility had recently begun accepting ID transfer female offenders, and there were none participating in the education programming yet.

Life skills training is also provided to offenders in the facility. The emphasis of the training is to teach offenders the importance of building positive relationships with family and community members. There are 160 slots available on any given day. Program data estimates indicate maximum utilization, with 70% of the slots utilized by confinees. Of the total life skills slots available, there is an equal distribution of males and females.

The third type of available offender programming is vocational programming.

which focuses on providing offenders with job skills. Program participation is based on individual needs as defined in the Individual Treatment Plan and completion of the educational and life skills requirements. ID transfer offenders are eligible to participate if program slots are available. Vocational program areas include introduction to computers, electrical maintenance, industrial cleaning and food services. Program data estimates indicate maximum utilization with 72.5% of the slots utilized by confinees. ID transfer offenders occupied 27.5% of the slots. Of the total vocational slots available, males and females are not equally divided. Male confinees occupy a lower percentage of the available slots than female confinees.

*Rehabilitation* Three types of rehabilitative programming are offered at the facility: a modified therapeutic community, substance abuse education and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. The contract encourages facilities with a minimum of 400 confinees to provide a modified therapeutic community. The Dawson State Jail has a 108-bed modified state jail therapeutic community for females and a 54-bed community for males. The female program is operated on two pods with a capacity of 54 confinees each. The male program operates one pod with a capacity of 54 confinees. Only confinees are eligible to participate in the program. The therapeutic community consists of three phases.

Staff members also provide 26 hours of substance abuse education. Substance abuse education is provided for both male and female confinees and ID transfer offenders on a monthly basis. Placement into the program is based on the offender's treatment needs and is reserved for offenders with the highest needs. AA meetings are available on varying days for both male and female confinees and ID transfer offenders.

The Chaplaincy program is operated by a chaplain and volunteers. Program participation is voluntary and available to all offenders. Most classes are offered weekly and cover such topics as life skills, family programs, personal growth and spiritual growth.

*Work* As per contract stipulations, the facility should "establish a work program that would utilize offender laborers, many of whom would be unskilled to minimum skilled." The community work program is

coordinated by the Community Services Sergeant. The size of the work crews depends on the type of work project. The work crews range from 10-15 offenders and are generally supervised by one or two correctional officers. Work is scheduled Monday through Friday for 8 hours per day.

The work program is only available for confinees who are low-risk, meet medical criteria, have clear disciplinary records, and who have met all of their academic criteria. Although eligibility criteria is high, there is a large enough pool of offenders and enough community projects to keep the work crews busy.

ID transfer offenders and confinees are assigned work duties inside the facility. Assignments are made based on the offender's custody status and programming obligations. Even with work and programming, offenders felt that there is not enough to do to keep them busy. When staff members were asked if ID transfer offenders have enough to do to keep them busy, 53% of the staff said no. When asked the same question regarding confinees, 46% of the staff said no.

The Dawson State Jail has a job readiness program that serves to get the offender "paper-ready" to work, and provides them with referrals prior to their release from the facility. The program is only available to confinees.

*Recreation* The recreation program is managed by a Recreation Supervisor with community volunteers to assist with the coordination of activities. Program participation is voluntary and is available to all offenders on a daily basis; however, confinees and ID transfer offenders participate at separate times, as do the male and female offenders.

**Summary** The survey ratings for this facility are average. There was not a major area that stood out as excellent. The poorest rated area by staff was the degree to which fights between offenders occur. Staff members reported that fights between offenders and other non-physical acts of aggression (e.g., chunking, shoving) occur often. The poorest rated area by offenders was participation in the community work projects.

One of the biggest issues noted by the facility staff during interviews was the inability to hire and retain quality employees. Management is constantly dealing with obtaining and retaining quality employees.

Another issue was poor communication throughout the facility and the lack of quality training. Staff members expressed concerns that the combination of these issues has had a negative impact on employee morale.

A major topic discussed during interviews was the management issues confinees present. The structure of the law which does not allow for good-time credit to be either given or taken limits sanctions or incentives that can be imposed on the confinee population. The confinees feel that they can do or not do whatever they want because they know that the date of their release will not change. These are not issues unique to the Dawson State Jail, but are system wide.

Lastly, the building design poses challenges for correctional staff members. It is a ten-floor building with very limited space. The classrooms are small and all of the therapeutic community work is conducted in the pods. Since there is no outside recreation area, staff members were concerned that offenders were more agitated than offenders in other units, because they are never allowed outside of the building. This extra stress could lead to security issues. Additionally, staff members were concerned about the high amount of inmate movement, which is hard to control. All offenders and facility staff members use the same elevators. At times, there are crowds of offenders and staff members waiting for the elevator in a small area. Overall, many staff members stated that the building design creates a claustrophobic, agitated environment, not only for the offenders, but for the staff members who are there to control the offender population.

In summary, the facility was experiencing some major changes in operations. At the time of the review, the Warden had been recently hired and the Principal had been on the job less than two weeks. In addition, the facility had just begun housing female ID transfer offenders. Overall, it appears that facility staff members are managing a problematic confinee population with the resources they have.

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# APPENDIX

## FACILITY OPERATIONS

Staff Survey Questions					Negative		Moderate		Positive
					0	1	2	3	4
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Security Staff</b>	<b>Support Service Staff</b>	<b>Program Staff</b>	<b>All Staff</b>					
I feel safe in this jail.	2.55	2.55	3.00	2.64				✓	
All officers feel safe in all parts of the unit.	1.41	1.90	2.63	1.83			✓		
Do you have concerns with confinees and ID offenders in the same facility?	2.05	2.45	2.50	2.25			✓		
How often are there threats of violence?	2.00	1.78	2.43	2.03			✓		
How often do sexual assaults occur?	2.80	2.67	3.40	2.85				✓	
How often do fights between offenders occur?	.90	1.36	1.38	1.13		✓			
How often do other acts of aggression occur between offenders (chunking, shoving)?	1.24	1.40	1.50	1.33		✓			
How often do fights occur between offenders and staff at the unit?	2.62	2.18	2.88	2.55				✓	
How often do other acts of aggression occur between staff and offenders?	1.70	1.50	2.00	1.71			✓		
How often are weapons found during shakedowns?	2.25	2.33	2.43	2.31			✓		
<b>Security</b>									
Building is designed for effective surveillance.	1.57	2.00	1.63	1.69			✓		
This is a very secure facility.	2.48	2.00	2.25	2.30			✓		
Jail fences, walls, towers, alarms are secure.	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.52				✓	
Doors and locks are in good working condition.	1.95	2.64	2.75	2.30			✓		

## FACILITY OPERATIONS

Confinee Survey Questions		Negative	Moderate		Positive	
Safety	All Confinees	0	1	2	3	4
I feel safe in this jail.	1.49		✓			
Officers feel safe in the housing unit.	1.90			✓		
Do you have any concerns with confinees and transfer offenders in the same facility?	2.53				✓	
Do you feel offenders need weapons to defend themselves?	2.77				✓	
How often are there threats of violence?	1.13		✓			
How often do sexual assaults occur?	2.15			✓		
How often do fights between offenders occur?	.82		✓			
How often do other acts of aggression occur between offenders (chunking, shoving)?	.70		✓			
How often do fights between offenders and staff occur?	1.68			✓		
How often do other acts of aggression occur between offenders and staff (chunking, shoving)?	1.12		✓			
Facility Environment						
I am getting the programming I need.	1.28		✓			
The programming I am getting will help me when I get out.	1.58			✓		
I like the program staff.	1.69			✓		
Security staff treats me with respect.	1.03		✓			
ID offenders generally have things to do to keep busy.	1.40		✓			
Confinees generally have things to do to keep busy.	.93		✓			

## FACILITY OPERATIONS

Staff and Offender Survey Questions					Negative		Moderate		Positive	
Service Quality — Institutional	Security/ Program Staff	Support Service Staff	Confinees	All Staff	0	1	2	3	4	
Reception and orientation	3.15	3.44	1.40	3.23				✓		
Classification	3.32	3.10	1.54	3.26				✓		
Food Services	3.21	3.09	.42	3.18				✓		
Sanitation	2.36	2.73	.60	2.46			✓			
Health Care	2.31	2.45	.87	2.35			✓			
Laundry	2.93	3.27	.82	3.03				✓		
Maintenance	2.97	3.00	1.55	2.98				✓		
Human Resources	2.83	2.09	N/A	2.63				✓		
Risk Management	3.39	3.36	1.12	3.38				✓		
Operational Reviews	3.12	2.64	.98	2.97				✓		
Offender Disciplinary	2.79	3.09	1.13	2.87				✓		
Offender Grievance	3.12	2.91	.68	3.05				✓		
In-Service Training (provided at unit)	2.97	2.36	N/A	2.80				✓		
Commissary	2.44	2.00	.72	2.32			✓			

## FACILITY HEALTH

Staff Survey Questions					Negative		Moderate		Positive
					0	1	2	3	4
Commitment to the Institution	Security Staff	Support Service Staff	Program Staff	All Staff					
Based on my experience or what I've heard, this is the best facility in TDCJ.	1.67	1.55	2.13	1.73			✓		
I would rather be at this facility than any other I know about.	2.29	2.64	3.25	2.58				✓	
I would continue to work at this facility.	2.71	2.91	3.63	2.95				✓	
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>									
I am very satisfied with my job.	2.95	3.09	3.75	3.15				✓	
My job is usually interesting to me.	3.24	2.82	3.75	3.23				✓	
My job suits me very well.	3.33	3.00	3.75	3.33				✓	
My job is usually worthwhile.	3.14	3.27	3.63	3.28				✓	
<b>Job Stress</b>									
I have become harsh toward people since taking this job.	2.71	2.82	3.88	2.98				✓	
This job is hardening me emotionally.	2.67	2.55	3.88	2.88				✓	
I'm emotionally drained at the end of the day.	2.14	2.10	3.29	2.34			✓		
I worry that I treat some offenders as impersonal objects.	3.38	3.00	3.00	3.20				✓	
Working with people all day is a strain for me.	3.19	3.00	3.63	3.23				✓	
I'm fatigued when I wake up and have to face another day on the job.	2.67	2.36	3.13	2.68				✓	
<b>Management</b>									
The Mission and Philosophy are clear.	2.14	2.45	3.25	2.45			✓		
I agree with the treatment of offenders here.	2.38	2.18	2.63	2.38			✓		
Treatment of employees is consistent.	2.14	1.82	2.75	2.18			✓		
Formal communication channels help me to perform my job effectively.	2.86	2.64	3.13	2.85				✓	
We have a good communication channel when we have problems.	2.10	2.09	3.00	2.28			✓		
I have the authority I need to accomplish my work objectives.	2.95	3.00	3.25	3.03				✓	
Employees are consulted about changes.	2.52	2.27	3.13	2.58			✓		
I have a good understanding of the policies and procedures of this facility.	3.33	3.45	3.13	3.33				✓	
Management is flexible to allow for changes.	2.71	2.91	3.50	2.93				✓	
I would recommend this facility to a friend looking for a job.	2.71	2.18	3.00	2.63				✓	
I am paid fairly for the work I do.	1.14	1.18	2.25	1.38		✓			
In general, this institution is run very well.	2.48	2.55	2.88	2.58				✓	

<b>PROGRAMMING</b>					Negative	Moderate	Positive		
<b>Staff Rating Confinee Program Access</b>	<b>Security Staff</b>	<b>Support Services</b>	<b>Program Staff</b>	<b>All Staff</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Education	3.29	3.27	3.75	3.38				✓	
Vocational	2.75	2.78	3.38	2.89				✓	
Life Skills	3.15	3.36	3.63	3.31				✓	
Substance Abuse Treatment	3.55	3.45	3.86	3.58					✓
Chaplaincy Programs	3.33	3.55	4.00	3.50				✓	
Community Work Projects	1.43	2.33	3.25	1.88			✓		
Project RIO	2.27	3.38	3.75	2.81				✓	
Library	2.76	3.09	3.71	3.03				✓	
Recreation	2.86	3.18	3.88	3.15				✓	
<b>Program Quality</b>									
Education	2.71	2.56	3.25	2.79				✓	
Vocational	2.40	2.75	3.25	2.67				✓	
Life Skills	2.95	2.44	3.29	2.89				✓	
Substance Abuse Treatment	3.20	3.22	3.33	3.23				✓	
Chaplaincy Programs	3.33	3.67	3.40	3.43				✓	
Community Work Projects	2.24	3.38	3.67	2.66				✓	
Project RIO	2.50	3.14	3.40	2.88				✓	
Library	3.14	3.00	3.00	3.08				✓	
Recreation	2.67	3.30	3.17	2.92				✓	
<b>Confinee Rating Confinee Program Participation</b>				<b>Confinees</b>					
Education				1.54			✓		
Vocational				.77		✓			
Life Skills				1.21		✓			
Substance Abuse Treatment				1.45		✓			
Chaplaincy Programs				1.57			✓		
Community Work Projects				.44	✓				
Project RIO				.45	✓				
Library				1.60			✓		
Recreation				1.41		✓			
<b>Program Quality</b>									
Education				1.46		✓			
Vocational				1.19		✓			
Life Skills				1.52			✓		
Substance Abuse Treatment				1.74			✓		
Chaplaincy Programs				2.37			✓		
Community Work Projects				1.29		✓			
Project RIO				1.28		✓			
Library				1.60			✓		
Recreation				.77		✓			



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