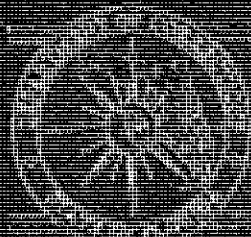


Office of the Inspector General  
Bureau of Internal Audit

**Follow-up of OPPAGA Report #09-38  
Faith- and Character-Based Prison Initiative  
Yields Institutional Benefits; Effect on  
Recidivism Modest**

**Report #A10025F  
May 21, 2010**



State of Florida  
Department of Corrections

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**TO:** Walter A. McNeil  
Secretary

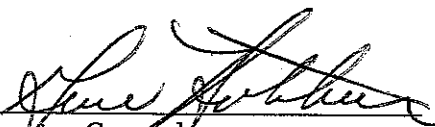
**FROM:** Gene Hatcher  
Inspector General

**DATE:** May 21, 2010

**SUBJECT:** FOLLOW-UP AUDIT REPORT # A10025F – OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS & GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY (OPPAGA) FAITH- AND CHARACTER-BASED PRISON INITIATIVE YIELDS INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS; EFFECT ON RECIDIVISM MODEST, REPORT NUMBER 09-38

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The Bureau of Internal Audit performed a follow-up audit to OPPAGA's Faith- and Character-Based Prison Initiative Yields Institutional Benefits; Effect on Recidivism Modest, Report # 09-38, issued in October 2009. The objective of this follow-up was to determine the corrective actions taken on reported audit findings and whether actions taken achieved the desired results as intended by management. The scope of our follow-up consisted of obtaining from the Office of Re-Entry a written response of actions taken to correct reported findings. The follow-up response was then evaluated to determine if management's actions were adequate and timely. We have evaluated the response to each finding and have assessed that appropriate action has been taken or is being taken to address the issues identified in the report. No further follow-up is necessary for this audit.

  
Inspector General

GH/PS/jc  
Attachment

Richard D. Davison, Deputy Secretary  
Bonnie Rogers, Chief of Staff  
George Sapp, Deputy Secretary of Institutions & Re-Entry  
Franchatta Barber, Assistant Secretary of Re-Entry  
Kathy DuBose, Director of Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Follow-up of OPPAGA Report #09-38

**Faith- and Character-Based Prison Initiative Yields  
Institutional Benefits; Effect on Recidivism Modest**

Tom Hunter, Inspector General

Report #09-38

Tom K. Strickland, Chief Financial Officer

March 2011

**BACKGROUND**

Faith- and character-based programs are prison rehabilitative programs intended to change inmates' internal motivations and thereby alter their behavior. Florida is one of 19 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons that offer faith-based prison programs.

In October 2009, the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) published a report, Faith- and Character-Based Prison Initiative Yields Institutional Benefits; Effect on Recidivism Modest, Report # 09-38.

**OBJECTIVES**

Our follow-up objectives were to determine:

- what corrective actions were taken on reported audit findings, *and*
- whether actions taken achieved the desired results as intended by management.

**SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

A request was made to the Office of Re-Entry for a written response on the status of corrective actions taken.

**RESULTS OF FOLLOW-UP**

**Finding:** The initiative operates prison-wide in four correctional institutions and in specified dorms in seven institutions. The prison-wide programs have a demonstrated positive effect on inmate institutional adjustment and institutional security, and a modest but positive effect on reducing the likelihood that inmates will reoffend. The dorm-based programs also have a positive effect on institutional adjustment and security; however, they do not have a demonstrated effect on inmate recidivism.

**Recommendation:** To improve the initiative's effectiveness in reducing recidivism, the department should monitor emerging research on other faith- and character-based correctional initiatives and adopt best practices and evidence-based models as they become established and can provide demonstrated results.

**Management's Original Response:** *We concur and will comply. To monitor emerging research and demonstrated results for faith- and character-based correctional initiatives, the department will task Chaplaincy Services and the Bureau of Research and Data Analysis with the responsibility to continually conduct an applicable literature review. When they determine a specific practice that fits the department's model, has promising results, and can be applied at no cost to taxpayers, they will present it to the Office of Re-Entry for their implementation consideration.*

**Management's Follow-Up Response:** *The Department is keeping an annotated bibliography of academic studies and articles that reflect recent research and best practices in faith- and-character-based programming.*

**Finding:** **The department has encountered several challenges managing the dorm-based programs, including limitations in providing inmates with religious diversity and underutilization of some prison dorms.**

**Recommendation:** To ensure the constitutionality of the faith- and character-based initiative and full utilization of all dorm-based program beds, we recommend that the Department of Corrections require volunteer coordinators and chaplains to regularly report to central office chaplaincy their strategies for ensuring that dorm program composition meets the religious needs of all dorm-based program participants.

**Management's Original Response:** *The constitutionality of the faith and character-based initiatives are of critical concern to the Department. It is due to the procedural prudence and balanced approach of the department that these programs have successfully operated in full public purview but without First Amendment litigation. That said, this recommendation is duly noted and will result in appropriate adjustments. Such adjustments can be illustrated by the actions already taken at and planned at Union CI, to include:*

- 1. Monthly meeting between Chaplain and the volunteer coordinator. They have been having these informal meetings for some time. Future meetings will address operational issues, curriculum, volunteer recruitment, and inmate participation;*
- 2. Secondly, the Chaplain will be required to submit a monthly report to the Central Office Chaplaincy Services Administrator. This report will include inmate attendance, curriculum with annotation, volunteer recruitment (efforts and goals) and operational issues; and*
- 3. Finally, the Chaplain will initiate a more formal continuing education for the current volunteers. The constitutionality of the program depends in part on a well-trained volunteer team. These intentional training sessions will explain procedures, review precautions, and respond to current issues.*

*The Chaplain has been making a sincere effort to recruit additional volunteers to the Faith- and Character-Based dorm program at Union Correctional Institution. He has scheduled two additional programs from sources other than the 'one church' mentioned above. He is in the process of adding two volunteers who are fluent in Spanish. He is continuing this effort with the express intent of creating a more diverse program.*

**Management's Follow-Up Response:** This recommendation is duly noted and has resulted in appropriate adjustments. Using Union Correction Institution as an example, actions taken there that accord with this recommendation include the following:

1. The Chaplain at Union, William Hedrick, regularly communicates with the volunteer coordinator.

#### **Meetings**

The faith- and-character-based dorm chaplain and the volunteer coordinator are meeting on a monthly basis and are communicating frequently by telephone and email.

#### **Curriculum**

Suggestions for changes in curriculum have been discussed that encourage different religious groups to be active in the program.

#### **Volunteer Recruitment and Training**

Three training sessions were held in February and March. A total of 39 volunteers were trained with many of those trained specifically for the faith- and character-based Dorm. These volunteers came from a variety of faith groups, including Greek Orthodox, Messianic Jew, Episcopal and Baptist churches. The Orthodox, Messianic and Episcopal volunteers are now active in the faith-and character-based dorm program.

Inmate participation has improved and two new life skills classes have been added. More will be added as space becomes available.

2. The chaplain now submits a monthly report to the Central Office Chaplaincy Services Administrator. This report includes inmate attendance, curriculum with annotation, volunteer recruitment (efforts and goals) and operational issues.

#### **Attendance**

The average attendance varies from 75 to 83 at each class or session in the faith- and character-based dorm. This variance is primarily due to work schedules. All faith- and character-based dorm inmates are assigned jobs, which sometimes conflict with programming. Monitoring the daily problems arising from participants not allowed to attend due to work schedule is ongoing, but corrected as they occur.

Inmates know that religious programming is voluntary. Those inmates who do not want to participate in a religious program are able to do self-guided study pertaining either to the inmate's own faith or to a life skill or character trait study.

#### **Volunteer Recruitment and Training**

Chaplain Hedrick has recruited volunteers from an orthodox jewish group in Jacksonville and will add them to the calendar in the near future. Chaplain Hedrick is in regular contact with the inmate faith- and-character-based participants using the open forum approach. This allows a free flow of issues and innovative ideas.

3. The chaplain is establishing a larger continuing education for the current volunteers. These additional training sessions will explain procedures, review precautions, and respond to current issues.

*In February and March, retraining was conducted with a number of volunteers. Covered topics included matters dealing with security and institutional concerns and religious freedom for faith- and-character-based dorm inmates.*

**Recommendation:** To achieve higher utilization of the faith- and character-based dorms, we recommend that the Legislature amend s. 944.803(3), Florida Statutes, to authorize the department to serve more than 20% of inmates with more than 36 months left on their sentence in faith- and character-based dorms. Alternately, the Legislature could clarify that the department could meet the statutory requirement by adjusting the population at other dorm-based program locations so that overall the program has at least 80% of inmates within 36 months of release.

**Management's Original Response:** *Concerning the first option offered in Recommendation 3, given that our faith- and character-based programs are a key part of the department-wide Re-Entry Initiative, we would ask that the Legislature not amend the referenced statute. A key part of the Re-Entry Initiative is the evidence-based, best practice of maximizing program resources to provide needed programs for those inmates that are within 36 months of release. To be authorized to serve more than 20% of inmates with more than 36 months left on their sentence in faith- and character-based dorms would go against our Re-Entry efforts to comply with best-practice and the overall aim of having Re-Entry services succeed by providing timely, excellent programs that help inmates succeed.*

*Concerning the second option offered in this recommendation, given the latest data available, the Legislature may not need to clarify departmental requirements in this regard. Since 6/3/2008, the Bureau of Research and Data Analysis has prepared a biweekly report for Classification that breaks down these percentages by dorm and statewide. Data from the latest report (as of 10/2/2009) show that statewide 89.9% of all inmates housed in dorm programs had less than 36 months left before release. Plus, six of the seven dorm programs were well over the 80% threshold, with the remaining dorm program at 79.5% (virtual compliance). So whether one applies the 80% standard to each dorm or statewide, the department's monitoring efforts have paid off and show that a minor adjustment is needed at only one facility to bring us into compliance for each individual dorm and that statewide we far exceed the current legislative requirement.*

**Management's Follow-Up Response:** *House Bill 811, sponsored by Representative Rouson, and identical Senate Bill 2260, sponsored by Senator Crist, were introduced during the 2010 legislative session to address faith and character-based programs in correctional institutions. These bills would remove the statutory provision in section 944.803, Florida Statutes, requiring that at least 80% of the inmates participating in the Department's faith-based programs be within 36 months of release. At the conclusion of the 2010 legislative session, the House bill died in the House Criminal and Civil Justice Policy Council and the Senate bill died in the Senate Policy and Steering Committee on Ways and Means.*

**Recommendation:** We also recommend that the department modify its eligibility criteria for the dorm-based program at Lancaster Correctional Institution to admit the full youthful offender age range of 18 to 24 years.

**Management's Original Response:** Since this recommendation could effect federal requirement for and dollars from the National Child Nutrition Program (NCNP), as well as local facility options in terms of inmate management, the department will need to further review how it could comply with this recommendation. Leadership within the Office of Re-Entry, Chaplaincy Services, and the executive leadership team at Lancaster CI will need to be consulted to determine the best option.

One promising option would be to change the age-range for this dorm program from 21-24 to 18-20. This would keep Lancaster CI compliant with the NCNP eligibility criteria that require a distinct or separate area for the care of 'children' (in an institution, a child is defined as a person less than 21 years of age). Also, with only 37 beds in this dorm, this change in age-range could go a long way to ensure full utilization of the dorm (since under-utilization has been a problem given the existing age-range of 21-24). This would in turn eliminate the need to place non-participants in this faith-based dorm to ensure full utilization.

**Management's Follow-Up Response:** This recommendation is still under review and consideration. Security, operations and classifications concerns exist that need to be resolved before the faith- and-character-based program can be expanded to accommodate younger inmates.