CORRECTIONAL OFFICER RETENTION

Analysis Completed for Alabama Training Institute’s Certified Public Manager ® (CPM) Training Program
Solutions Alabama

August 2013
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INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) is the largest law enforcement agency in the state and has 29 correctional facilities. ADOC employs more than 3,100 Correctional Officers and 1,000 non-uniformed support personnel. Five of the facilities are considered maximum security and 11 are considered medium security. There are a total of 13 minimum camps, work release and community work centers.

ADOC is taking steps to increase the effectiveness of its recruiting and hiring process, thus acquiring the most desirable candidates while supplying ample job opportunities. ADOC’s comprehensive recruiting and training process seeks individuals who possess a strong moral character, professionalism, honesty and integrity. These individuals will most certainly succeed and have numerous opportunities for growth and advancement to supervisory or administrative positions.

ADOC offers employees an abundance of career opportunities and advancements in corrections. In the years to come, ADOC will continue to grow in size, and in complexity of services while offering many long-term opportunities to its employees.

Mission Statement
The mission of the Alabama Department of Corrections is to confine, manage, and provide rehabilitative programs for convicted felons in a safe, secure, and humane environment, utilizing professionals who are committed to public safety and to the positive re-entry into society.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADOC asked an Alabama Certified Public Manager’s Program Consulting Team (CPM Team) to examine ways to reduce high turnover rates among the first three (3) years of appointment into the Correctional Officer classification. The high attrition rates are making it impossible to sustain the number of officers required to man critical posts on a 24/7 schedule. ADOC currently loses over 60% of its employees within the first three (3) years of appointment into the Correctional Officer classification.

ADOC employs the following classifications:

Correctional Officer Trainee
Annual Salary: $28,516 - $43,339
Required Qualifications:
- Standard High School Graduate or GED Certificate
- Valid Driver's License
- 19 Years of Age
- No Felony Convictions
- No Domestic Violence Convictions
- Drug Free
- Good Health and Physically Fit
- U.S. Citizen
- Pass Written Examination
- Pass Background Check
- Pass Physical Ability Test
- Military Discharge under Honorable Conditions

**Correctional Officer**  
Annual Salary: $29,954 - $45,501  
**Required Qualifications**  
- Permanent Status as a Correctional Officer Trainee

**Correctional Sergeant**  
Annual Salary: $31,488 - $47,757  
**Required Qualifications**  
- One year of experience after obtaining permanent status as a Correctional Officer

**Correctional Lieutenant**  
Annual Salary: $35,589 - $53,995  
**Required Qualifications**  
- A total of three years of experience at the level of Correctional Officer or higher  
- To include one year's experience and permanent status as a Correctional Sergeant or Classification Specialist  
  (Individuals in the Classification Specialist class must have at least one year of experience as a Correctional Officer or higher)

**Correctional Captain**  
Annual Salary: $39,290 - $59,517  
**Required Qualifications**  
- A total of three years’ experience at the level of Correctional Officer or higher  
- To include one year's experience and permanent status as a Correctional Lieutenant or Classification Specialist Supervisor  
  (Individuals in the Classification Supervisor class must have at least one year of experience as a Correctional Sergeant or higher)

The need for a Correctional Officer Trainee classification was analyzed in December 2006 and was subsequently implemented in 2007. Prior to this implementation, all recruits were considered Correctional Officers. Since 2006, the student load for the Alabama Corrections Academy has averaged more than 700 per year; routinely includes training for new recruits, lateral transfers, county Correctional Officers, K-9 handlers, members of the Corrections Emergency Response Team, warden's training and others. Since 2002, more than 6,246 students have received some form of training at the Alabama Corrections Academy. The academy staff is headed by a Director and 18 full time employees.

The following title changes were adjusted during this analysis:  
- Supervisor 1 - Changed to Lieutenant  
- Supervisor 2 - Changed to Captain

After collecting relevant background information, the CPM Team decided to examine several options available to ADOC. These include but are not limited to: implementing a mentoring
and/or leadership program, following the Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission’s (APOSTC) Administrative Code for the six month provisional appointment, implementing an employee satisfaction survey, examining current work environments and the lack of funding for ADOC. The goals of examining these items were to identify current policies and procedures that can be changed and to identify possible new policies and procedures that can be implemented to lower attrition rates.

Key Findings
- There is a recruitment deficiency for the State of Alabama.
- Currently, there is not an employee satisfaction survey or an employee exit survey.
- Entry level salaries for ADOC officers are far below the national average.
- Current institution overcrowding has a direct negative affect on officer morale.
- There is not a mentoring program for officers.
- ADOC does not utilize training programs and classes enough to encourage a positive working environment.
- Disciplinary Procedures and Actions should be reviewed for effectiveness.

ADOC TRAINING ACADEMY BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Prior to 1973, there were no professional development standards for correctional security personnel. In October 1973, the Alabama Legislature passed a bill placing Correctional Officers under the jurisdiction of the Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission (APOSTC), the state’s certifying commission for law enforcement offices

Immediately thereafter, Correctional Officers began receiving 240 hours of police officer training at Regional Police Academies throughout the state. After APOSTC determined that only one-third of the police training was applicable to Correctional Officers, an additional 80 hours of training was designed and implemented by APOSTC for Correctional Officers.

In 1976, Correctional Officers began receiving a total of 320 hours, but upon further review and a needs assessment, a new basic training curriculum was designed to address the specific corrections training needs. The proposed curriculum was reviewed and approved by the National Institute of Corrections, the American Correctional Association and the APOSTC, and it was implemented in January 1978.

Training for Correction Officers was consolidated from regional police academies in November 1980, and located at the Alabama Criminal Justice Training Center (ACJTC) in Selma. About four years later, the Alabama Corrections Academy received certification as a Law Enforcement Training School by the APOSTC and it became a separate entity with separate administrative and academic facilities, operating under the sole direction of the ADOC following APOSTC requirements, with a curriculum of 280 hours.

Today, the standard is 480 hours (12 weeks) of academy training for new recruits. In addition, all security personnel receive 32 hours of continued professional development training annually. The number of ADOC recruits continues to grow, with more than triple the graduating class of 2006.
ALABAMA CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING CENTER

The current ACJTC debuted on September 23, 2010. The new training center is a six building complex, complete with two academic buildings — one for each department. The ADOC academic building is 12,072 square feet with three classrooms, interactive SMART boards, administrative offices and a firearms vault. Each department has its own dormitory at 33,803 square feet housing 75 sleeping units. The ACJTC also has shared dining hall seats 200 and a fully-equipped 5,000 sq. ft. fitness center.

The ACJTC is the largest law enforcement training facility in the state of Alabama. A partnership with the APOSTC, ADOC, and the Alabama Department of Public Safety provides superior law enforcement training to develop and support the finest officers.

The ACJTC is located on the campus of Wallace Community College in Selma. It replaced the 1950's era training center at Craig Field, also in Selma. The old facilities were in constant need of repair, costly to maintain and considered deplorable by many, including members of the Alabama Legislature who toured Craig Field prior to approval for this project.

RECRUITING, HIRING, AND TRAINING

Recruiting
To apply for a Correctional Officer Trainee (COT) position, an applicant must complete a State of Alabama Application for examination. The application can be mailed to the State Personnel Department or submitted at an onsite testing location. ADOC currently has one recruiter for the State of Alabama. Their assignment encompasses the whole state and sometimes adjoining states such as Georgia and Florida.

A reservation is not necessary to attend onsite testing. A list of the onsite testing and locations can be found at http://www.doc.state.al.us/Employment.aspx.

To participate in the testing procedures, applicants must arrive by 7:00 AM. Applicants should dress appropriately for a physical ability test (athletic shoes and knee length pants may be worn). The applicant should bring water and a lunch, as the exam process may last most of the day.

Hiring
In order to be hired as a Correctional Officer Trainee with the ADOC, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- High School Diploma or GED Certificate
- Valid Alabama Driver's License
- 19 Years of Age
- No Felony Convictions
- No Domestic Violence Convictions
- U.S. Citizenship
- Honorable Discharge from U.S. Armed Forces
- Good Health and Physically Fit
- Drug Free
• Pass Written Examination
• Pass Background Check
• Pass Physical Ability Test
  • Push Ups - 22 In One Minute
  • Sit Ups - 25 In One Minute
  • 1.5 Mile Run - 15 Minutes and 28 Seconds
  • Trigger Pulls - 30 Seconds 18 Times with Strong Hand and 12 with Weak Hand

Once the applicant takes the written examination, the State Personnel Department grades the applicants on the basis of their written examination scores. The names of applicants who pass the written exam are placed on an employment register under “Band One”. Applicants who pass the physical ability are subsequently fingerprinted and given a pre-employment medical examination, drug screen and Correctional Officer Trainee (COT) pre-employment packet with paperwork that applicants complete prior to the written examination. The packet along with copies of a high school diploma, driver’s license and social security card are reviewed with a representative of the Correctional Officer Unit on the day of the onsite testing. Once successfully completing the written examination, the physical ability, medical exam and drug screen, a COT is eligible for appointment to the ADOC. Once appointed and approved to attend the Academy by APOSTC requirements, the COT must once again pass all previous medical and physical elements, along with passing the 90-second physical agility test, which consists of the following:

• Push a Vehicle 15 Feet
• Climb Up/Over Chain Link Fence or Wood Wall
• Crawl Through Window
• Traverse Balance Beam
• Drag Dummy (165 lbs. for 15 Feet)
• Run Distance Between Obstacles

Training
The COT is appointed to a facility and works there until the Academy begins. The COT is required to complete a 480-hour training program at the ADOC Training Academy located in Selma, Alabama. They reside at the Academy while in training Sunday through Thursday of each week. Successful completion of the Academy results in APOSTC Certification and permanent status as a COT. They are eligible for promotion for a Correctional Officer.

ADOC incurs a cost of $12,489.70 in order to send each COT through the Academy, which does not include the salary they receive throughout their attendance. About 20% of the COTs in each Academy class drop out before graduation, with the majority of these being females. Approximately 10% of trainees withdraw before graduation due to failing an APOSTC physical requirement such as physical training, firearms and academics. The other 10% are those who withdraw for various personal reasons.

Currently, there is not a limit on the attempts to complete training and graduate from the Academy. Because of the cost incurred to send each COT through the Academy, it is recommended that trainees only be allowed a maximum of three attempts to complete
training. After the third failed attempt, the COT will be ineligible to apply for employment with ADOC for the next two years.

**FUNDING IMPACT ON CORRECTIONAL OFFICER RETENTION**

Funding for ADOC was first evaluated by comparing ADOC’s funding to the funding levels of six other peer states that were closest to Alabama’s population. The average spending among the seven states is $128.24 per citizen each fiscal year. Within the selected peer group shown below, Alabama funding for ADOC is more than 29% below the average of its peers at $99.13 per citizen each fiscal year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Est. 2012 Total DOC (General Fund)</th>
<th>Number of State Inmates</th>
<th>Funding Per Correctional Facility (General Fund)</th>
<th>Funding Per Citizen</th>
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<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>3,814,820</td>
<td>$398,000,000</td>
<td>24024</td>
<td>$16,566.77</td>
<td>$104.33</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>$533,000,000</td>
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<td>$121.68</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
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<td>$159.28</td>
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<td>$15,392.05</td>
<td>$99.13</td>
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<td>Colorado</td>
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<td>$21,361.64</td>
<td>$128.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>$189.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Funding was also evaluated by comparing ADOC’s funding and expenditures to all other states.

- Alabama is ranked 49th on funding per inmate at $19,953. (Chart A)
- Alabama is ranked 45th on funding for the 10th percentile salary range for new Correctional Officers and Jailers. (Chart B)
- Despite low initial wages for Correctional Officers, the Alabama mean wages for Correctional Officers is ranked 30th highest in the nation. (Chart C)
- Alabama ranks 25th in the nation for its spending percentage of its General Fund budget (6.76%), and 31st in the nation for all spending, including capital and Federal Funds, for State correctional facilities (8.62%).
Additional funding per inmate could be achieved by decreasing the inmate population, identifying new funding for the department, and/or by improving operational efficiencies.
Chart B - Correctional Officer and Jailers 10th Percentile Annual Wages

Chart C – Annual Mean Wages for Correctional Officers and Jailers
As seen in Chart B, salaries for the 10th percentile of Alabama Correctional Officers are well below most of the other states, while the median wage (Chart C) for Alabama Correctional Officers is much closer to the norm.

Funding for an increase of the entry level Correctional Officer pay scale could provide an incentive for Correctional Officer recruitment and an incentive for new and existing officers to stay on the job for longer durations. ADOC should consider implementing a job classification and compensation study in an effort to raise initial pay scales for new Correctional Officers, while retaining median and upper pay levels at current levels.

In an effort to identify funding for lower level pay scale adjustments, and in today’s restrictive fiscal environment, state governments are looking for innovative ways to reduce costs while improving working conditions for their employees. In addition to seeking additional funding, ADOC should focus on reducing expenses. This would allow funds to be used on improving entry level salaries, and on improving work conditions within the Alabama correctional facility system.

State corrections departments throughout the country are seeking to save money in various ways. Most of the activity is occurring in three areas:

- Increasing Operational Efficiencies
  - Facility Consolidation
  - Reduce or eliminate inefficient programs
- Implementing Recidivism Reduction Strategies
  - Strengthen Community Corrections Systems
  - Invest in Society Re-entry Programs
  - Bolster community supervision programs
  - Promote evidence-based community programs
- Reviewing and Refining Correctional Inmate Release Policies
  - Review sentencing guidelines

To address the unavailability of additional funds, the State of Alabama has reduced its funding for ADOC by:

- Eliminating Pay Increases
- Reducing Employee Benefits
- Decreasing Overtime
- Implementing Staff Reductions or Hiring Freeze (Non- Essential Personnel)

Other states have reduced expenses by:

- Decreasing health services
- Reducing food services
- Eliminating programs
- Renegotiating contracts for programming
- Closing facilities
- Reducing Beds
- Delaying expansion or construction of new facilities
OVERCROWDING

Overcrowding has been an issue for some years now within ADOC. The CPM team concluded that this can be a factor impacting Correctional Officer turnover. With overcrowding, safety becomes an issue not only for the Correctional Officer, but for the inmates as well. According to the statistics outlined on the ADOC website, the inmate to Correctional Officer ratio is 11 inmates to one officer. However, the present ratio exceeds 200 inmates to one officer in areas such as the dormitories and on the yard. Safety becomes a critical issue when physical or verbal aggression surfaces between inmates and between inmates and Correctional Officers. Someone can become seriously injured before help reaches the dormitory, yard or any other designated area within the facility.

As a result of the high inmate to Correctional Officer ratio, employees’ stress levels are reasonably expected to be elevated. Correctional Officers may come to the conclusion that the job classification is not a risk that he/she is willing to tolerate due to overcrowding and increased stress levels.

Elevated stress levels can cause health issues, job absenteeism or the desire to seek out other employment opportunities. Also, stress levels can be elevated if an individual is not receiving the assistance that he/she feels is needed at his/her job, such as leadership not taking the initiative to assist when manpower is minimal. Simply receiving help from the sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and even possibly the wardens will decrease the stress placed on Correctional Officers.

Morale, not only among inmates and staff, but also between upper level management and the Correctional Officers has to be an issue, due to overcrowding and the demands of the job. Therefore, leadership should become more involved with providing training to the Correctional Officers on a monthly or bi-monthly basis in the areas of conflict resolution, stress management and effective communication. Due to closer interactions, upper level management would assist with the low level of morale, as well as build a greater rapport amongst the Correctional Officers and leadership. Currently, ADOC’s In-House designed capacity is 13,403. As of March 2013, the ADOC In-House Population was 25,269, almost twice that of the In-House Designed capacity. Even if the inmate to staff ratio of 11:1 is not met, there should be individuals in place to assist with making sure that all of the correctional facility population (inmates, upper level management, wardens, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, correctional staff, medical staff, etc.) feels protected because people within the correctional facility population are working together.

Safety, a minimal level of stress and morale are important factors in assisting with managing the large number of individuals incarcerated with ADOC. Upper level management should evaluate and implement changes necessary to address safety, stress and morale. Therefore, positive interaction and feedback from the Correctional Officers is essential in managing the key finding of overcrowding. Currently, ADOC houses approximately 16,381 non-violent offenders (excluding sex offenders). The cost to retain each inmate is $43.26 per day or over $258,654,351.90 annually. With proper education, rehabilitation and supervision, these non-violent offenders could become productive, self-sufficient individuals. This would significantly reduce overcrowding within ADOC correctional facilities. Reducing overcrowding with ADOC will help alleviate stress on Correctional Officers. With less stress
and fewer inmates to supervise this should contribute to an increase in Correctional Officer retention.

ADOC should continue the practice of evaluating inmates who could be released back into society. Parolees could be housed in a halfway house or recovery home with supervision 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Parolees should be required to work to pay for their living expenses and should be subject to random drug testing.

**Parolee Employment/Housing**

The CPM team’s recommendation for employment for parolees would be to establish a residential community recycling center for parolees to run and operate in communities that currently do not offer recycling. This would not only provide job opportunities for parolees but also provide an essential service to the community. Collaborating with recycling center for residential bins and for material pickup would be essential in getting the project started. Parolees should be required to take classes for job training and to further their education so they can work towards becoming self-sufficient. Partnering with the Alabama Economic Development and Community Affairs to train and create jobs for parolees is another suggestion. The Alabama Career Centers provide employment assistance, adult education and job training, and other services for parolees.

Alabama Community Partnership for Recovery and Reentry (CPR Network) provides a network of support for individuals transitioning from our correctional facilities to their families and communities. Partnerships and collaborations among state and local governmental agencies, faith and community-based organizations, local groups and individuals, provide resources to these individuals and families, helping them meet the particular challenges they face in their reentry. Collectively, these efforts can be effective in breaking the cycle of re-offending and help these individuals become law-abiding and productive citizens, responsible parents, and contributing members of their communities.

Housing for parolees could be provided through community based facilities, such as halfway houses, recovery houses, Life Tech facilities, or residential reentry centers. Some of the transitional facilities located in Alabama include Labor of Love Home, Rainbow of Hope Inc., Whitson House, The Way, Mom’s Inc., and Transform Central Project Rescue in Hartselle, AL.

Requiring parolees to live in a structured environment with supervision such as a community halfway house is believed to reduce recidivism by minimizing areas of struggle for individuals recently released from prison due to the lack of resources (a good support system, a job, money, transportation, etc.) available upon release.

Before beginning a new job, training is essential. Therefore, providing job training is a must as well as encouraging parolees to attend classes to further their education. The program cannot be too lenient on parolees. Therefore, requiring parolees to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting for those who were charged with drug related offenses and drug testing periodically should be a major factor in determining if these individuals should remain in the early release program. The early release program’s key decision makers should encourage parolees to become a mentor by sharing their story in an effort to educate others about prison life and not to follow the path they took.
Alternative Sentencing Options
Many states look to Pre-Trial Diversion Programs as an alternative to traditional sentencing whereby first-time, non-violent offenders can avoid a felony conviction by participating in counseling, community service, education and the payment of restitution while remaining drug free. Montgomery County District Attorney Ellen Brooks has led a model Pre-Trial Diversion Program that has achieved significant results.

According to the 2011 Pew Center on the States State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America’s Prisons report, of the 10,880 Alabama inmates released between the years 2004 and 2007, there was a 35.1% rate of recidivism – or the act of reoffending. The Montgomery County Pre-Trial Diversion Program has held consistently low recidivism rates since its inception in 1976, most recently measured at 4%. The Montgomery County Pre-Trial Diversion Program was founded on the standards upheld by the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies (NAPSA) which include utilizing:

- Comprehensive assessment of the defendant and address specific needs related to reducing future criminal behavior
- Individualized and realistic intervention plans which feature achievable goals structured to minimize the risk of future criminal behavior
- Program conditions that address restoring justice and reducing recidivism by incorporating a variety of approaches including, but not limited to, defendant rehabilitation, community service, victim restoration and restitution
- Culturally competent and gender specific programming for participants

If criminal offenders are not held accountable with supervision and evidence-based counseling there is a high probability that recidivism will occur as we can see from probation and prison populations. Furthermore, the safety of communities is compromised when offenders are not able to benefit from a court mandated counseling program tailored to meet individual needs to assist an offender with dealing with underlying physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual issues in order to modify choices and destructive behavior.

Rehabilitated offenders are not the only positive outcome of the evidence-based counseling received through the Montgomery County Pre-Trial Diversion Program. In 2012, $256,813 was collected in victim restitution. Through the community service component of the program, Montgomery County non-profit organizations received an economic impact of $60,436 worth of staff support and assistance to their agencies at no cost.

ADOC is encouraged to work with the judicial community to explore the expansion of alternative sentencing options, consider reduced or modifying sentencing for certain non-violent offenses and evaluate the existing inmate population to determine eligibility for early release or transition to a lesser restrictive facility, such as Life Tech Institute, halfway houses, and recovery houses. Additionally, ADOC would benefit from enhancing the standards of their Community Corrections Programs and Re-Entry Programs by incorporating required assessment and evidence-based counseling into these existing programs. These are critical steps toward reducing overcrowding and recidivism, which positively impacts the citizens of Alabama, ADOC’s inmate population and the Correctional Officers who serve this state.
DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERS

We recommend that ADOC put more emphasis on developing the leadership skills of the current leaders. This will include anyone with the rank of a sergeant and above. If the leaders are better equipped to handle the daily obstacles or situations they face, ADOC will be affected in a positive way.

There are training programs such as, Certified Public Manager ® (CPM) facilitated by the Alabama Training Institute, that concentrate on understanding leadership, strengthening your leadership, emotional intelligence, performance coaching and organizational culture and ethics. This program is designed for managers in all areas of government. The National Institute of Corrections offers a Blended Correctional Leadership Development series, which helps the skills of leaders in correctional agencies while addressing real agency issues at the same time. ADOC can enroll some of their staff leaders at the facility level in these programs or similar programs. ADOC can also develop a training program that will be catered more specific to the needs of the leaders within the department.

In researching this subject, we discovered that the Oklahoma Department of Corrections offers a Correctional Leadership Development (CLD) program for employees. The program provides a progressive curriculum, beginning at the pre-supervisory level through upper and executive levels. Training is based on principles that provide opportunities for growth in leadership roles; developing knowledge and skills necessary to support the vision, mission, and values of the agency; and developing skills needed to guide and direct staff in a productive and positive manner. This can cultivate and enhance the leadership skills of the leaders of ADOC, which can have a trickle-down effect of positivity throughout the department.

The concept of serving is fundamental to the leadership role. Good leadership involves serving the organization or group and the people within it. In the Forbes Magazine article titled “The #1 Reason Leadership Development Fails”, written by Mike Myatt, discusses the reason why leadership development programs fail. According to the American Society of Training and Development, U.S. businesses spend more than $170 billion dollars on leadership-based curriculum, with the majority of those dollars being spent on leadership training. Ford R. Myers, M.Ed., who is the president of Career Potential, LLC and has been providing professional services in career consulting, executive coaching, assessment and training since 1992. Myers believes, and most would agree, the problem with this is you do not train leaders, you develop leaders. He also believes that the solution to the leadership training problem is to scrap it in favor of development. Do not train leaders; coach them, mentor them, discipline them and develop them, but do not attempt to train them. Where training attempts to standardize by blending to a norm and acclimating to the status quo. Training is something leaders dread and will try to avoid, whereas they will embrace and look forward to development.

The concepts of leadership styles and new ideas are constantly growing and evolving. It is the key that ADOC continues to grow and improve to better serve the state of Alabama. This brings energy and new ideas, which can create a more productive and better work environment for the department.
“The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born – that there is a genetic factor to leadership. That’s nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born.” Warren Bennis

**Mentoring**

Currently, ADOC Correctional Officer trainees are put in the care of seasoned Correctional Officers in each facility for a short period of time before they are allowed to man their own post. The Correctional Officer trainees are placed in facilities anywhere from weeks to months before entering the ACJTC and then about the same length of time after their graduation. It is not guaranteed that they will be placed in the care of the same seasoned officer. With the arrival of so many new officers each year, the need for good mentors is vital. The impact of negative mentoring is potentially damaging to the overall corrections system.

Mentoring is an important responsibility of the agency and is a strong counterpart to proper and continuous training. Mentoring is about coaching and counseling employees on how to deal with frustration, giving constructive criticism, handling disappointment and behaving with humility and compassion towards inmates and coworkers. By providing proper mentoring, the agency receives appropriate development of people who can be part of and carry on the culture.

ADOC should structure a mentoring program for trainees at every facility. Those officers who serve as mentors should be free of serious infractions (performance violations, policy violations) for at least one year or longer, have no unexcused absences within the last six months, and an overall positive outlook and contribution to the ADOC environment. The requirements of exemplary integrity, professionalism and ethical behavior are necessary for a fresh slate as new employees come into the agency.

The North Carolina Department of Corrections has successfully implemented a mentoring program since August 2000. The Correctional Officer Mentoring Program (COMP) is completed in three days and has been shown to retain Correctional Officers. Mentors say the program enables them to learn new skills and also develops a stronger workforce, which ultimately aids every employee. "I think the new officers will have an opportunity to see the dedication and work ethic of their mentors, and that’s bound to have a positive impact." said Wade Hatley, an assistant superintendent at Craggy Correctional Center, who oversees the program there.

**Discipline**

ADOC has experienced an unfortunate rise in the number of disciplinary problems within the facilities. The two biggest issues encountered are attendance and the smuggling of illegal contraband by some officers. To keep discipline from lowering morale, employees need to perceive that discipline is administered equally. Supervisors do not ignore infractions from favored employees but punish more severely the less-favored employees. Evenhanded discipline keeps up employee morale while protecting ADOC from charges of discrimination. Written rules and standard punishments help keep discipline uniform and hold everyone to the same standards.
Discipline in the workplace is the means by which supervisory personnel correct behavioral deficiencies and ensure adherence to established rules. The purpose of discipline is to correct inappropriate behavior. Proper discipline should not be excessive, unnecessary punishment or meant to embarrass an employee. Often, a positive approach may solve the problem without having to discipline. However, if unacceptable behavior is a persistent problem or if the employee is involved in a misconduct that is unacceptable by ADOC, supervisors may use discipline to correct the behavior. This practice is included in the state’s discipline system and training program, Progressive Discipline. Progressive Discipline is a way for the supervisor to make the employee aware of a weakness in a job-related area. This allows an employee the opportunity to change the undesired behavior. The State of Alabama’s discipline process is a management tool used to teach an employee the correct conduct and/or behavior. The objective of this discipline is not punishment but to bring a change in the employee’s behavior through a series of steps starting with counseling and becoming more severe with progressive.

ADOC has adopted Administrative Regulation AR208, Employee Standards of Conduct and Discipline, as their discipline policy. AR208 establishes the responsibilities, policies and procedures concerning ADOC employee behavior and work performance and provides a guide to implement disciplinary action, if necessary. It is the policy of ADOC that employees maintain the highest level of behavior and efficiency. Officers must reflect the top image of public service and uphold with integrity the public confidence entrusted in them. If an employee’s behavior or performance does not comply with these standards, progressive discipline is utilized to correct unsatisfactory work performance and employee misconduct (Corrections, 2005). ADOC has implemented Annex H table, which is a table of infractions and level of discipline, to promote consistency within as well as guide supervisors at all levels when discipline is necessary.

After review of the corrections AR208 and ADOC Annex H table, it is determined that the progressive discipline approach is an effective and positive way to discipline officers. However, when the issue of retaining Correctional Officers is considered, it was determined that the level of discipline on some of the minor infractions listed in the Annex H table should be re-evaluated. One of the minor infractions that require re-evaluation is the call-in procedure. For example, Officer X is late for work (tardiness) or fails to follow the proper call-in procedures. According to AR 208 and Annex H table this infraction requires a three-day suspension on the third offense. (Corrections, 2005) It is not beneficial to the agency to suspend an officer for three days in an establishment that is already understaffed and overcrowded.

Another common concern relayed by several upper management staff has been officers’ displeasure over not being relieved on time. Therefore, it is recommended that staggered work schedules be established. This will allow all post to be covered as well as promote employee morale. An option to consider is that the Panama Plan be implemented. The Panama Plan is a slow rotation plan that uses 4 teams and two 12-hour shifts to provide 24/7 coverage. The working and non-working days follow this pattern: 2 days on, 2 days off, 3 days on, 2 days off, 3 days off. Each team works the same shift (day or night) for 28 days then switches over to the other shift for the next 28 days. After 56 days, the same sequence starts over. The pluses of the system are that employees are off every other weekend and no
night shifts for 28 consecutive days. The system is popular with military and security service organizations. It also has been successfully used in the Nebraska per Robert P. Houston, Director of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services.

ADOC recognizes that the failure of officers to perform their job properly is an issue. Currently, the severity of the action does not have a basis on the resulting consequence. According to the corrections AR208 and Annex H table, major and minor infractions of job performance requires a two-day suspension after the second offense. Instead of suspension, it is proposed that on-site training be offered to refresh officers on proper job performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

**Fitness Preparation** - It is recommended that ADOC as a recruitment tool offer a fitness preparation/conditioning program prior to attending the Academy. This program will prepare candidates to pass the mental and physical challenges of the Academy. These programs have played a significant role in the recruitment of female candidates. Dr. Henry N. Williford, Head of the Physical Education and Exercise Science Department at Auburn University at Montgomery, has worked with numerous public safety organizations to design fitness conditioning programs to prepare candidates.

**Recruitment Strategies** - It is recommended that ADOC hire a total of three recruiters to cover North, Central and South Alabama. Each recruiter will be responsible for recruiting through high schools, colleges and job fairs in their designated areas. The recruiters will share the duties of traveling to adjoining states. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen the marketing message to include updated brochures, videos of what to expect in the training academy, videos and interviews with current Correctional Officers to present a realistic job preview that candidates can watch prior to selection to the training academy. Furthermore, ADOC should ensure its website content and social media pages are regularly updated to attract new recruits. An alternative to hiring additional recruiters is to partner with other state agencies that have limited recruiters and form a Recruitment Team. This team will meet at least once a month to discuss ways to recruit in their agencies, as well as travel to job fairs, high schools and colleges to promote employment opportunities for the State of Alabama.

**Female Retention** - It is recommended that ADOC reevaluate their requirements for females due to the high dropout rate of women in the Academy. Unfortunately, APOSTC will not change the requirements for females due to equal rights, but should consider reviewing the requirements in order to retain females in the Academy.

**Retired Employees** - It is recommended that ADOC consider hiring part-time employees who have retired from the agency. They will not have to complete all of the requirements for a Correctional Officer or are already APOSTC certified. This would reduce salary costs, as well as the cost to go through the Academy.

**Training** - It is recommended that Correctional Officers be required to attend on-going training and development throughout their career. Areas to be address are communication, anger management, sexual harassment training, mental health, crisis intervention, depression and maintaining a healthy and positive attitude. A target and development program should be implemented to reduce stress level, increase job performance and reduce burnout. Because of the cost incurred to send each COT through the Academy, it is recommended that trainees only be allowed a maximum of three attempts to complete training. After the third failed
attempt, the COT will be ineligible to apply for employment with ADOC for the next two years.

**Internships** - It is recommended that ADOC continue its partnership with state colleges and universities in offering college internships. This can give students the opportunity to experience the inner workings of correctional facilities and to determine if being a Correctional Officer is the right career path. An intern may be assigned to a wide variety of positions, keeping in mind the student's career goals. The program can operate for each semester, with openings being limited. Students can apply by submitting the following requirements:

- Must be a current college student
- Possess a GPA of 2.8 or higher
- Provide a letter of interest, volunteer experiences and hours of availability
- Pass an oral interview

There is no pay associated with the internships but the experiences and working knowledge gained can assist them with gaining on the job experience in the field of criminal justice while providing ADOC with additional staffing resources.

**Exploration Programs** - It is recommended that ADOC create a partnership with high schools to offer Correctional Officer exploration programs in high schools. The program can be offered to students ages 14 to 18 who have an interest in learning about being a Correctional Officer or assist with making a decision on a career. Law Enforcement Career Exploring, a national work-based program of Learning for Life and subsidiary of Boy Scouts of America, provides educational training programs for high school students on the purposes, mission and objectives of law enforcement. The program provides career orientation experiences, leadership opportunities and community service activities. The program’s goals help students choose a career path within law enforcement and to challenge them to become responsible citizens of their communities and the nation.

**Surveys** - It is recommended that ADOC require their employees each year to complete surveys in order to identify potential concerns that may impact retention and provide opportunities for ADOC to enhance its retention strategies. Exit surveys should be required of Correctional Officers who leave ADOC as well.

**Mentor Program** - It is recommended that ADOC structure a mentoring program for trainees at most, if not all, facilities. Those officers that serve as mentors should be serious infraction free (traffic violations, policy violations) for at least one year or longer, no unexcused absences within the last six months, an overall positive outlook and contributions to the ADOC environment.

**Leadership** - It is recommended that ADOC put more emphasis on developing the leadership skills of the current leaders. This will include anyone with the rank of a sergeant and above.

**Schedule Revision** – It is recommended that the Panama Plan be implemented. The Panama Plan is a slow rotation plan that uses 4 teams and two 12- hour shifts to provide 24 hours a day, seven days a week coverage. The pluses of the system are that employees are off every other weekend and no night shifts for 28 consecutive days. The system is popular with military and security service organizations. The system is used in the Nebraska Department of Corrections.
Classification and Compensation Review - It is recommended that ADOC consider evaluating its job classifications in an effort to raise initial pay scales for new Correctional Officers, while retaining median and upper pay levels at current levels.

Financial Review - It is recommended that ADOC focus on reducing current expenses and ensuring its practices and policies that encourage the most efficient use of resources.

Overcrowding Reduction - It is recommended that ADOC consider the release of non-violent offenders (excluding sex-offenders) back into society by partnering them with various state agencies and private companies to provide jobs, training and housing. Parolees could be housed in a home with supervision 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and be required to work to pay for their living expenses and subject to random drug testing. It is also important that ADOC consider sentencing strategies and early releases. This can help divert the number of inmates entering the facility and reduce the amount of time they stay in the facility.

Legislative Amendment - It is recommended that new legislation be written to reduce sentencing for first time non-violent offenders (excluding sex-offenders).
SOURCES


ENDNOTES

i Figures provided to the CPM Team upon initial project assignment

ii Figures from ADOC website, www.doc.state.al.us/academy.asp

iii US Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01000.html


vii US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

viii US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

ix ADOC In-House Population: Defines an inmate where ADOC maintains custody of an inmate to a period of incarceration. ADOC In-House Population inmates are housed within correctional facilities owned and operated by ADOC; this includes transient inmates between correctional facilities

x Figures are from page 2 of the March 2013 monthly statistical report as published by ADOC

xi Figure provided from Bill Lawley with ADOC