



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1100

July 12, 2021

TO: All Interested Parties  
FROM: Cheryl Strange, Secretary  
RE: Prison Bed Consolidation & Unit Closure Update

On May 25, 2021, the Department of Corrections (DOC) shared a draft proposal for the closure of units within prison facilities. Over the past six weeks, the DOC team has heard from staff, incarcerated persons in our care and custody and their families, labor leaders, elected officials, community leaders and many other stakeholders. As we examine the information and listen to constituents, one thing is clear; the issues are complex, individualized, and required more time to consider impacts, mitigate them, and discover good solutions. I want to thank all of you for your patience as the department paused the process.

**Why are facility unit consolidations and closures under discussion?**

Of the 17,000 total prison beds statewide, nearly 4,000 are empty as of today and that number is expected to grow. The Department has seen a **54% decrease** in prison admissions from March 2020 to June 2021 compared to the same time frames in 2019 and 2020. This is partially due to earlier diversions, interventions and treatments, as well as a strong focus on expanding community-based reentry programs allowing individuals to safely transition back to their home community. Impactful court decisions such as State v. Blake and innovative, less restrictive programs such as Graduated Reentry could further reduce our number of incarcerated individuals in our care and custody in the future. All budgets, including the 2021-2023 biennial budget, passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, require the Department to reduce prison spending by \$80 million over the next two years. With a significant increase in the number of vacant beds, the state must address this unfunded capacity issue now.

**A Phased Approach**

Pausing this process has allowed the Department time to have meaningful conversations with local stakeholders, advocates, incarcerated individuals, and their families and help us in developing a thoughtful approach to these complex issues. It's also allowed staff the time to identify areas where we can consolidate some prison units with little or no impact on our staff, incarcerated individuals and their families, programs, and services. Our criteria for decision-making are based on finding unit closures and consolidations that have the least impact on staff, incarcerated persons and their families, and minimize negative effects on programs, education, healthcare, and other critical services.

Due to a range of complexity among facilities, a 'phased approach' will be used to identify a consolidation of units within facilities first, low-impact closures second, and later closures at facilities where there likely will be impacts. Each phase will address a different level and approach to consolidations and closures and will involve meetings with key groups such as our labor partners, our Local and Statewide Family Councils, tribal governments, Black Prisoners Caucus, and many, many others that make up the fabric of our stakeholders and advocates. We'll be conducting outreach to stakeholder to hear comments as we progress through each phase.

***"Working Together for SAFER Communities"***

**Consolidations**

A DOC team has been analyzing data which demonstrates that some units in some facilities are less complicated and thus could be consolidated with little to no impact on incarcerated individuals, their families, staff, programs and services or the communities which support our facilities. We have been reviewing this approach through initial discussions with stakeholders and we will schedule more discussions locally.

Consolidations involve moving incarcerated individuals into other living units within a prison facility. Staff are redeployed, but staffing levels are not reduced. Living units are consolidated or combined within a prison and may involve use of double beds versus single beds where appropriate. This can occur immediately and allow us to reduce high levels of overtime, some of which is mandatory and decrease the impact of staff vacancies at facilities. Incarcerated individuals will not be transferred due to consolidation but may be transferred due to housing classification per DOC policies and procedures.

**Units for Consolidation**

Facility	Unit(s)
Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC/WSRU)	C/D
Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW)	L
Washington State Penitentiary (WSP)	G

**Phase One Closures**

Phase one closures are defined as shutting down a unit and reducing the associated staffing. Closures of these units could be achieved with minimal impacts to staff, incarcerated individuals and their families, communities. There will be no impact to access of services, such as health care, drug treatment, etc. as planned, and we expect minimal reductions in staff or impact on local economies. Incarcerated individuals will not be transferred due solely to unit closures but may be transferred due to housing classification per our normal DOC policies and procedures.

**Phase One Units Under Consideration for Closure**

Facility	Unit(s)
Clallam Bay Corrections Center (CBCC)	C
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC)	E
Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW)	Bear
Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC/MSU)	A/B
Olympic Corrections Center (OCC)	Clearwater
Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW)	L
Washington State Penitentiary (WSP)	G

**Phase Two**

This phase involves closing units which would likely have impacts and that is why we needed to take time to examine data and concerns. Due to the individualized and varying factors and complexity, Monroe is included in this phase, but several others such as Larch, Coyote Ridge or Stafford Creek are also under consideration. Issues at these facilities could impact staffing and incarcerated individuals and their families. We are sensitive to these impacts and thus have allowed for more time to listen and gather stakeholder input in the coming months for the best decisions when made, as well as the best approach. Our goal is to mitigate impacts by working with our labor partners and community stakeholders.

**Phase Two Units Under Consideration**

Facility	Unit(s)
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC/MSU)	Camas
Larch Corrections Center	Silverstar
Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC/WSRU)	A/B, C/D
Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCC)	H3/H4
Washington State Penitentiary (WSP)	Unit 10

**What does this mean for staff?**

One of the Department’s key priorities is mitigating impacts to staff. Every effort will be made to minimize the loss of prison jobs. Any decisions on unit closures will work to limit impacts to permanent employees. Hiring freezes in the Prisons Division are already in place, which will mean fewer staff will be impacted. The Department intends to manage any reduction in staff over time through a phased in approach; not filling existing vacancies, using natural attrition, and creating opportunities for new roles for staff within the department.

**What does this mean for incarcerated individuals?**

We are approaching this challenge with a specific objective of limiting impacts, to the extent possible for incarcerated individuals and their family and support systems. These efforts will include a goal to minimize transfers. The Department will continue with access to programming, academic and vocational education, substance use treatment, sex offender treatment, cognitive behavioral and violence reduction, cultural and religious programming, visitation, and religious practices.

**What’s next in the process?**

Addressing the issue of empty beds across the system and thus reducing spending by \$80 million is a big task and one with serious consequences if we do not achieve these closures to meet our legislative appropriation. However, please know that I am deeply committed to supporting our staff, our incarcerated persons and their families, and the communities which support them throughout this process. Gathering input is an important part of this process, especially as we listen to themes of concern, suggestions and offered solutions. We’ve established a email address where you can send questions and comments at [DOCReentryExpansion@DOC1.WA.GOV](mailto:DOCReentryExpansion@DOC1.WA.GOV) .

By working with established stakeholder groups and individuals, I know we can make the best decisions to consolidate and close prisons units and achieve the significant budget reductions we are required to deliver for the citizens of the State of Washington. I thank you for your continued support as we work together to find solutions for the best outcomes and support the success of those under our jurisdiction.