



STATE OF TENNESSEE

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NEWS RELEASE

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MEETING JAIL NEEDS REQUIRES BETTER PLANNING, BETTER PROCEDURES

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — County governments need better guidance and oversight when constructing jails, according to a report by the Comptroller's Office of Research. "Building and Financing Jails in Tennessee" also suggests that smaller counties consider establishing regional jails to limit liability and improve services for prisoners.

The report concludes that some counties have funded jail construction projects that will not meet long-term needs for safely and efficiently housing prisoners. Some counties have cut construction budgets in favor of other priorities, resulting in jails with higher operating and maintenance costs, as well as shorter useful lives.

The plans review process for jail construction projects, conducted by Tennessee Correctional Institute (TCI), may also need revision. Rules require that counties submit plans to TCI for review and approval, but do not specify when counties should submit them or the types of documents and drawings necessary. Other states' jails oversight agencies, and other agencies in Tennessee, establish timelines and specify the documents necessary to thoroughly and adequately review construction plans.

The report examines successful regional jail systems in other states, and identifies potential cost savings, liability reductions, and improved programming for prisoners. It recommends the General Assembly consider financial incentives to help some counties establish regional jails to realize some of these benefits.

The report includes additional recommendations for jail construction standards, the types of expertise required to review jail construction plans, and counties' use of available technical assistance.

The report is available on the Comptroller's Web site at www.comptroller.state.tn.us.

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