

**Inmate Incarceration Costs and Security Staff Morale**

**December 1999**

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The Honorable John S. Wilder  
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The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Kenneth N. (Pete) Springer, Chair  
Senate Committee on Government Operations  
The Honorable Mike Kernell, Chair  
House Committee on Government Operations  
and  
Members of the General Assembly  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Transmitted herewith is a special report on Inmate Incarceration Costs and Security Staff Morale in the Department of Correction. This audit was conducted pursuant to the requirements of Section 4-3-304, *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

Sincerely,

John G. Morgan  
Comptroller of the Treasury

JGM/dww  
99-013

State of Tennessee

# Report Highlights

Comptroller of the Treasury

Division of State Audit

Special Report

## **Inmate Incarceration Costs and Security Staff Morale**

December 1999

### **AUDIT OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the report were to determine how the Department of Correction calculates the daily cost per inmate and whether other methods are available and to determine the morale of the prisons' security staff and what the department has done to address security staff turnover.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Daily Inmate Incarceration Cost**

The Division of State Audit developed a model to provide decision makers with detailed information on incarceration costs. The model provides the incarceration cost of an inmate at a given facility, a variable inmate rate, and an approach for identifying and analyzing differential costs. It includes actual maintenance costs, capital costs, and debt service in its calculation (page 2).

#### **Security Staff Turnover and Morale**

Turnover in correctional officer positions has been a problem in the department. A Division of State Audit survey of current and former security staff showed that most current security staff are at least satisfied with their jobs, but the survey also indicates areas where staff believe improvements could be made. Areas of dissatisfaction include salary, staffing, and schedule flexibility (page 8).

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"Audit Highlights" is a summary of the audit report. To obtain the complete audit report which contains all findings, recommendations, and management comments, please contact

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**Special Report**  
**Inmate Incarceration Costs and Security Staff Morale**

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# **Special Report**

## **Inmate Incarceration Costs and Security Staff Morale**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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#### **PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY**

This special report on two issues concerning the Department of Correction was prepared pursuant to *Tennessee Code Annotated*, Section 4-3-304. We reviewed the method of determining the daily cost per inmate and the morale of security staff.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the report were

1. to determine how the Department of Correction calculates the daily cost per inmate and whether other methods are available and
2. to determine the morale of the prisons' security staff and what the department has done to address security staff turnover.

#### **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

The information presented in this report was obtained through

1. a review of department cost data and employee turnover reports;
2. interviews with department staff and staff of the Select Oversight Committee on Corrections, the Comptroller of the Treasury, and the Department of Finance and Administration;
3. a review of STARS information;
4. a review of performance audits from other states and reports from the Fiscal Review Committee; and
5. a survey of a sample of current and former security staff of the department.

A major objective of this report was to develop a model to provide decision makers with detailed information on incarceration costs, rather than to provide current information on costs at individual facilities. Therefore, when developing the model, we used fiscal year 1997 cost information which, although not current, had been finalized and was more readily available.

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## CONCLUSIONS

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### Daily Inmate Incarceration Cost

The Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) calculates and publishes daily inmate incarceration costs. The calculation is based primarily on facility-direct operating expenses such as employee salaries and benefits, administrative costs, prisoner food and clothing, and utilities. Through cost allocation procedures, the department determines additional costs which are added to the daily incarceration costs. These costs include central office administrative expense, statewide indirect costs, major maintenance, and training academy. The department has also calculated a department-wide allocation for capital expenditures based on the level of funding legislated for TDOC capital projects. The department does not, however, include interest costs in its calculation.

For fiscal year 1996-1997, facility-direct operating costs ranged from \$2,314,800 to \$32,388,700. Cost variations are caused by factors such as differences in inmate populations and in the types of facilities. For example, Deberry Special Needs Facility has the highest daily cost because services are provided for convalescent health care, intensive mental health intervention, sex offender therapy, and pharmaceuticals. These services carry more costs than those delivered at conventional time-building institutions. For fiscal year 1996-1997, the department calculated an average daily inmate incarceration cost of \$55.95 (see Schedule 1).

#### **Schedule 1 Department's Calculation of Daily Inmate Incarceration Cost For Fiscal Year 1996-1997**

Average Direct Facility Costs*	\$50.35
Additional Allocations:	
Central Office Administrative Expense	\$ 1.76
Major Maintenance	\$ 0.61
Statewide Indirect Cost	\$ 0.14
Training Academy Costs	\$ 0.48
Capital Costs	<u>\$ 2.61</u>
Total Daily Inmate Incarceration Cost	\$55.95

\* Direct cost for 16 facilities, \$250,400,192; average daily inmate population, 13,624.

#### Analysis of Department's Calculation

The department's figure of \$55.95 is an average daily rate of the 16 facilities in operation during fiscal year 1996-1997. However, the daily rate for direct operating costs actually varied

widely (from \$34.02 to \$160.53) among facilities. Because facility costs vary so much, the average cost of \$55.95 does not accurately reflect incarceration costs at any specific facility. Although the department receives frequent requests for the average cost per inmate, this information, if used alone without information on cost by facility or at least by type of facility, does not provide decision makers, the media, or the public with an adequate understanding of the department's cost structure.

The department's method of calculation may not accurately incorporate certain essential cost elements, such as actual maintenance costs, capital cost, and debt service. Major maintenance is a departmental account in which maintenance expenses between \$5,000 and \$50,000 are charged. Since major maintenance expenses vary among facilities, these costs should be presented with the facilities from which they originated instead of being allocated equally to all facilities. Capital costs represent the expense of constructing prison buildings, acquiring land, and improving and renovating existing prisons. The cost of a prison should be expensed over time, based on an acceptable depreciation procedure. The cost of building a new prison is financed through bond issues and current assets. The state makes principal and interest payments on bonds annually. Since these expenses result from constructing prisons, they should be included in the daily rate as well.

Division of State Audit Calculation

The Division of State Audit constructed a model which provides a better understanding of the department's cost structure. The model is used to illustrate the daily incarceration cost at one facility, Northeast Correctional Facility. Based on the cost model, the daily inmate incarceration cost at Northeast Correctional Facility during fiscal year 1996-1997 is \$46.17. Using the department's method of calculation, the daily inmate incarceration cost at this facility would be \$44.74. The differences are explained in Schedule 2.

**Schedule 2  
Explanation of Cost Differences  
For Fiscal Year 1996-1997**

Daily Incarceration Cost Using Department's Calculation Method	\$44.74
Add:	
Bond Interest Expense	\$2.20
Less:	
Difference in Treatment of Major Maintenance (note 1)	(\$0.27)
Difference in Treatment of Capital Costs (note 2)	(\$0.50)
Division of State Audit's Calculated Incarceration Cost	\$46.17

Note 1: The department allocates the major maintenance cost for all facilities evenly, which amounts to \$0.61 per day. The Division of State Audit used actual major maintenance expenditures, which amounted to \$0.34 per day. The difference in treatment results in the Division of State Audit's maintenance cost being \$0.27 less than the department's.

Note 2: The department allocates capital costs evenly for all facilities at a rate of \$2.61 per day. The Division of State Audit used the specific capital cost for the facility in question, which amounted to \$2.11 per day. The difference in treatment results in the Division of State Audit's capital cost being \$0.50 less than the department's.

#### Discussion of How the Division of State Audit Model Was Developed

The cost model is based on a simple formula that contains seven variables: fixed cost, variable cost, facility administrative cost, overhead allocations, major maintenance costs, capital costs, and bond interest expense. Direct facility operating expenses are categorized and values are assigned to each variable. The sum is calculated. Each variable is divided by the facility population and by 365 days. The result is a per-day cost for each cost category. The sum of all cost categories is the daily inmate incarceration cost. The formula is:

$$F + V + FA + OH + M + C + B = \text{Daily Inmate Incarceration Cost,}$$

where,

F = fixed cost, a cost that does not change in proportion with changes in inmate population (e.g., utilities and salaries).

V = variable cost, a cost that changes in direct proportion to changes in inmate population (e.g., food and medical care).

FA = facility administrative costs, which are typically administrative in nature; they may vary from month to month, but not in direct proportion to changes in the inmate population (e.g., certain costs related to travel, printing, minor maintenance, accreditation, and training).

OH = overhead allocations, which are costs such as central office staff salaries, training academy costs, and statewide indirect costs that are allocated based on a cost allocation procedure. (It should be noted that, while statewide indirect costs represent a cost to state government, these costs are never actually charged to the department's accounts.)

M = major maintenance, which includes the cost of repairs at a facility that were between \$5,000 and \$50,000. It should be noted that these costs do not include fence detection automation, which is charged to its own separate cost center and would be difficult to allocate to specific facilities.

C = capital cost, which represents the annual depreciation expense calculated by dividing the facility's construction cost plus capitalized interest by the estimated useful life (in years) of the facility.

B = bond interest expense, which is the amount of interest payments made in a given year on bonds issued to finance facility construction. It should be noted that this information is not readily available—it had to be extracted from the detailed records maintained by the Department of Finance and Administration and the Bond Finance Division of the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury.

Uses of the Division of State Audit Model

The cost model provides decision makers with (1) incarceration cost of an inmate at a given facility; (2) the components of that cost; (3) a variable inmate rate; (4) the effect of interagency charges; and (5) an approach for identifying and analyzing differential costs. An example of how the cost model is applied is provided below using fiscal year 1996-1997 expenditures for Northeast Correctional Facility.

The cost figure of \$46.17 is broken down into its component parts, shown on schedule 3.

**Schedule 3  
Incarceration Cost Components: Northeast Correctional Facility  
For Fiscal Year 1996-1997**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Daily Rate</b>
<b>Fixed Costs</b>	\$10,969,379.50	\$23.17
<b>Variable Costs</b>	\$ 5,246,885.82	\$11.08
<b>Facility Administrative Cost</b>	\$ 2,317,075.56	\$ 4.89
<b>Overhead Allocations</b>	*	\$ 2.38
<b>Major Maintenance</b>	\$ 158,664.83	\$ 0.34
<b>Capital Cost</b>	\$ 998,706.00	\$ 2.11
<b>Debt Service</b>	\$ 1,041,722.45	<u>\$ 2.20</u>
<b>Total Incarceration Cost</b>		\$46.17

\* Overhead allocations are not actually charged to facility accounts.

The model also yields an inmate variable rate. This information is useful when considering the cost of adding more inmates to a facility. The cost directly related to the inmate is \$11.08. That means as long as the facility operates near capacity, each additional inmate will increase the facility's operating costs by \$11.08. However, there is a level at which additional inmates will increase costs more than \$11.08. For example, costs will increase at a rate of \$11.08 for each additional inmate within a given range. When inmates are added above that range, new staff have

to be hired and building expansions have to be constructed—all of which increase operating costs by more than \$11.08 per inmate. An understanding of the department's operations and experience in the corrections field are essential in estimating the level at which costs will increase more rapidly than the variable rate.

The effects of interagency charges are noticed when applying the model. Interagency charges are what other state agencies charge the department for the delivery of services. The Department of General Services and the Department of Finance and Administration are two agencies that charge the department for some services. The department, in turn, passes the charge on to the facility from which it originated. At Northeast Correctional Facility, \$2,714,457 of expenses were charged in fiscal year 1996-97 for services delivered by other state agencies. When privatization issues arise, it will be important to examine interagency charges when identifying differential costs.

### Limitations of the Model

Although the model is capable of rendering detailed cost information, the following limitations should be noted:

- The model is time-consuming to apply—data on capital costs and debt service are scattered throughout several state agencies and require the researcher to manually obtain information.
- Categorizing cost into “fixed,” “variable,” and “facility administrative” is open to the judgment of the researcher applying the model (limitations of the department's accounting system make it difficult to properly categorize costs).
- The department's accounting system precludes researchers from obtaining detailed expenditure information; thus, the precision of incarceration cost estimates is lessened.
- Capital depreciation expenses are based on an estimated useful life of 50 years, which is the maximum amount allowable under state policy. There are arguments that appear valid making the case that prisons have useful lives of more than 50 years. (The Governmental Accounting Standards Board offers little guidance on capital depreciation.)

### Differential Costs

Currently, there are debates surrounding the issue of privatization. When examining the cost-effectiveness of different alternatives, it is essential that differential costs be correctly identified. When comparisons are made between in-house service and contracted service, it is improper to compare in-house fully allocated costs to the cost of paying a contractor to provide the service. Only the state's differential costs should be compared with the state's cost to contract. Differential costs fall into two broad categories: 1) those that will not be incurred if a service, or portion thereof, is contracted out (“avoidable costs”) and 2) any additional costs that

will be incurred as a result of the contract (“incremental costs”), such as contract monitoring costs. Furthermore, three specific types of cost are especially troublesome in this type of analysis: indirect (allocated) costs, nonrecurring costs, and revenues lost.

Indirect costs are those costs that are incurred outside the department and then allocated to the department through some allocation scheme. Examples of indirect costs of the Department of Correction include costs incurred by the Departments of Personnel, Finance and Administration, and the Treasury, as well as the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury. While some cost savings might accrue to these departments when state services are contracted out, it is highly probable that many costs would still be incurred and merely be reallocated to other departments. Any serious attempt to identify the state’s differential cost of contracting out services must include some consideration of what portion of indirect costs would actually “go away” and what portion would be reallocated to other departments.

When government services are contracted to a private vendor, there are inevitably some one-time, nonrecurring costs involved. For example, the cost of negotiating and drawing up the contract represents a one-time, incremental cost to the state. To ignore these costs would be to overestimate the cost savings incurred under the contract; to include these costs in the analysis along with other, recurring costs would be to underestimate the cost savings. These costs must be considered when analyzing the privatization issue, and some reasonable means of amortizing these costs must be developed.

Another issue that demands consideration in the privatization discussion is that of departmental revenues. The department operates a number of enterprises that represent revenue centers for the state, such as prison commissaries. Any attempt to accurately calculate the state’s cost to contract for correctional services would necessarily involve identifying those revenues that would be lost as a result of privatization. Essentially, lost revenues are tantamount to incremental costs in this type of analysis and so must be incorporated into the cost savings formula.

When comparing in-house and contract costs, the sought-after figure when estimating cost savings should be:

$$\text{Avoidable Costs} - \text{Incremental Costs} - \text{Net Revenues Lost} - \text{State's Cost to Contract} = \text{Cost Savings to the State}$$

Once differential costs are identified, the cost model provides an efficient way to determine the dollar amounts which will be used for comparisons.

## **Management's Comment**

The cost analysis methodology can be constructed in whatever way is determined to be most reflective of actual costs. It is essential that if statewide indirect costs that are actually never charged to the department are to be included, there be a very deliberate identification of how these costs are to be derived.

Better clarity related to capital cost is needed. Audited schedules are not currently made available to the DOC, showing the outstanding capital and/or bond interest expense for each facility having outstanding debt. This information is not currently charged back to the DOC and is not readily available within the state's accounting system.

It is troublesome to identify costs that would be totally eliminated from state government, if privatized, or costs that qualify as differential costs. A formula is needed which sets forth the parameters for differential costs and/or the state's cost to contract.

### **Security Staff Turnover/Morale**

Turnover and vacancies in correctional officer positions have been a problem area for the Department of Correction. The Division of State Audit surveyed current and former security staff to determine employee satisfaction and reasons staff leave the department. The results show that most current security staff are at least satisfied with their jobs, but the survey also indicates areas where staff believe improvements could be made.

The correctional officer turnover rate for calendar year 1998 was 34%. The rates ranged from 12% at Brushy Mountain Correctional Complex and 20% at Southeastern Tennessee Regional Correctional Facility to 50% at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution and 52% at West Tennessee State Penitentiary. The department's turnover report, derived from Department of Personnel data, contains a compilation of the reasons correctional officers left the department. The largest percentage of correctional officers left because of "personal" reasons (25.9%), followed by "job change" (14.1%) and "for better pay" (11.7%). The report also indicates that 65% of correctional officers who separated from the department in 1998 left the department after less than one year of service; 90.6% left after less than six years of service.

The department also conducts surveys of all employees who have left the department in good standing. While those "exit surveys" have yielded information similar to that contained in the 1998 turnover report, additional helpful information was obtained as well. For instance, 24% of exit survey respondents left the department for law enforcement or security jobs, and the most common reason for leaving the department (cited by 50.9% of respondents) was "pay too low for the job required." The second most common reason for leaving (cited by 41.3% of respondents) was "favoritism/politics at work."

The Division of State Audit conducted a survey to gather additional information on why security staff leave the department and to determine current staff's levels of job satisfaction, the

likelihood that they would leave their jobs, and their reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The correctional officer series includes correctional officer, corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, and captain. All of these employees were surveyed, although only correctional officers are included in the department's turnover rates. Responses to the survey are summarized and analyzed below. In addition, appendix 1 includes a discussion of the survey methodology and a detailed breakdown of current staff's survey responses. (A detailed breakdown of former staff's survey responses was not deemed useful because of the brevity and narrow focus of the survey.) Appendix 2 contains selected written comments from both former and current staff.

### Current Security Staff

Highlights of the current staff's survey results are as follows:

- 31% rate their personal job satisfaction as "low" or "very low";
- 54% perceive job satisfaction among their peers to be "low" or "very low";
- 27% say they would take another job at equal pay if one were available;
- 10% say they are actively seeking other employment;
- 65% believe that the number of security staff in their facility is either "less" or "far less" than adequate to control the number and types of inmates housed there;
- 72% say they are "somewhat dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" with their salary; and
- 80% say their families worry "some" or "a great deal" about their personal safety on the job.

On the positive side, of the 231 respondents,

- 87% characterize their working relationship with their peers as "good" or "excellent" while less than 1% characterize it as "poor";
- 77% say their decisions regarding inmate control are "usually" or "always" supported by their supervisors;
- 63% say their decisions not regarding inmate control are "usually" or "always" supported by their supervisors;
- 148, or 64%, say they are required to work overtime, but of those, only 14 say they have to work too much overtime (34 say they only work a little overtime, and that they "hardly notice it" and 49 say they "gladly work all overtime required"); and

- 85% say they feel either “somewhat safe,” “safe,” or “very safe” on the job.

Relationships Observed. Statistical analysis of the survey responses indicated possible relationships between several of the factors inquired about in the survey, some of which appeared to be stronger than others. The factors most correlated with employee satisfaction include feelings of personal safety on the job, salary, relationship with co-workers, supportive supervisors, perceptions of understaffing, and flexibility in adjusting work schedules. Other factors included amount of contact with inmates, type of inmates supervised, facility type, amount of required overtime, and length of service with the department. The stronger relationships appeared to be the following:

- Employees who felt safer on the job were more satisfied, while those who felt less safe were less satisfied.
- Employees who were more satisfied with their salaries reported greater job satisfaction.
- Those who reported poorer relationships with co-workers also reported lower job satisfaction.
- Employees who reported that their supervisors were supportive of their decisions reported higher job satisfaction.
- Respondents who reported inadequate staffing tended to be less satisfied with their jobs, while those that did not report inadequate staffing were more satisfied.
- The more flexible employees reported that their work schedule was, the higher they reported job satisfaction.

Other factors related to job satisfaction, though the relationships appear weaker than those above, are listed below:

- It appears that employees who have less contact with inmates and those who deal with inmates of a lower security classification are more satisfied than employees who routinely deal with high-security inmates.
- Employees at general purpose and special purpose facilities tended to report higher job satisfaction than employees of high security and classification facilities.
- Employees who were required to work overtime tended to rate their job satisfaction lower than those who were not required to work overtime. More relevant to job satisfaction was how they felt about the amount of overtime they were required to work. Those employees who said they had to work “too much” overtime were less satisfied than those who didn’t mind the overtime as much.

- Security staff who have been with the department for less than 2 years or for more than 10 years appear to be more satisfied with their jobs than those employees with 2-10 years of service.

Most of the factors that figured in the employees' level of job satisfaction also were related to security staff members' willingness to explore other job opportunities. Survey results indicate that

- Respondents who reported that they were at least satisfied with their jobs were less likely to explore other job opportunities, while those with lower job satisfaction were more likely to report that they were actively seeking other employment.
- Those who reported less flexible work schedules were much more likely to take another job at equal pay or be actively seeking other employment.
- As would be expected, respondents less satisfied with their salaries were more likely to be open to other job opportunities.
- The amount of overtime required appears to be related to employees seeking other employment.
- Employees who felt more unsafe on the job tended to be more open to other employment opportunities.
- The higher that employees rated their relationships with co-workers, the less likely they were to be seeking employment opportunities elsewhere.
- Employees who said their supervisors were supportive of their decisions regarding inmate control were less likely to be seeking other employment.
- Employees who believed the facilities where they work are understaffed were more likely to be seeking other jobs.
- Those employees who have been with the department as security personnel for less than 2 years or for more than 10 years appear to be more open to other possibilities. Those who have been employed by the department as security personnel for 2-10 years appear to be less open to other employment. This is a curious phenomenon, given that employees with less than 2 years or more than 10 years in the department reported more job satisfaction than employees with 2-10 years.

Two other factors appear related to employees' openness to new opportunities (although they surprisingly showed little or no relationship to job satisfaction):

- Employees who said their families worried about their safety on the job were more likely to be open to other jobs, while those who said their families worried less (or didn't worry at all) were less likely to look for other work.
- Employees who said they talked "sometimes" or "always" with their families about the dangers of their job were more likely to be open to other opportunities, and employees who said they "seldom" or "never" talked with their families about the dangers were less likely to be open to those opportunities.

Thus, it appears that job satisfaction, coupled with family considerations, tends to affect employees' willingness to look elsewhere for work. The survey also revealed some interesting, albeit predictable, attitudes towards employee benefits such as insurance and retirement:

- Respondents with more than 8 years of service were much more likely than those with fewer years of service to report that state employee benefits prevent them from leaving the department.
- The more open that employees were to other employment opportunities, the less likely they were to say they stay with the state because of the benefits. The less open that employees were to other opportunities, the more likely they were to say they stay with the state because of the benefits. Our analysis did not indicate whether benefits provided incentive for employees to stay with the state, or if benefits simply mean more to employees who plan on staying with TDOC than they do to those who plan to seek other jobs.

Finally, there were a couple of other interesting possible relationships:

- There appears to be a powerful relationship between employees' job satisfaction ratings and their perceptions of their peers' job satisfaction. In other words, employees who are happy with their job believe that their co-workers are also happy with theirs.
- Employees who perceived their peers' job satisfaction to be lower tended to be more open to other employment opportunities. Of those respondents who said they were "actively seeking other employment," 87% rate their peers' job satisfaction as either "low" or "very low."
- Employees who reported more satisfaction with their salaries also reported that their peers were more satisfied with their jobs. (It makes sense that employees who are more satisfied with their salaries will tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, and vice versa. Employees who are more satisfied with their jobs will tend to believe their co-workers are satisfied with theirs as well.)

### Former Security Staff

Survey results indicate that several factors may have combined to motivate employees to leave TDOC for other jobs. (It should be noted that respondents were instructed to mark all categories in the survey which applied to them. For this reason, many respondents marked several responses, indicating that more than one factor played a role in their decision to leave the department. Therefore, percentages listed here, when added, equal more than 100%.)

Of 112 respondents

- 34 (30%) said they left because of job dissatisfaction.
- 45 (40%) said they left for better pay.
- 24 (21%) said they left because of a job change.
- 51 (46%) said they left because the salary and benefits at the Department of Correction are not commensurate with the risks involved in the job.
- 43 (38%) said they left because of poor morale among Correction employees.
- 34 (30%) said they left because the facility where they worked had an insufficient number of staff to control the inmate population.
- 29 (26%) said they left because they did not feel comfortable with their co-workers.
- 75 (67%) said they left for “other” reasons.

Because employees most often said they left the department for “other” reasons, it stands to reason that the written comments may provide more insight into employees’ thinking than any statistical analysis. (See appendix 2.)

Relationships Observed. The auditors observed the following relationships among responses to the survey

- Employees who said they had little or no contact with inmates tended to say they left for “other” reasons. None of them said they left for better pay.
- Employees who retired were more likely to say they supervised lower-security inmates.
- Employees who said they left because they did not feel safe on the job had mostly worked at high security facilities.

- Employees who said they left because their families were concerned for their safety had mostly worked at high security facilities.
- It appears that employees with less time with the department were more likely to leave because of safety concerns, both theirs and their families'.
- Only employees with less than 1 year in the department said they left because of the quality of the training they received.

### Written Comments

Auditors also compiled and categorized the written comments on the surveys of both current and former security staff. (See appendix 2.) Below is a list of percentage of respondents who made written comments in each category:

- More than 60% of respondents wrote comments relating to pay and/or overtime; many of these complained about being made to take compensatory time instead of being paid overtime.
- Approximately 32% of respondents commented about security staff being inadequate.
- Approximately 32% of respondents commented about favoritism/politics within TDOC.
- Almost 23% of respondents commented negatively about the training correctional officers receive.
- Almost 12% commented negatively about the privatization issue.
- Just over 2% wrote comments indicating that they were afraid to answer questionnaires truthfully for fear of retribution.
- Almost 10% made positive written comments of some sort about their jobs or the department.

### **Recommendations to Reduce Security Staff Turnover**

The following recommendations are based on the results of both the current and former security staff surveys, and do not consider measures the department may have already taken. Steps taken by the department in an attempt to improve employee recruitment, retention, and training include implementing an across-the-board pay increase; using part-time employees, such as retired or former employees who separated in good standing to fill some posts; decentralizing

delivery of some training programs; using college interns as part-time help; and using various advertising methods such as local newspapers, the internet, and the inside of MTA buses.

Survey responses reflect opinions and perceptions and may not always be factually accurate. However, if many security staff share the same perception, the department should consider what it can do to correct that perception. Implementation of these recommendations may help to cut down on security staff turnover within the department and, therefore, maintain or improve the level of security provided by Tennessee's prisons. Issues that the department may wish to address include

1. Salary - A 1998 survey of 14 southeastern states indicates that on average, Tennessee's correctional officers are paid less than correctional officers in all but two of those states (West Virginia and Mississippi)—in some cases, as much as \$6,000 less per year. (Tennessee's reported average salary for correctional officers was \$19,946. The starting salary for correctional officers was increased in July 1998 from \$16,296 to \$16,968; top-out pay was increased from \$26,088 to \$27,168.) Also, responses to State Audit surveys indicate that a large percentage of correctional officers are dissatisfied with their pay. Increasing the pay to a level which is competitive with neighboring states and local sheriffs' offices and police departments could prevent many officers from leaving TDOC for better paying jobs.
2. Understaffing - Addressing the pay issue will probably improve understaffing to a degree, but the department should implement a comprehensive plan to recruit, hire, and retain security staff. TDOC Personnel Division reports show that in January 1998, there were 2,911 security staff positions, 246 of which were vacant. Of the vacant positions, 198 were correctional officer positions, and 48 were other security staff positions. In September 1998, there were 2,901 total security staff positions, 249 of which were vacant. Of those vacant positions, 218 were correctional officers, and the rest were other security staff. Recent department efforts described above may help in this area.
3. Flexibility of schedule - Because employees who reported more flexibility in adjusting their work schedules tended to report higher job satisfaction, implementing more flexible scheduling and leave policies would likely increase job satisfaction overall. Of course, maintaining adequate staffing would help with this situation.
4. Supervisor support of correctional officers - Classes or seminars in effective management and communication for supervisors could pay dividends with more satisfied staff members. To address supervisory training, the department has conducted classes in leadership training, has changed policy to require all supervisors to complete training, and is developing a request for proposals to train management staff in effective ways to reduce turnover and enhance employee retention.
5. Safety on the job - Again, maintaining an adequate staff will probably help this situation. Another method of dealing with this issue would be to sponsor support groups or conduct classes on dealing with dangers in a correctional setting, especially for new security staff.

6. Officers dealing with higher security inmates - To address the concerns of this group, the department should consider offering supplemental training and support to security staff at higher security institutions and those who routinely deal with higher security designation or special needs inmates.
7. Working relationships among security staff - Because respondents reported they were less likely to seek employment elsewhere if they had good relationships with co-workers, management should encourage wardens to support activities which build camaraderie among security staff.
8. Family concerns of security staff - It may be helpful to security staff and their families if the department offered some sort of orientation to the families so that they could get a better idea of how a prison operates and the security measures in place to protect employees. The department could also sponsor support groups for spouses and children of security staff who may have a difficult time dealing with the nature of their family member's work.

The following recommendations are based on suggestions made by respondents in their **written comments**:

9. Hazardous duty pay - The department may wish to explore its options for offering hazardous duty pay to security staff working the more dangerous assignments within the department.
10. Years of service before retirement - The department may wish to examine the requirement of thirty years of service before retirement, explore the possibility of lowering this requirement to a level consistent with other states' correctional systems, and prepare legislation to amend the statutes, if necessary.
11. Regular step raises - The department may wish to examine policies for granting regular pay raises to security staff so that those who have maintained satisfactory job performance during their tenure are paid more than employees who have just been hired.
12. Overtime, comp time policies - The department may wish to examine policies governing in what situations overtime or comp time would be awarded, especially when employees are required to work past their regular hours or on regular days off because of staff shortages or their replacements calling in sick. Also, when mandatory overtime is required, management may wish to establish some sort of requirements for notifying staff members in advance.
13. Shift structure and length - Management may wish to examine the use of 12-hour shifts instead of the current 8-hour shifts. Eliminating a shift may save the department in payroll and health care costs, reduce the number of people calling in sick (because they would have to take 12 hours of leave rather than eight), and raise the base pay of security staff. Another option to explore would be to allow staff to work only four hours over when someone calls in sick, and to call the next shift in four hours early, so that no one would have to work double shifts.

14. Nepotism - The department may wish to address employment of members of the same family within institutions. It may wish to review its nepotism policy and ensure employees are aware of it to alleviate perceptions of favoritism based on family relationships.
15. Employee input into management - Management may wish to examine the need to implement some sort of mechanism to regularly evaluate and address employee concerns regarding the operation of facilities. Input from those who handle prison security on a daily basis may provide valuable information and tools to improve security and operations.
16. Effects of money-saving efforts on security - The department may wish to examine the effects of measures taken to save money, such as turning off lights, on facility security and security of staff.
17. Bad weather policy - The department may wish to examine its bad weather policy to ensure that it is fair to both those who cannot get to work due to the weather, and those who cannot leave the facilities because of the weather or because their replacements are unable to make it to work. Management should ensure that the policy is applied consistently.
18. Filling post openings - Management may wish to examine the manner in which post openings are filled. It would appear that the most equitable way of filling vacant posts would be to publicize vacancies and allow staff members to apply for them, using seniority as one of the determining factors as to who gets the post. Management may also wish to designate certain posts for new employees and implement mechanisms so that they may work their way up to more desirable posts. Another option would be to implement a post rotation so that officers would not stagnate in a post, and each officer would work some more desirable posts as well as some that might be less desirable.
19. Training - The department may wish to examine the training provided new security staff, including the amount of classroom training, facility-specific training, self-defense training, etc., to ensure that correctional officers are prepared as well as possible when they are left on post by themselves. Management may wish to consider placing new recruits in a facility (to observe only) for a time before sending them through the academy. In doing so, recruits would have an opportunity to see what their job may really be like before the state invests time and money sending them through the academy.

### **Management's Comment**

The department continues to place emphasis on staff turnover, and most of the issues discussed in this report have previously been identified by TDOC. Initiatives have been taken to increase the applicant pool, assure supervisory staff are better trained, and to incorporate a mentoring program for new employees.

## Appendix 1

### Survey Methodology and Results of Survey of Current Security Staff

We chose a sample of security staff currently employed with the department and a sample of security staff who had left the department in fiscal year 1998. We then sent survey questionnaires to 353 of the 2,677 current security staff and to 286 of the 776 security staff who left the department in fiscal year 1998. (The number of current and former security staff chosen for the samples were based on plus-or-minus 5% margin of error, 95% confidence interval, for a population of 3,000 current and 1,000 former security staff.) Of current security staff who were sent a questionnaire, 231 returned a completed questionnaire for a response rate of 65%; and 112 former employees responded, for a response rate of 39%. The results of the survey of current security staff are detailed below; the results of the survey of former security staff are summarized on page 13.

#### Current Employees (231 respondents)

**Question 1: How would you characterize your job satisfaction?**

**Question 2: How would you characterize job satisfaction among security staff at your facility?**

<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	<b>(#1) Personal</b>	<b>(#2) Perceptions of Co-workers'</b>
<b>High or Very High</b>	29%	12%
<b>Satisfied</b>	40%	32%
<b>Low or Very Low</b>	31%	54%

**Question 3: Willingness to consider other employment:**

<b>Willing to listen to potential opportunities, but it would take a very good one to make me leave.</b>	52%
<b>Would take another job at equal pay if one were available.</b>	27%
<b>Actively seeking other employment.</b>	10%

**Question 4: How well were you trained when you started work for TDOC?**

<b>Very Well or Well-Trained</b>	31%
<b>Adequately Trained</b>	36%
<b>Not Well Enough or Not Well at All</b>	19%
<b>Best Training On-the-Job</b>	16%

**Question 5: Describe your relationship with the rest of the security staff.**

<b>Excellent</b>	32%
<b>Good</b>	55%
<b>Fair</b>	11%
<b>Poor</b>	1%

**Questions 6 & 7: How often are your decisions supported by your supervisors?**

	<b>Inmate-Related</b>	<b>Non-Inmate-Related</b>
<b>Always or Usually</b>	77%	63%
<b>Sometimes</b>	15%	27%
<b>Seldom or Never</b>	5%	5%

**Question 8: Does your facility have adequate staff to control the number and types of inmates housed?**

<b>More or Far More than Adequate</b>	2%
<b>Adequate</b>	32%
<b>Less or Far Less than Adequate</b>	65%

**Question 9: Are you ever required to work overtime?**

<b>Yes</b>	64%
<b>No</b>	14%
<b>Can Volunteer to Work Overtime</b>	17%

**Question 9a: What is your opinion of the overtime you are required to work (if overtime is required)?**

<b>I gladly work all overtime required.</b>	32%
<b>It's too much.</b>	9%
<b>More than I want to work, but it's tolerable.</b>	23%
<b>Just enough.</b>	13%
<b>Only a little; I hardly notice.</b>	23%

**Question 9b: What is your opinion of the amount of overtime available for you to work (if you can volunteer to work overtime)?**

<b>As many overtime hours as I can handle are available.</b>	23%
<b>Just about the right amount.</b>	51%
<b>I could use a little more overtime.</b>	15%
<b>I could use a lot more overtime.</b>	10%

**Question 10: I can adjust my work schedule...**

<b>Any time I need to.</b>	18%
<b>Sometimes</b>	57%
<b>Never</b>	23%

**Question 11: How satisfied are you with the shift you work?**

<b>I work the shift I prefer.</b>	74%
<b>My shift is okay, but I would prefer to work another.</b>	13%
<b>I would prefer to work any shift other than the one I work.</b>	2%
<b>It does not matter which shift I work.</b>	10%

**Question 12: How do you feel about your personal safety on the job?**

<b>Safe or Very Safe</b>	46%
<b>Somewhat Safe</b>	39%
<b>Somewhat Unsafe or Very Unsafe</b>	15%

**Question 13: How much does your family worry about your safety on the job?**

<b>They don't worry about my safety at all.</b>	12%
<b>They worry about me some.</b>	61%
<b>They worry about me a great deal.</b>	19%
<b>This question does not apply to me.</b>	6%

**Question 14: Which best describes conversations with family members about your job?**

<b>We never talk about the danger.</b>	15%
<b>We seldom talk about the danger.</b>	38%
<b>We sometimes talk about the danger.</b>	38%
<b>We nearly always talk about the danger.</b>	3%
<b>This question does not apply to me.</b>	6%

**Question 15: Currently, how satisfied are you with your salary?**

<b>Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied</b>	26%
<b>Dissatisfied or Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	72%

**Question 15a: Do state employee benefits keep you from leaving TDOC?**

<b>Yes</b>	54%
<b>No</b>	46%

**Question 16:** See note below.

**Question 17: What is your facility's classification?**

<b>General Purpose</b>	42%
<b>Classification</b>	21%
<b>Special Purpose</b>	13%
<b>High Security</b>	28%

**Question 18: What is the security designation of the inmates you typically supervise?**

<b>Minimum</b>	54%
<b>Minimum Restricted</b>	53%
<b>Medium</b>	58%
<b>Close</b>	39%
<b>Maximum</b>	36%
<b>Little or No Contact w/Inmates</b>	9%

**Question 19: How long have you been a security staff member with TDOC?**

<b>&lt;1 year</b>	8%
<b>1-2 years</b>	13%
<b>2-3 years</b>	5%
<b>3-4 years</b>	4%
<b>4-5 years</b>	4%
<b>5-6 years</b>	4%
<b>6-8 years</b>	7%
<b>8-10 years</b>	8%
<b>10 years+</b>	48%

NOTE: Percentages in the above results may not equal 100% due to rounding, and the fact that respondents may not have answered a question or may have marked more than one answer. Also, respondents were instructed to check all answers that apply on some of the questions. Question 16 asked respondents at which facility they worked, and auditors chose not to include this information because responses appeared to provide no particular useful information.

## Appendix 2 Selected Survey Comments

The following are selected written comments from respondents to both the current and former security staff surveys.

### **Comments on Pay/Overtime by Current Employees**

60.4% of respondents commented on this topic.

*Too much favoritism, forced overtime just about every weekend. The same people lay out every weekend and we have to work for them and get flexed out (asked to take comp time off rather than receive paid overtime) without pay, and we get no choice in the matter. I get food stamps usually, am below the poverty line, family of four. We are not given a choice of flex time or pay.*

*Too many “very good” officers leave because the pay is not at the level they deserve given the pressure of the job on them and their families every day; instead, younger, less gifted, qualified and caring people take their place, making COs (correctional officers) with experience and professionalism think twice about staying. Simply put - better pay, better standards of entry requirement, results in better staff and safer institutions for the public, the inmates, as well as the staff who work in them. If this is ignored, Tennessee is facing a riot one day which cannot be controlled immediately due to the current levels mentioned.*

*Most employees like their job but the pay could be better. The benefits are pretty good. The ranking officers do not understand that all employees have family life which comes first. I understand this job is 24 hrs, 7 days a week, but the rank has forgotten how it feels to pull 16-hours a day and try to take care of a family, because they only work 8-hours a day and then go home. I started back to work six months ago but now I understand that some being hired are making more money than I am even when they first start. Start pay is supposed to be the same for everyone. The reason the state can't get enough employees to man the prisons is because of the pay. If you can get it increased enough for someone to make a good living without working a lot of overtime, people might stay and probably wouldn't even think about quitting. Nowadays everyone goes where the money is.*

*Pay rate should be raised to compare to surrounding states. Put a stop to flexing out overtime (asking an officer to take comp time off rather than being paid overtime). Let the staff have the choice of whether they want the money or to take a day off. Our staff are being made to flex time out, and when this happens, the staff member is the one who loses. If you have to work two shifts, sometimes you have to pay a baby sitter extra because they have to work longer. So if you have to flex out your extra shift you have to come up with the extra money yourself. This makes you lose, where if you were paid time-and-a-half for that extra shift, you get extra money to help cover the extra baby sitter hours.*

*Having worked for the department for 18 years, I see a continual decline in morale of employees, low pay in the Tennessee Department of Correction, which is one of the lowest paid in the nation. We as employees are dealing with a totally different type of inmate. "Gangs" are on rapid increase, placing more stress and pressure on employees - those working behind fences should be making hazardous duty pay as State Troopers. More staff are needed desperately in most institutions. Many good employees with years of experience have left the department to go to jobs that start them out at more salary than they were making with years of (service) with the state. Tennessee has yet to raise the pay scale to compete with private sector in order to attract career employees.*

*More competitive salary packages, with greater differences between grades (CPL, SGT, LT, CPT) would increase competition for positions and make taking promotions more worthwhile, and probably increase the caliber of applicants.*

*Need more employees to work. There is a real shortage and sometimes personnel are held over to work back-to-back shifts. To help deter inadequate staff, the department should increase the pay. The salary is not competitive among others in the job market. This would reduce the turnover of personnel, especially the younger ones. The retirement plan should be reduced to twenty years, instead of thirty years. Some personnel look at retirement within the department and do not think it's worth thirty years of their life. The retirement plan, benefits, and job satisfaction need to be revamped in order to keep the younger personnel and develop continuity and loyalty within the department. Quality management of personnel, competitive salaries, and caring and providing supervisors help to improve job satisfaction.*

*Pay is a big problem; we have no step raises. I could be working here for 10 years and still make what the new people make when they start. It would help keep people, get more people to work here. If they had step raises, it would make us work hard, feel like we are here for a reason, instead of just being a warm body. It would make us care that we are here doing this job. This job is very stressful. You never know what's going to happen during the day. And if you get drafted (made to work overtime) then you get flexed and don't get paid for that time. And instead of getting flex for 12 hours we only get 8 hours. We get paid for time-and-a-half which is 12 hours so I say that if we get drafted we should get 12 hours off. I also think it should be our choice to be flexed or paid. That would make a big difference in staff.*

*I am not upset about dealing with inmates, I am upset about the time and the quality of life I have with my family. I have to work at least 24 hours (overtime) to bring home a paycheck that will pay my bills, living expenses. I feel I have a lot to offer TDOC and I would like to see our work, dedication, and professionalism at least appreciated. Pay us a decent salary. Can you live off of \$600.00 biweekly? If you paid a decent salary, there are a lot of attitudes within the department that would change. I am committed to the department, but I do not think that you all really care.*

*Entrance pay needs to be increased to be competitive with other employment in the area.*

*Also, if you made more money, it would seem like you put your life in danger for a reason.*

*I feel that our salary is not enough because we put our lives on the line just like state troopers and police and we do not have any weapons behind the fence and if the inmates wanted to they could take over any time because by the time help came, we could be dead. I think we should be getting hazard pay. Correctional officers are just as good and proud of our jobs, just like state troopers and police.*

*We build up comp time and annual time and can't use it. Do something about the same people calling in sick every week & making other people work double shift. Hire extra people for each shift to cover the call-in. Raise the pay to equal other states.*

*As to question 15, the pay scale is not fair at all. I personally have been working for the department for 4 years & 2 months and make the same as someone who comes in the door tomorrow. Tell me how fair that is. Look at all the other states' salary rates and you will see why no one wants to work for Tennessee Department of Correction when they can go just across the state line to Virginia or North Carolina and make \$5,000 to \$8,000 more per year.*

*We feel that higher pay would give more incentive for people to seek jobs here. Officers have resorted to calling in sick, getting doctors' notes and even taking stress leave to get time off, which results in us having to work doubles. Although we don't mind working one of our off days and sometimes both, we hate working doubles. A lot of us feel that we should only have to work 4 hours mandatory and then the next shift should call someone in 4 hours early. For instance an officer who works third and has to pull a mandatory double or first should get off at 10:00 a.m. Then a second shift officer should be required to come in at 10:00 a.m. to take his place. To sum it up, if we were paid more, the result would be less call-ins, less sick time, a safer environment, less people quitting, and better morale.*

*As far as dollars go, we need more. If you were to raise the pay you could raise your standards on who you hire. A simple solution would be 12-hour shifts. This would give us 4-day work weeks & 8 hours overtime a week. Less people would call in sick if they had to take 12 hours of leave. This would bring our base pay up to nearly \$500 a week and still save the state money; by eliminating a shift you would profit in health care savings alone, not to mention money in training & over all 3 shift payroll. A 4-day work week at \$500 a week is a huge incentive & it would allow you to put more money into training & educating those already employed by the state.*

*Local factories are offering just as good benefits and higher pay than the prisons, better working conditions, and every weekend and all major holidays off. The Department of Correction will never be able to keep valuable employees without a major pay increase.*

*Many staff get training in Tennessee, then go to Virginia or North Carolina, who pay much more. Have to work part-time jobs to make ends meet here. Officers at Northeast do a good job, would stay if pay was better.*

*The pay is too low for the risks we take, pay should be equal to state trooper pay.*

*A lot of people leave because of salary. The cost of living goes up, we get a 2% or 3% raise, our insurance goes up and takes it.*

*Correctional officer job could be improved by 20 or 25 year full retirement and higher pay. Or set up a system where an employee can pay 10 years retirement and the state pick up 20 years. The employees could retire in 20 years with 30 years full retirement. Employees are never asked how they feel about things or incidents. The only thing you hear is “What is the policy on that?” Why is Tennessee on the bottom of the pay scale of the 50 states?*

*Our government says \$16,400 per year for a household of four is considered poverty. Correctional officer salaries average \$18,000 per year, just \$1,600 above poverty line. Now, the state of Tennessee says it requires approximately \$24,000 per year to house one convicted felon. Something is drastically wrong here! I have a family of four, my wife stays home with our two young children. It is far better for her to raise my children 9 hrs. a day than day care strangers at \$400 a month. Every time I go to TCA (Tennessee Corrections Academy), I hear “We need a more professional correctional officer.” Well, the figures tell the story! The state of Tennessee gets exactly what it pays for! I have many other points to bring out, but I will respectfully withhold them at this time. If someone is interested in what I have to say, please feel free to call or write (name, address, and phone number omitted by auditors).*

*The Department of Correction has lost, and continues to lose, good officers due to the pay rate of neighboring states. When a man walks into a prison and puts his life on the line every day, it would be nice to know that he makes at least \$20,000 per year. Starting pay in Virginia is between \$21,000 and \$22,000 per year. The starting pay in North Carolina is around \$26,000 per year. We are, sadly, a long way behind.*

### **Comments on Pay/Overtime by Former Employees**

*From Mountain City, TN, you can drive to either Virginia or North Carolina in thirty minutes. You can increase your salary by five or six thousand a year. Also, insurance is free. Tennessee needs to catch up to other states in pay and benefits.*

*If the salary and benefits were better there might be a chance of getting better quality employees who would stay with the job. The majority of employees are lazy and do not do the job right, which makes it hard on anyone who tries to do the job right. I liked the job and would have stayed if the quality of employees were better.*

### **Comments on Inadequate Staff by Current Employees**

32.2% of respondents commented on this topic.

*Staffing is so low that no more than three people can be off on any given shift and only two weeks of vacation can be bid (requested) once per year and may not be split, bids done quarterly, thus making it mathematically impossible for everyone to receive the time off that they have earned! So benefits to state workers are not true benefits. Many areas have been cut to the point that it is impossible to accomplish that which must be done. Unit officers have inmates of 108 to 1 ratio with two buildings to cover and responsibilities are the same as when they had 25 inmates to 1 staff. This department at its current path will soon (if not already) be the worst department in the state to work for.*

*The inmates are not well-controlled. We have to work several people over(time) just about every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and all holidays. We are called 1-minute before end of shift and told we can't leave, we must work a double shift to cover for the same people who lay out every weekend. We get flexed out even if we don't want to, and not on a day we choose, but one the administration chooses.*

*The department appears to have lowered its standards to allow employment to fill spaces or cut overtime. This has put at risk officers, inmates, and the facility, including the public. It's very obvious to the average person that certain new employees are not ready for a "professional" position such as this. Inmates expect to feel safe, but we seem to be filling spots on the roster or allowing COs to get away with bad job ethics before thinking what is more important.*

*The biggest factor, inadequate staff! Threatened with being fired if sick leave is used.*

*RIF (reduction in force) - This has created a lot of shortage. Example: On some shifts there isn't enough built-in relief, so if you have staff approved to be off and then have call-ins, you're running a short shift. This could be hazardous if a disturbance should occur. We've been awful lucky! In my opinion, you've got to have your priorities. You either have adequate staff to properly run and maintain a penal facility or you run short, not allowing overtime to make us look good in Nashville. Working out of job classification - Making security staff relieve kitchen stewards to reduce their comp time build-up. This puts a great burden on some with children due to the flexible shift adjustments. Staff spending their own money to pay a baby sitter to accommodate institutional needs, because of poor management in food service. I've yet to see kitchen stewards working housing units...*

*Inadequate staff - one officer working two housing units is unsafe for the inmates and unfair to the officers.*

*The lack of adequate staff, I never know where I'll be working, although I do have an assigned position. An adequate staff would greatly improve satisfaction among employees, but that won't happen until salaries are greatly improved. Tennessee trains a lot of officers for other states for free.*

*Inadequate staff - in my opinion, most "new correction officers" are scared, because of inadequate staff. I have talked to a lot of new officers, and they have expressed to me the same fears that I felt. I think many would stay if they felt safer.*

*I have worked at (facility) for about 20 months, and of those 20 months I have used 2 sick days with no vacation. Very few people can say that, but I still have problems getting days off when I need one. I have been late to work 1 time and when a post with good days off becomes available I'm always looked over. These problems could be worked out with adequate staffing and some sort of guidelines set to determine who works which posts. I work in a maximum security unit and policy is almost always broken during recreation because (facility) doesn't have enough employees to properly supervise the inmates. If we do go by policy it takes longer than my shift because there isn't enough staff. And if it isn't done by my shift my supervisors get upset. Due to these problems which I have discussed my job satisfaction is low and I am currently seeking different employment. Even with less pay and benefits.*

*We build up comp time and annual time and can't use it. If you call in sick, they jump your case & want a doctor's excuse, even though you may not need to go to the doctor. Do something about the same people calling in sick every week & making other people work double shift. Hire extra people for each shift to cover the call-in.*

*Another part of the problem is the shortage in people - to take a personal day you almost have to call in sick, because the shift cannot justify hiring overtime for comp & annual pay - (ex. - incident occurred at the institution that was quite traumatic, no one checked to see if the officers were okay.)*

*There is a definite lack of employee supervision here since the cutbacks which occurred in the early 90s. Some of us have to work harder than others due to supervisory practices, which causes ill feelings toward other co-workers.*

*Inadequate staff. Unable to grant leave when requested by staff. Unable to plan vacations.*

*We need more officers, this is a death trap. Building falling apart. Radios & equipment faulty. Locks can't or won't be repaired - you figure it out. Robbing Peter to pay Paul. Pulling officers ratio 222 to 1 - If I go on I'll explode.*

*Mainly security concerns: lack of staffing for control of outside security, lack of officers in each housing unit, and lack of available personnel to respond to emergencies. All of the above lower job satisfaction among security staff.*

*Running on skeleton crew. Right now we are working with a skeleton staff, because of which Personnel will hire anyone who walks through the door. If there was more incentive then maybe we could get more officers to come work here, less officers taking jobs elsewhere, and a larger selection to pick qualified officers from.*

*Understaffed facilities have more incidents with staff and inmates. Too many officers getting assaulted due to not having enough security to control inmates in units. Inmates overpower facilities when there's not enough staff in security. Inmates do take advantage of situations like this.*

### **Comments on Inadequate Staff by Former Employees**

*If you had an emergency, they did not care. Just stay on your post, kids, sick, job, etc. I was forced to work 3&4 hours sick while my relief had come in early and was stuck on another post waiting on relief that was late. Examples such as this cause good employees to quit.*

### **Comments on Supervisors/Favoritism/Politics/etc. by Current Employees**

31.7% of respondents commented on these topics.

*Assure that everyone has a fair chance at "preferred positions."*

*Supervisors need training to deal with new young employees and differing job expectation.*

*Ranking staff should be more supportive of new employees, let them know we will help and support them. We need not forget we were once new ourselves.*

*Poor management skills lower job satisfaction, currently have no skilled managers. It begins with providing correct information on policies and procedures. Second problem is inconsistent enforcement of rules and punishment of employees and inmates.*

*Upper management changing policies about things inside institutions they have never worked in, to make things look good on paper or in the newspapers.*

*I feel that at our institution there is too much favoritism going on and that well-seasoned employees are being overlooked for job positions they should be allowed to work. Also I feel that certain positions that employee's families are put in, that is a form of nepotism and shouldn't be allowed. I have been at (facility) for eight years and have yet to get a 1st shift slot. Family should mean something to employers but apparently in corrections it does not. That is the only complaint I have. Not getting 1st shift to be at home with my family in the afternoons and picking up my children at school.*

*Jeopardize institution security by turning off perimeter lights to save money - turn lights back on. Full seniority for job bids & shift placement for all state corrections employees. Require supervisors to work instead of passing the buck to officers all the time! Do away with unit management. Tell the Governor to stop treating corrections employees like trash that needs to be thrown away!*

*No Equal Opportunity - Too much politics used for personal gain. Unfair to those who don't use such tactics. Example: Promotions, shift changes, job changes, etc. Inclement Weather Policy - Last winter when the roads were impassable due to timber being in the roads, power lines, ice and snow couldn't be scraped because the county and state couldn't get around. There were some staff who went out of their way to make the effort to get to our facility to help and relieve staff that were still working. A lot of staff cut timber out of the roads with their own*

*chain saws for many hours, attempting to make the roads passable. When they finally did get to the facility, they worked 2-3 shifts until other staff could make it in and get back on normal track. The staff that didn't even show up, let alone make an effort, some got comp time. Those of us that worked 2-3 shifts got overtime, but were made to flex it off. Some staff got paid for this overtime. This wasn't fair to begin with. I feel that comp time should have been awarded to all or none. The overtime should have been paid to all or none. This really tore down the morale of staff. Would you call this institutional needs? Or would you call it poor management? Shift Meeting - No such animal. Poor communication. Lack of teamwork. And you ask and wonder about the turnover rate. These are just a few drops in a bucket. If a person stays with the Department of Correction, he or she better learn quick about being flexible. Working with the inmate population becomes second nature after many years of service. Working with department heads that display no-care attitudes is hard to swallow. These are just a few things that lower job satisfaction. I feel that we have a good facility, but it's been those of us who have been around for a number of years to keep it that way, who have put up with the pros and cons of everyday operation as I've just mentioned. Thanks for listening. P.S. We love our jobs sometimes!*

*I am very disgusted with the way the disciplinary board handles write-ups. A lady officer, that I work with, saw an inmate having sex with his visitor on the picnic area. The case was dismissed. This makes you want to quit. We are also always understaffed. The inmates are treated with more respect than staff by supervisors (especially warden & AWO [Associate Warden of Operations]). Good officers are being removed from their posts, because they try to do their job by post orders. It seems that inmates can get an officer moved whenever they wish. This is very depressing. I would like to have more support from supervisors (top level). We have some good captains, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, and I think I have a good relationship with them. They are the best, but their decisions are overturned at times. Thanks for taking the time to read this.*

*A lot of people leave because of the way they are treated by the ranking staff. In fact, most people leave because of the way they are treated by staff. 2. You don't get promoted by your work record or punctuality, you get promoted by being in the right "clique" or by who you are sleeping with. 3. Seniority doesn't mean anything. New buddies come in & get special treatment over seasoned officers, i.e., they are assigned posts with good off days & given a choice of shifts. 4. If you are one of the worst officers on shift, the better you get treated, such as better post assignments and days off. Need to take some of the ranking staff out of a power position, especially when they use it to bully employees. 5. Post job opening so people can sign up for them if they want the post & go by seniority. 6. Assign new people on post & let them work up to the post with good days off. 7. Don't give good shift or days off to someone who is married to rank or just because they are kin. 8. If a person likes his or her shift, don't make them move to another shift. Find someone that wants to be changed.*

*I think things could be better if the state would break up the cliques, and if the rank would stop messing around with the female employees then giving the females their choice of post, shift, or days off when these females give in to the ranking officers' requests (sex for favors). Experience, seniority, or work performance does not count.*

*I live 60 miles from work, I fall asleep on the road a lot; If I'm doing something improper I'll get written up immediately, but when an inmate does wrong, supervisors will verbally warn them before disciplinary action.*

*Seldom are we ever advised as to who is "up" for mandatory overtime. Notice would be appreciated by the officers as well as our families. I might add that when we are asked to work on our RDO (regular day off) and we can't (for whatever reason) or won't (for whatever reason) we are spoken to in a demeanor that is somewhat less than professional. (There are some lieutenants and captains who do understand, but they are few.) I have noticed that the department is basically hiring anyone. Not that I am superior, but there are some employees working in this department that make it very dangerous, i.e. they forget about handcuffs, they intimidate inmates for no reason, etc. Most supervisors are aware of this, but aren't really concerned about the intimidation aspect. This creates a very dangerous environment.*

*This department seems to be more interested in pacifying the inmates, and making them comfortable, than they are about their employees. The supervisors, if that's what you choose to call them, could use a little supervision themselves. There is no consistent treatment of employees here, only for the inmates. It seems that if anyone above the rank of sergeant doesn't do his job properly, it goes unnoticed by those above him. There is a definite lack of employee supervision here since the cutbacks which occurred in the early 90s. Some of us have to work harder than others due to supervisory practices, which causes ill feelings toward other co-workers. There are not enough supervisors who care about the job, and/or doing the job correctly. Too many old-timers are just coming to work to collect a paycheck, and if someone tries to correct them, they find they are almost untouchable due to time in service. It should be made easier to get rid of dead weight employees. I've seen several employees who should have been dismissed, rather than being taken off probation. This refers to incompetent employees as well as those who just don't care about the job, as long as they get paid. I've heard more than once about employees who were not recommended for release from probation, but the person(s) with the final decision kept them on anyway, due to staff shortages. (An incompetent employee is much more dangerous to all involved than one who is not here.) Dealing with the convicts is generally not a problem here, the problem is dealing with co-workers who get special privileges because of who they work under, and an administration that is deaf and blind. Ask yourself this question: Why do the inmates get to meet with the warden once a month to express their concerns, but the employees are not able to meet with the warden unless they are in trouble? The inmates are having a great time, and have so many privileges that they are better off in here than back home.*

*I don't like the fact that inmates have more pull in certain situations and more say than unit officers do!! That's what makes people want to quit the Department of Correction! If you have a snitch, as they call it, in your unit, they get out of write-ups and are believed over officers. This is not right at all!*

### **Comments on Supervisors/Favoritism/Politics/etc. by Former Employees**

*Would not get any support from management. You had to be in the clique to get days off and post assignments. Warden & Deputy Warden were more interested in pleasing inmates than helping employees. Certain brass were always out to fire or punish people rather than help.*

*The administration was always playing games with the officers. The game they were playing when I quit was they sent maintenance around to alter all the light switches in the housing units so the lights in guild security offices could not be turned on, and the lights in the bay area were fixed so that only approximately 1/3 of the lights worked. This created a dangerous work environment for women officers and was just another way to degrade us. The officers are not treated well by the administration. You should do away with supervisors and have work groups down here. The inmates treat the officers better than the administration does.*

*I felt very uncomfortable around some of my co-workers. It was mostly the men employed at the facility and it was as if some of them wanted to take advantage of the female officers who were there. The job on a whole was a good job. It was the co-workers who made me uncomfortable because I am a female. It felt as if I had double pressure. The inmates being aggressive and also the male officers. It was a learning experience for me and I would be willing to try it again at a different facility, if I were able to. Could you please send me info on women's facility locations?*

*Being threatened by the union at Brushy Mountain because I dropped out of it. I started state grievance procedures but was transferred to (facility omitted) and dropped the grievance. After being transferred, the employees at (facility omitted) were hard to get along with due to union connections. The Correction Department needs to look closer at this. There is a lot of room for improvement in the Correction Department. One officer that was hired at the same time that I was quit before I did because of the harassment from the union because he would not join the union. I would have stayed on in the Correction Department if I could have ever done anything to improve the department. There is definitely room for improvement. (Note: The "union" at Brushy Mountain does not actually have a contract with security staff or management at the facility, and as such, is not technically a union. It is simply an agreement allowing security staff at Brushy Mountain to join a union organization, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and have dues taken out of their paychecks. The agreement allows security staff to bid on post assignments, off days, vacations, etc., based on seniority, and to be represented by union officials in disciplinary hearings. This agreement was not signed by any state or department officials, and stemmed from an employee walkout at Brushy Mountain in 1974.)*

*The Tennessee Department of Correction is structured for inmates instead of the working individuals. Supervision of COs is very poor. If all facilities are run like CCWC (Carter County Work Camp) then no wonder there is such a turnover of employees. There is so much partiality toward some and others are treated very poorly.*

### **Comments on Training by Current Employees**

22.6% of respondents commented on this topic.

*Placed at job assignment with “sink or swim” attitude.*

*Received no on-the job training in this area - assigned post. Not enough (if any) on the job (post) training, especially those under unit management.*

*Too many books and films, not enough hands-on training time.*

*Some of the classes help, but some could be improved on. The self-defense class is informative but it is just enough teaching to get someone hurt.*

*I was not prepared for situations unique to my institution. I needed a thorough orientation of our compound, I didn't know where things were. I didn't understand how my institution worked, i.e., movements, passes, medical. Post rotation on a 6-month interval would help. Let officers who have spent six months in housing units change to yard slots and vice-versa. This would be a refreshing break and keep officers from stagnating in posts. It would also enhance the training of the individual officers and give them something to look forward to, to hang in there for.*

*The supervisors need to be trained more on how to manage their personnel. All that is required to be a supervisor is time on the job and a test. There should be some type of school for supervisors on management skills.*

*Whenever I started in 1985, our facility was short-handed to begin with. There was just no one available to teach and show the fundamentals & methods of OJT (on-the-job-training), so they just gave me the keys and said the Post Orders are in the desk, do the best you can, if any questions, call operations. In reality inmates taught me and time and experience has been my best teacher and I've survived almost 14 years in Correction.*

*Three weeks at the training academy is not enough to prepare a green employee for prison life. Should concentrate more on OJT. Possibly 3&3, three academic and three at work site under senior officer. Consider going to a central hiring system by regions.*

*The training should come first before going to the academy. Training should be at least 2 weeks OJT, then if people decided to stay or go, the state wouldn't have to be paying out a lot of money for the ones that go.*

*Training at the training academy was general, it was helpful; however, training specific to the institution was done on the job, and was much more helpful.*

### **Comments on Training by Former Employees**

No former employees commented on training.

### **Comments on Privatization by Current Employees**

11.7% of respondents commented on this topic.

*Deal with the privatization issue once and for all. Demand better protection of long-term employees if privatization occurs.*

*The privatization question has major morale effects on department employees, as well as difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.*

*CCA (Corrections Corporation of America) - This seems to be a hot topic; I have seen a lot of good staff leave due to this. Some that don't have many years invested are getting a head start trying to seek other employment, afraid of losing their jobs if CCA did take over. It's really older employees who are staying because they already have too many years invested to go elsewhere.*

*At this time the threat of privatization has morale very low. None of the young officers plan on staying because of this. The older officers who have planned on retiring from state service are very disgusted indeed, considering the benefits which could be lost.*

*All staff are tired of hearing about privatization. We started working because of the benefits and retirement and now have no idea if we will have either.*

### **Comments on Privatization by Former Employees**

No former employees commented on prison privatization.

### **Positive Comments by Current Employees**

9.6% of respondents made positive comments.

*I am very well satisfied with my job. I enjoy this type of work and would not want to do anything else.*

*The state does have good benefits as far as leave time, pension, etc., is concerned. The insurance is a plus, although I feel it costs the employee too much. The \$20 a month they match for those of us who choose to participate in the 401(k) plan does add up.*

*This is overall a good place to work. There are also hidden benefits some people never think of like uniforms, shoes, coats, no layoffs in the foreseeable future.*

*I enjoy commanding a shift and working with my officers at this level.*

*It's a great experience. I've got no real complaints - it has helped me raise my family for the past 19 years.*

*Job Satisfaction: The wardens and the Shift OICs (officers in charge) do a great job with COs in under-staffed conditions. I highly commend them.*

### **Positive Comments by Former Employees**

*I enjoyed working for RMSI (Riverbend Maximum Security Institution), and have nothing but the highest regard for Riverbend. It was truly an honor working for that institution.*