



## BRIEFING SHEET

Report 19-4

May 2019

State Auditor

[Joe Chrisman](#)

## Adult Corrections Expenditures

### Background

The Department of Corrections (DOC) operates 36 adult institutions, places inmates needing specialized mental health treatment at the Wisconsin Resource Center, and places inmates in county jails when space is unavailable in its institutions. Wisconsin's adult inmate population increased from 2009 to 2018, and grew from 21,941 in 2011 to 23,675 in 2018, or by 7.9 percent.

### Key Findings

During our audit, we found:

- Operating expenditures for adult corrections increased from an estimated \$909.3 million in fiscal year (FY) 2013-14 to \$933.9 million in FY 2017-18, or by 2.7 percent.
- The largest areas of expenditure growth were for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and for contracted medical services.
- The average daily operating expenditures per inmate varied substantially among adult institutions. Over 60 percent of the variation was explained by the number of full-time equivalent security personnel per inmate at each adult institution.
- The total number of paid overtime hours increased from 1.2 million in FY 2013-14 to 1.9 million in FY 2017-18, or by 50.7 percent.
- From FY 2013-14 to FY 2017-18, turnover rates for correctional officers increased from 17.8 percent to 26.1 percent, and the vacancy rate for all security positions more than doubled, growing from 6.7 percent to 14.0 percent.
- The health care reports completed by correctional institutions were incomplete and inaccurate, which prevented meaningful analysis. DOC's use of its new electronic medical records system would enable DOC to improve management of inmate health care and potentially reduce future expenditures.
- To address increasing health care expenditures, DOC has taken steps to reduce health care costs, such as purchasing pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and dental supplies through a multi-state compact to negotiate lower prices.
- In FY 2017-18, 62.8 percent of Wisconsin's total adult correctional expenditures were for personnel. However, the extent to which the number of inmates in DOC's institutions currently exceed their design capacities makes the objective of reducing personnel costs more challenging.

### Key Recommendations

We make recommendations to help DOC manage adult corrections expenditures, including by improving its collection and analysis of inmate health services data, increasing the use of telemedicine appointments, consolidating inmate trips to external medical appointments, and enhancing efforts to assess treatment and educational programs.

[Printer Friendly Version](#)

---

## Legislative Audit Bureau

[www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab](http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab)

(608) 266-2818

22 East Mifflin Street  
Suite 500  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

---

[View Report 19-4 Highlights](#)