

FEBRUARY 2, 2021

The 2021-22 Budget: Correctional Staff Training Proposals



LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

Background

Commission on Correctional Peace Officer Standards and Training (CPOST)

- CPOST is statutorily responsible for developing, approving, and monitoring standards for the selection and training of correctional officers and supervisory staff, as well as monitoring the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation's (CDCR's) design and delivery of staff training.
- The commission is composed of six members—three members appointed by CDCR to represent the department's management and three members appointed by the Governor to represent the California Correctional Peace Officers' Association (the union representing CDCR correctional staff).
- The 2020-21 budget includes \$1.3 million from the General Fund for CPOST.

Training for CDCR Correctional Staff

- **Basic Correctional Officer Academy.** CDCR operates a 13-week correctional officer academy at the Richard A. McGee Correctional Training Center in Galt. At the academy, cadets learn the basic practices of a correctional officer—such as how to search inmate property—in a largely classroom-based setting. After graduating from the academy, individuals are assigned to prisons to work as correctional officers.
- **Correctional Staff Training Budget.** The 2020-21 budget includes \$83 million (General Fund) in base funding for CDCR to deliver training to correctional staff. This funding supports the academy as well as various other types of training for staff throughout their career with the department, such as training for officers who promote into supervisory positions.



Background

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- ***Need for New Correctional Officers Typically Stable.*** Various factors can affect the number of new correctional officers needed, particularly the rate at which correctional officers leave CDCR employment (referred to as the officer attrition rate). However, the number of academy graduates roughly offsets the officer attrition rate in most years. Accordingly, CDCR's correctional staff training budget is not adjusted annually. In contrast, many other areas of the department's budget are adjusted annually for changes in workload, such as changes in the inmate and parolee populations. We note, however, that funding for the academy is sometimes adjusted to account for certain population changes, such as when the state shifted responsibility for a few tens of thousands of inmates to counties in 2011.



Governor's Proposals

- **Fund Additional CPOST Staff (\$492,000).** The Governor's budget proposes two new supervisor positions for CPOST to better monitor and evaluate standards and training for correctional staff. For example, CPOST plans to assess training quality by comparing the performance of new officers—as measured by number of policy violations—to that of senior staff.
- **Establish New Facility for Hands-On Training (\$9.1 Million).** The administration proposes to convert the Northern California Women's Facility—a former prison located in Stockton—into a facility to provide hands-on training to cadets on topics such as transportation of inmates, communication and de-escalation techniques, and escape prevention. The training would be integrated into the 13-week academy, allowing cadets to receive a combination of classroom and hands-on training. (Under the proposal, the funding would generally decrease until reaching \$4 million in 2024-25 and annually thereafter.)
- **Establish Job Shadowing Program for New Correctional Officers (\$11.7 Million).** The administration proposes requiring new correctional officers to shadow experienced officers for three weeks before the new officers are placed in their permanent assignments. The requested funding would support the following:
 - **New Officer Pay.** \$6.2 million to pay the assumed 1,880 new officers' salaries during these three weeks. This is because funding that is currently budgeted to pay new officers' salaries during these three weeks will instead be used to pay for other officers to temporarily fill their positions while they are participating in the job shadowing program.
 - **Prison-Based Sergeants.** \$5.5 million to support 33 correctional sergeant positions. These sergeants would coordinate the new job shadowing program and perform various other duties related to staff training that the department indicates have grown in recent years beyond a level that can be accommodated by existing staff. For example, they would help maintain fitness testing equipment.



Assessment

General Concept of Proposals Appear Reasonable

- We find that efforts to integrate hands-on training into the academy and implement a job shadowing program for new officers appear worthwhile to ensure new correctional officers are sufficiently prepared to begin working. In addition, we find that additional staff requested for CPOST would better position the commission to meet its legislative mandates.

Proposal Does Not Facilitate Legislative Oversight

- In recent years, CDCR has received numerous concerning allegations of staff misconduct at various prisons, some of which could be caused by training deficiencies. Accordingly, it is important for the Legislature to be informed on efforts to improve officer performance. With the requested new supervisory staff, CPOST reports that it would be better able to monitor metrics related to staff training and performance. However, the proposal does not include any requirement that the Legislature be kept regularly informed of the findings.

Not All Proposed Prison-Based Sergeants Fully Justified

- The department indicates that existing staff are unable to accommodate workload related to ongoing staff training. As a result, certain tasks—such as scheduling staff for their annual required training—are not being completed in a timely manner. According to CDCR, 16 of the 33 proposed prison-based sergeant positions would relieve existing staff of some of their other workload—such as maintaining fitness testing equipment—so that they can complete all of their training-related duties in a timely manner.
- However, the department has not been able to provide adequate information on such workload. This includes (1) data identifying the specific workload being delayed and the extent to which it is delayed, (2) the impacts of the delayed workload, (3) detailed analysis on the number of positions needed to complete this workload in a timely manner, and (4) additional alternatives that the department considered for accommodating the identified workload.



Assessment

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CDCR Intends to Produce Fewer Cadets in 2021-22 Than Proposal Assumes

- The requested \$6.2 million for new officer pay during the proposed three-week job shadowing program assumes CDCR will produce 1,880 new cadets in 2021-22. However, the department reports that after developing the proposal it determined that it will only need 1,466 new officers in 2021-22. This would reduce the funding needed for new officer pay by \$1.4 million.

Prison Closures Will Reduce Future Need for New Correctional Officers

- As described previously, the need for new correctional officers has been stable in recent years. However, going forward, prison closures will reduce the need for new correctional officers and the resources necessary to train them. This is because correctional officers at the prisons that are closed will have the opportunity to fill vacancies at other prisons. As those vacancies are filled, CDCR will not need to produce as many new correctional officers as otherwise. (For more on the prison closures, please see *The 2021-22 Budget: Prison Maintenance and Repair Proposals*.)
- The anticipated reduction in the need for correctional officers will temporarily reduce the resources CDCR requires to (1) operate the academy and (2) pay new officers' salaries while they complete three weeks of jobs shadowing. However, as noted above, CDCR's budget for training new correctional officers is not adjusted annually based on the actual need for new correctional officers. Accordingly, the proposed level of ongoing funding for officer training will likely become excessive during years when prisons are closed.



Recommendations

- **Approve CPOST Funding but Require Report on Training.** We recommend that the Legislature approve the requested resources for CPOST as the additional positions would better position CPOST to meet its Legislative mandates. In addition, we recommend that the Legislature pass budget trailer legislation requiring an annual report from CPOST beginning July 1, 2022 on the correctional training provided by CDCR. This report should include (1) data on relevant training outcomes (such as measures of employee performance and morale) and (2) the conclusions CPOST draws from the data and its plans to address any concerns or challenges identified.
- **Approve New Facility for Hands-On Training.** We recommend that the Legislature approve the proposal to provide hands-on training to cadets as it appears worthwhile to ensure new correctional officers are sufficiently prepared to begin working.
- **Approve Fewer Resources Than Proposed for New Officer Job Shadowing Program.** We recommend that the Legislature approve the proposal to provide three weeks of job shadowing for new officers but adjust the funding amount as follows:
 - Reject 16 of the 33 proposed prison-based sergeants. This would reduce the level of funding needed for the program by \$2.7 million.
 - Reduce proposed funding for new officer pay by \$1.4 million to more accurately reflect the number of new officers CDCR needs in 2021-22.
- **Require CDCR to Adjust Officer Training Funding Annually.** Given that prison closures will reduce the need for new correctional officers in future years, funding for new officer training should be adjusted annually. Accordingly, we recommend that the Legislature pass budget trailer legislation requiring the administration to propose adjustments to CDCR's budget for training new correctional officers on an annual basis. Such adjustments should be based on projections of its need for additional correctional officers at least 18 months into the future to account for the time required to recruit and train new officers. This would ensure that funding for new officer training remains aligned with the actual need for new officers.

