

A Performance Audit of the

Utah State Correctional Facility

An Examination of Staffing, Culture,
Safety, and Security

Office of the Legislative
Auditor General

Report to the UTAH LEGISLATURE





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November 14, 2023

TO: THE UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE

Transmitted herewith is our report:

“A Performance Audit of the Utah State Correctional Facility: An Examination of Staffing, Culture, Safety, and Security” [Report #2023-17].

An audit summary is found at the front of the report. The scope and objectives of the audit are included in the audit summary. In addition, each chapter has a corresponding chapter summary found at its beginning.

This audit was requested by the Audit Subcommittee.

We will be happy to meet with appropriate legislative committees, individual legislators, and other state officials to discuss any item contained in the report in order to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.

Sincerely,

Kade R. Minchey, CIA, CFE

Auditor General

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

AUDIT REQUEST

We were asked by the audit subcommittee to perform a review of the safety, security, and staffing of the new Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF). Since USCF opened in July 2022, it has experienced staffing shortages that have impacted its ability to maintain safety and security within the facility.

BACKGROUND

Direct supervision is an inmate behavior management model that places officers inside the housing unit with inmates and encourages frequent interaction. USCF was designed with direct supervision in mind but doing so greatly increased the need for more staff. Despite the Utah Department of Corrections' (UDC) awareness of this staffing need and recruitment and retention challenges, previous UDC leadership failed to sufficiently plan for the increased number of staff required at the new facility and a negative culture at UDC amplifies the existing staffing problems at USCF.

A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE UTAH STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ 1.1 UDC Failed to Prioritize, Plan, and Execute an Adequate Hiring and Retention Plan for USCF
- ✓ 1.2 Current Staffing Numbers Fall Far Short of Full Staffing Needs for Safe and Secure Operations at USCF
- ✓ 2.1 Status Quo Mindset Leads to Entrenched Negative Culture at UDC
- ✓ 2.3 UDC's Current Strategic Plan Lacks Focus on Safety and Security and Needs Revision and Improvement
- ✓ 3.2 Without Full Staffing, Design of Prison Reduces Safety and Security of USCF



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ The Utah Department of Corrections prioritize recruitment and retention of correctional officers and procure professional consulting to create a focused recruitment and retention plan.
- ✓ The Utah Department of Corrections senior leadership foster a positive culture by working with industry experts and consultants to review the organization and address actions and mindsets that do not align with new organizational values.
- ✓ The Utah Department of Corrections consider appointing a safety and security professional to implement and propel the mission of safety for prison operations.
- ✓ The Utah Department of Corrections work with the Legislature to consider if other supervision models should also be allowed in statute.

REPORT SUMMARY

Current Staffing Numbers Fall Far Short of Full Staffing Needs for Safe and Secure Operations at USCF

USCF's warden shared that he believes staffing shortages are a primary reason for recent officer assaults that have taken place at USCF, as well as frequent inmate-on-inmate assaults. UDC is aware of this but must make drastic changes to address these concerns. This will require leadership to be innovative and strategic in its efforts. Without a more focused approach on recruitment and retention, and a willingness by UDC management to be more responsive to the challenge, staffing USCF as intended may not be possible. It is critical that management focus on creating a culture of growth and retention.

Prison Design Places Greater Weight on the Full Implementation of Direct Supervision

While UDC has taken steps to implement direct supervision at USCF, additional action is needed should it choose to continue with the model. Addressing the deficiencies in UDC's implementation of direct supervision principles while also increasing staffing levels will assist UDC in its efforts to operate the facility as intended. Additionally, while **Utah Code** requires a system of direct supervision at new and modified facilities, UDC also should work with the Legislature to consider if the use of different inmate management techniques should be allowed in statute.

USCF Staffing Levels Fall Far Short of Estimated Need

To grasp the magnitude of the staffing shortage, we worked with UDC staff to estimate the number of officers needed for a full USCF staffing pattern. The figure on the right shows the large gap between actual staffing numbers and estimated staffing need.

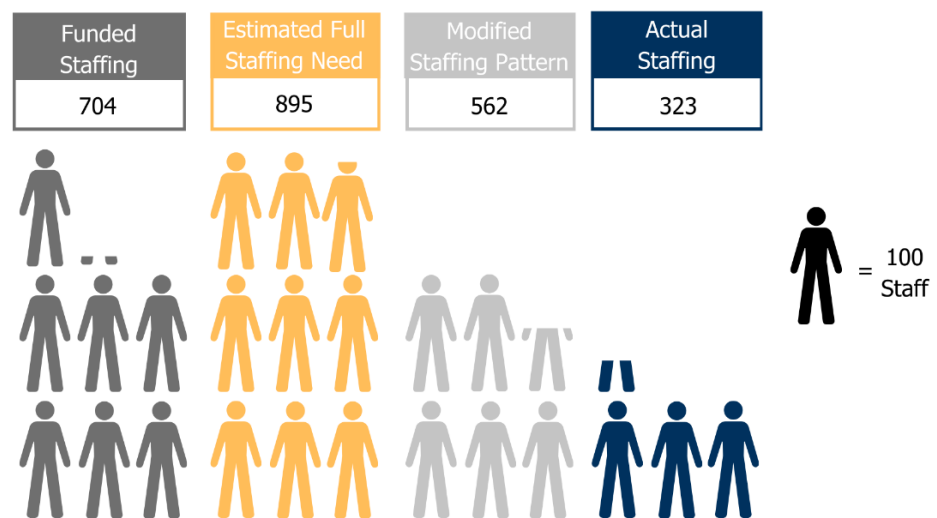


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Introduction

Utah Code 64-13-6 outlines the duties of the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) where UDC, among other responsibilities, shall:

- “...protect the public through institutional care and confinement and supervision in the community of offenders where appropriate...”
- “provide...program opportunities for offenders designed to reduce offenders' criminogenic and recidivism risk...”

UDC carries out this work through several divisions including Adult Probation and Parole (AP&P), Law Enforcement Bureau, Utah Correctional Industries, Division of Prison Operations (DPO), and the Programming Division, among others.

UDC provides opportunities for offender success through DPO at two facilities the Central Utah Correctional Facility (CUCF), located in Gunnison, and the new Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF), west of the Salt Lake International Airport. UDC moved to USCF from the Draper facility in July 2022. The new location was recommended by the Prison Relocation Commission (PRC) with information provided by UDC and various interest groups. The decision to build a new prison was based on the Draper site's aging structure, serious maintenance needs, inefficient and outdated design, and the cost of operations.



UDC moved to the new Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) in July of 2022.

USCF was designed on the foundations of direct supervision — an inmate management model that places officers inside a housing unit with offenders and requires frequent interaction between offenders and officers to reduce negative behaviors. Direct supervision has been recognized as a best practice for inmate behavior management by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC).



Our audit team is encouraged by the positive changes occurring within UDC.

This report addresses concerns regarding UDC operations and culture, among other concerns. Overall, our audit team is encouraged by the positive changes occurring within UDC. Recently, UDC appointed a new executive director who was confirmed by the Senate on June 14, 2023. Our audit

team has worked closely with the new executive director throughout this audit, and we are encouraged by the changes being implemented such as restructuring and bringing new leadership to UDC.



CHAPTER 1 Summary

Acute Staffing Shortage at USCF Currently
Undermines the Safety and Security of the Facility



BACKGROUND

Despite its awareness of recruitment and retention challenges, previous leadership of the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) failed to sufficiently plan for the increased number of staff required at the new facility. We found that current staffing levels fall far short of the estimated need and an increasing prison population is beginning to aggravate the already tenuous staffing crisis.

FINDING 1.1

UDC Failed to Prioritize, Plan, and Execute an Adequate Hiring and Retention Plan for USCF

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

The Utah Department of Corrections prioritize recruitment and retention of correctional officers and procure professional consulting to create a focused recruitment and retention plan.

FINDING 1.2

Current Staffing Numbers Fall Far Short of Full Staffing Needs for Safe and Secure Operations at USCF

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to assist in carrying out a staffing analysis for the prison at full capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to complete an analysis of pay, benefits, and organizational culture.

FINDING 1.3

Opportunities Exist to Increase and Maintain Staffing Levels Needed for Safe and Secure Prison Operations

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

The Utah Department of Corrections evaluate prison operations in conjunction with a correctional expert at the Utah State Correctional Facility and identify ways to reduce the demand for staff.



CONCLUSION

To reach adequate staffing levels, UDC leadership must be more responsive to the challenges facing the department and provide a more focused approach to recruitment and retention. It also must find ways to decrease the demand for staff at the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF). This lack of planning by previous UDC leadership is a serious shortcoming that is affecting operations in serious and, at times, dangerous ways.





Chapter 1: Acute Staffing Shortage at USCF Currently Undermines the Safety and Security of the Facility

1.1 UDC Failed to Prioritize, Plan, and Execute an Adequate Hiring and Retention Plan for USCF

Utah's new prison utilizes a direct supervision model that relies heavily on frequent interactions between officers and inmates. The concerns addressed throughout this report suggest the potential need to consider making changes to this model, which would be a policy decision. Since fiscal year 2013, management's efforts in the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) to plan for and staff the new Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) have lacked urgency and have been insufficient. Despite UDC's awareness of recruitment and retention challenges, we found that UDC management's actions to address staffing needs before moving to USCF were minimal. Although UDC's planning was not adequately addressed, the need for more staff was recognized by state lawmakers. In its 2022 General Session, the Legislature appropriated \$19 million to hire more officers¹ and \$20.2 million for salary increases. In 2023, it added another \$23.8 million for salary increases. In sum, about \$63 million in ongoing funding has been directed to UDC staffing issues in the two most recent general sessions. UDC has not been staffed adequately since 2013 and while it has made efforts to recruit and retain officers, these efforts have not been targeted or strategic when implementing a philosophy and moving to a new prison that required more staff. This was a major shortcoming that has led to dangerous and harmful outcomes. Since the move to the new prison, staffing challenges have become exponentially more difficult at USCF, reaching crisis levels.



Despite its awareness of recruitment and retention challenges, UDC management's actions to address staffing needs before its move to USCF were minimal.

Despite Being Aware of Recruitment and Retention Challenges, UDC Management Did Not Adequately Address Acute Staffing Needs

Historically, UDC has been understaffed. A 2014 UDC internal audit report titled *A Performance Audit of Employee Recruitment and Retention* identified multiple areas where UDC was falling short in recruitment and retention efforts. One such area was UDC's turnover rates at its prison sites. The audit states:

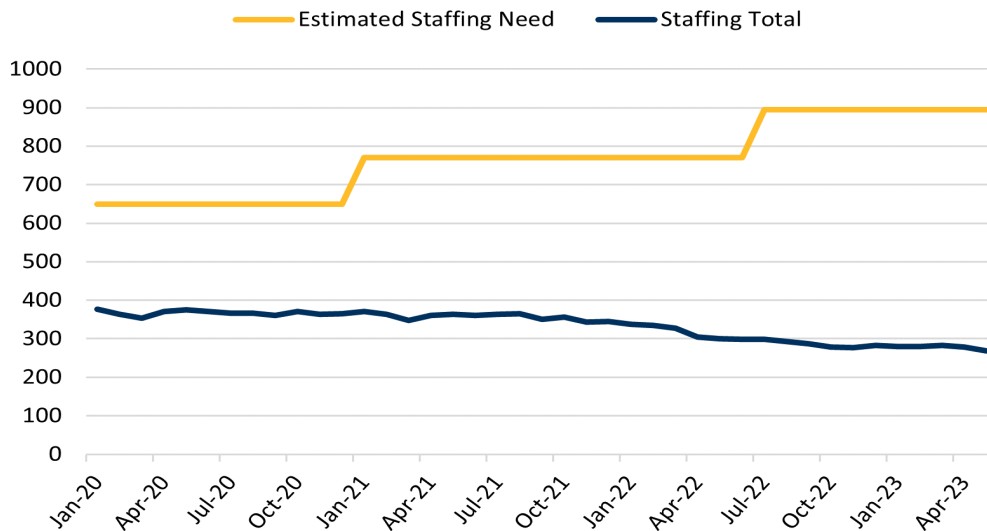
¹ The \$19 million appropriation is ongoing funding. However, this is reduced by \$13 million one-time in fiscal year 2022 for a 2022 total of \$6 million.



Best practices suggest that a low staff turnover rate is ideal for an organization...High turnover costs the agency not only a significant amount of money, but loss of experience and workforce stability as well.

The audit found that the staff turnover rate at the Draper prison was about 21 percent, one of the highest rates in the intermountain area. The audit also attributes the implementation of mandatory overtime to the Draper prison's turnover rates. Figure 1.1 shows that UDC has been consistently understaffed, long before the move to USCF. UDC had little planning to increase staffing numbers upon moving to the new USCF. We revisited USCF's turnover rates and, according to data obtained from a UDC human resources representative, it had a turnover rate of 40 percent in fiscal year 2022 for correctional officers (CO).

Figure 1.1 Estimated Staffing Need and Total Certified Staff. UDC has been consistently understaffed for the last three years.



Source: Auditor generated from UDC data.

Note: The estimated staffing need increased in 2021 due to higher rates of staff leave usage. The estimated staffing need increased again in 2022 because of the move to the new prison.

The 2014 internal audit made several recommendations for UDC to combat its turnover challenges. Most notably, the audit found that UDC could improve recruitment and retention through more strategic planning and comprehensive policies and practices aimed at systematic change throughout the organization. We found that past leadership has failed to act on this information, contributing to the problems currently facing the department. The following quote sums up the 2014 audit's findings on staffing challenges at UDC during this time:



2014 UDC Internal Audit

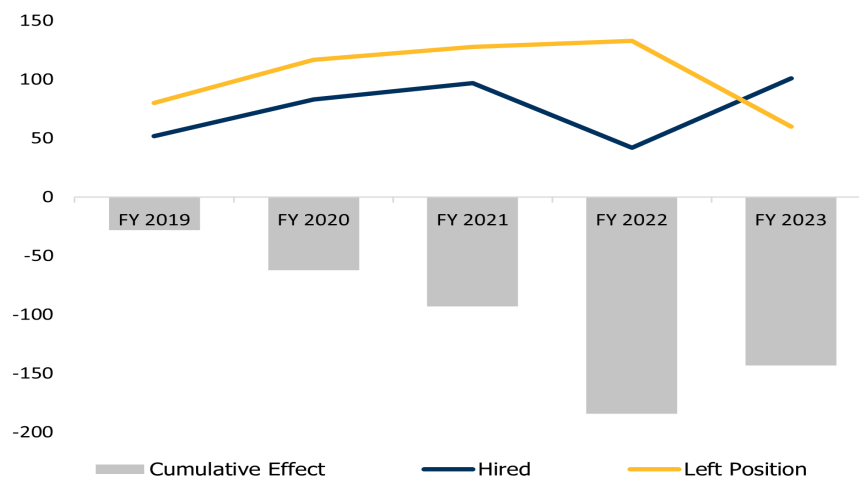
Perhaps the most serious problem the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) faces now and in the future is the need to attract and retain sufficient numbers of high-quality correctional officers...In order to maintain UDC's most valuable resource, the issue of reducing staff turnover and creating a satisfied labor force needs improvement. The retention of trained and experienced staff maximizes financial resources and lends stability to the work force.

Despite the 2014 audit findings, no major changes to recruitment and retention were made until 2019 with the hiring of a dedicated recruiter. As a result, UDC did not adopt a formal recruitment strategy until 2021. We are concerned about ongoing effects of the lack of action from past UDC leadership regarding recommendations from the 2014 internal audit.

The Current Recruitment and Retention Approach Has Not Yielded Sufficient Staff for Safe and Secure Prison Operations

UDC has been ineffective in growing its CO pool over the last five fiscal years. To illustrate, Figure 1.2 shows trends in UDC's hiring and turnover since FY 2019.

Figure 1.2 Hiring and Turnover Trends for USCF Correctional Officers. UDC has a net negative of 143 COs since 2019, (including both external and internal turnover).



Source: Auditor generated from UDC data.

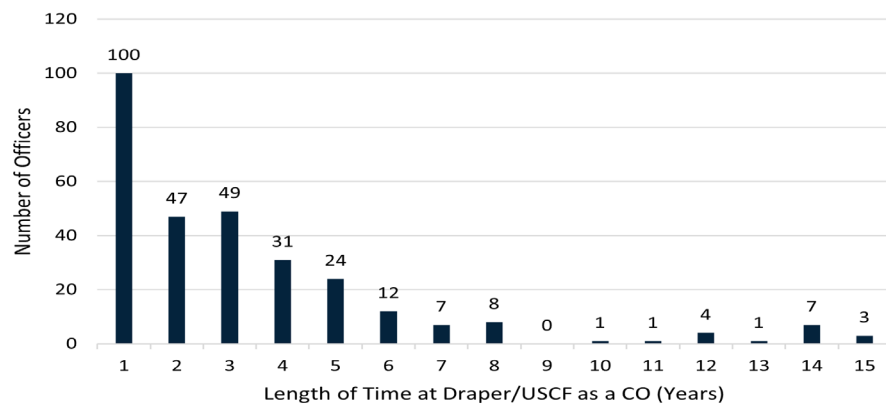
The move from Draper to USCF took place at the beginning of fiscal year 2023. Rather than increasing hiring to meet the increased demand for COs at the new prison, UDC lost 91 more officers than it had hired in fiscal year 2022 (the year leading up to the move). 2022 witnessed historic staffing shortages across many sectors of the economy, and our team is encouraged by the positive hiring trends moving into 2023. UDC management attributes the large dip in fiscal year 2022



hiring to low pay and the move to the new prison. A significant factor in the positive hiring spike for fiscal year 2023 is recent legislative appropriations that have allowed UDC management to increase the starting salary for COs. This is a positive change, but also means that new officers may be paid more than tenured officers. UDC personnel spoke to us about salary compression and noted that it does not occur at correctional facilities in counties, and it impacts CO turnover.

According to turnover data, since 2019, a majority of Draper/USCF COs leave the department within the first three years. This is shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3. Draper/USCF External Turnover Since 2019. The majority of COs turnover in their first five years and most significantly around the one- to three-year mark.



Source: Auditor generated from UDC data.

Note: This data includes cadets that separated from UDC within the first year because they did not pass the POST testing.

One explanation provided by USCF leadership for such high turnover in the early years is that CO contracts are for two years. Also, competition for COs creates a challenging economic environment for UDC to operate in. Counties and cities throughout the state of Utah typically pay more and are active in recruiting UDC officers to their departments. These issues significantly impact employee retention at USCF. Because UDC has struggled to maintain adequate staffing for so many years, we believe it is now necessary to bring in national experts and experienced consultants to ensure UDC achieves its needed staffing levels and implements the best retention and recruitment strategy possible. We recommend that UDC hire a professional consultant to help address these concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

The Utah Department of Corrections prioritize recruitment and retention of correctional officers and procure professional consulting to create a focused recruitment and retention plan.

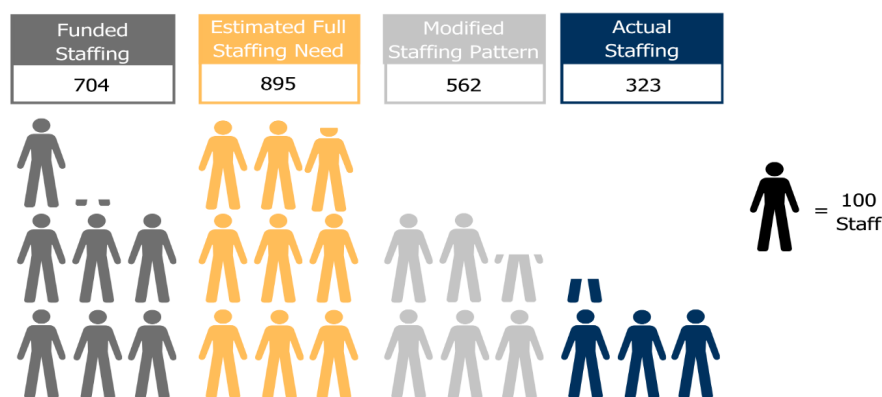
1.2 Current Staffing Numbers Fall Far Short of Full Staffing Needs for Safe and Secure Operations at USCF

USCF's warden shared that he believes staffing shortages are a primary reason for recent officer assaults that have taken place at USCF, as well as frequent inmate-on-inmate assaults. UDC is aware of this but must make drastic changes to address these concerns. This will require leadership to be innovative and strategic in its efforts.

Without a more focused approach on recruitment and retention, and a willingness by UDC management to be more responsive to the challenge, staffing USCF as intended may not be possible. We are encouraged by the positive steps the newly appointed UDC director is taking to address these issues.

Estimated Full Staffing Need. To grasp the magnitude of the staffing shortage, we worked with UDC staff to estimate the number of officers needed for a full USCF staffing pattern. We used the methodology recommended by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), which factors in the net annual work hours of an officer. Figure 1.4 shows the large gap between actual staffing numbers and estimated full staffing need.

Figure 1.4 USCF Actual Staffing Levels Fall Far Short of the Estimated Need. Full Staffing Need (yellow)² includes officers and sergeants needed to fully staff the prison at a fully implemented direct supervision model. Actual Staffing (blue) is the number of staff UDC reports to have as of October 2023. The modified staffing pattern is the estimated officers needed after removing multiple supervision posts (light grey). USCF's funded staffing (dark grey) is shown for comparison.



Source: Auditor generated from USCF data.

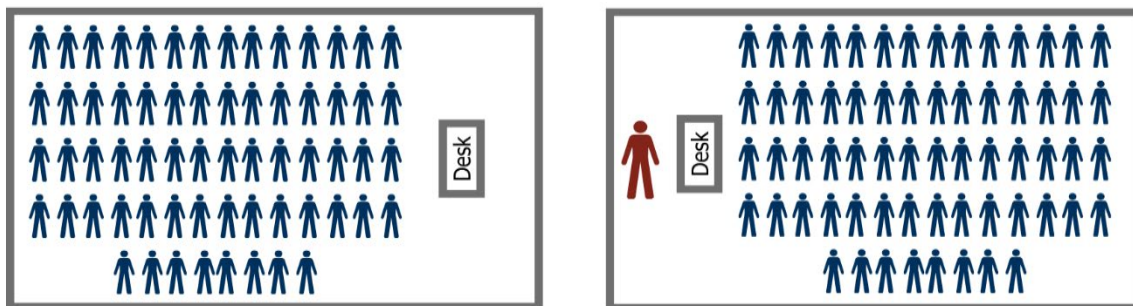
Note: Average number of officers on the schedule during FY 2023 was 281 officers, which was used to calculate estimated modified and full staffing need. Data based on UDC scheduling assumptions. Estimated full staffing need assumes all sections of USCF are operating at capacity under direct supervision model.

² Estimated full staffing need (shown in yellow) is based on national standards created by NIC and contained in the Prison Staffing Analysis Training Manual. UDC and experts should conduct a study regarding staffing need to determine what proper staffing levels should be. This number is for context and further study is needed if additional funding is being considered.



Figure 1.4 paints a stark picture of the task ahead for UDC to hire and maintain an adequate number of officers to operate the prison. A current staffing number of 323, while grossly improved from the beginning of fiscal year 2023, is far from the total needed for its modified staffing pattern, let alone a full staffing pattern.

Modified Staffing Plan Increases Risk of Incidents at USCF. The modified staffing plan removes multiple supervision posts. As a result, one officer supervises two sections at once in most housing units. This results in one officer supervising a total of 128 inmates in a general population area, as shown below:



Source: Auditor generated.

Note: In a fully staffed USCF, one officer would be placed at each desk, inside of the sections, and three more would be in the hall as rovers in the building.

In contrast to USCF's current modified staffing, NIC research indicates that one officer can usually supervise 64 inmates effectively in direct supervision.³ Without the required number of officers to supervise and monitor inmates, both staff and inmates are put at greater risk of death or injury within the prison.

A recent assault incident at USCF highlights the impact of the current condition.

Maximum-Security Assault:

In the maximum-security building (Antelope), a single CO entered the highest-level security section, alone. He requested that all sub-day room doors in the section be open at the same time as he did a routine cell check. As he stepped into a sub-day room, an inmate who had not been properly returned to his cell was hiding in the shower of his sub-day room and assaulted the CO from behind. The inmate handcuffed the CO. No other officers were present to help, and there was no response for two minutes, well after the assault had progressed to life-threatening levels despite being visible on security cameras.

³ NIC states that many variables affect the effective ratio of unit officers to inmates including classification, housing unit design, the officer's supervision skills, and the types of activities of the unit.



This assault demonstrates the impact that USCF's staffing can have on the safety and security of officers. When officer presence is reduced, inmates may feel emboldened as they know they can act without a quick response.

Mandatory Overtime Places Heavy Demands on Staff and Affects Morale.

According to its 2014 staffing audit, UDC has had a mandatory overtime policy in place since 2013 for COs. We believe that continuing the use of mandatory overtime is not sustainable. Now, all UDC certified staff are required to work at least one extra shift each month at the new prison, including Adult Probation



All UDC certified staff are required to work at least one extra shift each month at the new prison, including AP&P agents.

and Parole (AP&P) agents. In 2017, UDC required COs and sergeants to fill one mandatory shift per pay period and this policy is still in effect for USCF staff. To adhere to mandatory overtime, we were told COs and AP&P agents travel from across the state. As an example, AP&P agents reportedly drive from areas such as St. George to stay overnight in a hotel and UDC pays for travel and lodging for these officers.

This means officers traveling from St. George or the Central Utah Correctional Facility (CUCF) can log up to 16-hour days, including travel. It has been described that some officers who do not want to travel to Salt Lake will pay other officers to fill their mandatory shifts. From officer interviews, mandatory overtime is one of the least popular aspects of working for UDC which could lead to burnout, low morale, and officer turnover. We believe this is contributing to the critically low staffing levels shown in Figure 1.4 and must be addressed through innovative and targeted solutions. Changing organizational culture, as shown in Chapter II of this report, is a major part of this. UDC should take bold steps to change its culture and add incentives for both pay and benefits. The Office of Correctional Health from the American Correctional Association states that agency culture and environmental factors are directly related to retention and recruitment. *The Best Practice Handbook A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*, produced by our office, notes that culture change starts at the top of the organization with leadership.

An Increasing Prison Population Is Beginning to Aggravate an Already Tenuous Staffing Crisis

An important variable that impacts staffing needs in a direct supervision prison is its actual prison population. USCF has operated since July 2022 with two of its general population buildings empty. A total of three buildings are not currently in use, which has reduced the current need for certified staff in the full plan by approximately 140

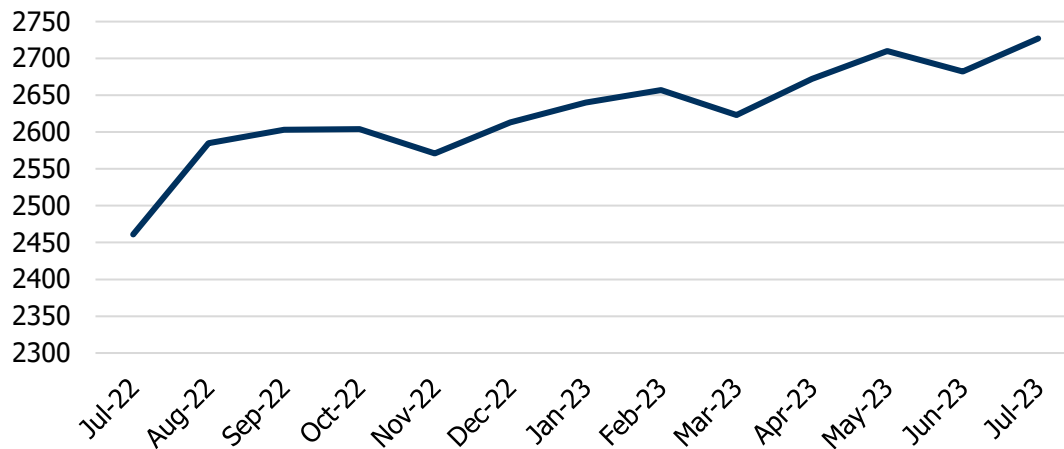


The prison population has grown, and with the current staffing levels, USCF is experiencing an overcrowding issue.



officers. However, the prison population has grown and with current staffing levels, USCF is experiencing an overcrowding issue. Figure 1.5 charts USCF's prison population since July 2022, the month the prison began operations.

Figure 1.5 The Prison's Population Is Increasing. Since the move to the new facility in July 2022, the prison population has increased by more than 250 inmates as of July 2023.



Source: Auditor generated.

Due to overcrowding issues, USCF leadership has indicated they have begun exploring the option of opening an additional general population building in the near future. This requires an additional 47 officers to fully staff the building. USCF leadership has explained that it would likely extend department-wide mandatory overtime. Importantly, UDC reported that historically its requests for funding have centered on the number of CO's required for staffing and have left out other operational costs of opening and running a new building such as programming staff, case workers, utility and food costs, medical costs, etc. According to UDC management, they are going to start including these support functions into their cost analysis and into future legislative budget requests.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to assist in carrying out a staffing analysis for the prison at full capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to complete an analysis of pay, benefits, and organizational culture.



1.3 Opportunities Exist to Increase and Maintain Staffing Levels Needed for Safe and Secure Prison Operations

To grow its CO numbers at USCF, UDC management should focus on hiring practices and department programs focused on retention of veteran officers. UDC management should also evaluate its operations at USCF and determine efficiencies that could decrease the demand for staffing. The graphic below displays this formula for adequate staffing.



Source: Auditor generated.

Retention Can Be Addressed Through Incentives That Attract Long-Term Commitment

Research by the Management and Training Corporation and the Office of Correctional Health from the American Correctional Association recognized that correctional agencies have had success in retaining officers by doing the following: wellness programs, creating better relationships between management and supervisors, increasing opportunities for training, tuition reimbursement, hiring and retention bonuses, premium overtime bonuses, and pay differentials for seasoned staff.

In contrast, after speaking with multiple officers at USCF, it appears that the reduction of benefits and lack of sustained incentive programs have reduced the financial incentive to stay with UDC. Because of these concerns, one officer said that as soon as he is eligible, he will retire. Another officer we spoke to is presently looking for other work.



After speaking with multiple officers at USCF, it appears that the reduction of benefits and lack of sustained incentive programs have reduced the financial incentive to stay with UDC.

Job Progression Could Increase the Safety of High-Level Security Facilities.

As an example of an option for UDC to consider, UDC could incentivize experienced officers to supervise inmates of higher classification or mental health status. Since the move to the new prison, the new maximum-security and mental health areas frequently have officers from other divisions working mandatory overtime shifts. Inconsistency is especially concerning in these housing areas, considering the security threat posed by these inmates. Other correctional organizations have additional levels of job progression besides the normal hierarchy of officer, sergeant, lieutenant, etc. Adding levels in the UDC pay scale could increase opportunities for COs and allow UDC to place more experienced officers in areas such as mental health or maximum-security. Creating incentives for experienced officers also could alleviate the impact of



salary compression through more opportunities for higher pay for experienced staff. We recommend that UDC study job progression options alongside an expert to determine if it would be beneficial for USCF.



Another option for UDC to consider is identifying additional opportunities to use civilian staff in support of certified staff, which could lessen the need for COs.

Another option for UDC to consider is identifying additional opportunities to use civilian staff in support of certified staff, which could lessen the need for COs. UDC should carefully weigh the rewards and risks of this policy shift. UDC has already added multiple control point operator (CPO)⁴ positions to monitor sections, which relieves some of the burden of monitoring inmates and provides officers with support in their duties in a non-contact role. UDC

reports also that it is actively evaluating positions that do not require a certified officer that are filled by COs and is transitioning these staff members out of these positions.

In the past, UDC has worked with NIC to address staffing concerns. NIC's recommendations gave UDC valuable feedback on ways to improve prison operations, highlighting concerns of staff burnout and recommending ways to continually improve and reevaluate posts. NIC also helped UDC to assess "peaks" and "valleys" in staff workload. However, additional work remains. Working with outside consultants is a practice that multiple other correctional organizations have done to address specific staffing needs. Doing so would provide an additional resource for UDC to use to address staffing needs.



Working with outside consultants is a practice that multiple other states have done to address their specific staffing needs.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

The Utah Department of Corrections evaluate prison operations in conjunction with a correctional expert at the Utah State Correctional Facility and identify ways to reduce the demand for staff.

⁴ Control point operator is a non-contact position that monitors and controls access of staff, visitors, and inmates through the use of video monitors, audio communications and operation of electronic doors.



BACKGROUND

Our audit found that a negative culture at the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) amplifies staffing problems at the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF). This includes a historic status quo mindset, staff feeling unsupported by leadership and poor communication contributing to a lack of trust. On a positive note, we found that staff we interviewed were optimistic when we discussed UDC's new executive director. We also found that the strategic plan lacks focus on safety and security.

FINDING 2.1

Status Quo Mindset Leads to
Entrenched Negative Culture
at UDC

NO RECOMMENDATION

FINDING 2.2

Negative Organizational
Culture Has Been Developed
Over Many Years at UDC

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

The Utah Department of Corrections senior leadership foster a positive culture by working with industry experts and consultants to review the organization and address actions and mindsets that do not align with new organizational values.

FINDING 2.3

UDC's Current Strategic Plan Lacks Focus on Safety and Security and Needs Revision and Improvement

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

The Utah Department of Corrections revise its strategic plan and implement the Management Cycle, as outlined in the *Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

The Utah Department of Corrections include safety and security as core values and incorporate them within its mission and purpose statements.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4

The Utah Department of Corrections consider appointing a safety and security professional to implement and propel the mission of safety for the department.



CONCLUSION

UDC leadership must address the negative culture that is impacting retention of USCF officers. Implementing best practices and working with professional consultants will help in this process. Additionally, focusing on staff safety and security in the strategic plan will promote a safety mindset in all department activities.





Chapter 2

UDC Leadership Needs to Focus on and Improve Organizational Culture

2.1 Status Quo Mindset Leads to Entrenched Negative Culture at UDC

An organizational culture survey that we conducted for this audit reveals that nearly half of UDC staff do not feel that senior leadership strives for excellence and innovation nor are staff given opportunities to innovate. In addition, multiple survey responses expressed frustration that their concerns and ideas had not been seriously considered by leadership and that management is disconnected from the work staff do.

OLAG's 2023 report, *The Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*, identified that an element of creating a positive organizational culture is the ability to innovate and adapt to changing circumstances. It also identifies best practices from the Utah Chief Innovation Officer such as expecting mistakes while innovating, adjusting quickly, and providing guardrails that give employees permission to challenge the status quo.

In addition, we found multiple instances where UDC leadership has exhibited a reluctance to consider new ways of doing things – a status quo mindset. In our opinion, this status quo mindset has stalled UDC's ability to overcome challenges in a meaningful way. It has caused issues like staffing shortages, discussed in Chapter I, to worsen and affect UDC's culture, job satisfaction, and production, which has led to reduced safety and security at the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF).

A new executive director was recently appointed, and he has reshaped the management of UDC. We are encouraged by the change in approach and positive steps being taken by the new UDC director to address these issues.



A status quo mindset from UDC management inhibits its ability to address challenges in a meaningful way.

We are encouraged by the new executive director's efforts to address these issues.



Lack of Retention Planning Despite a Staffing Crisis Demonstrates Status Quo Mindset of UDC Leadership

It is critical that management focus on creating a culture of growth and retention. UDC currently has no existing retention plans to date and explained that no significant targeted effort was placed on recruitment and retention because the need was not there, and although UDC has rarely been fully staffed, it was an accepted notion that vacancies will fill themselves. UDC seems to have a mindset that it will make do with the staff it has. According to the National Institute of Justice,

National Institute of Justice:

Although turnover is a significant problem facing the sector, agencies in general are not dedicating the same level of resources or attention to retaining staff that they do for recruitment.

This is true at UDC. In the last year, UDC has hired six staff to address recruitment and other support needs at USCF, but it has not hired staff to improve retention. Directing resources to improve retention may reduce the need to recruit staff, which is increasingly difficult in the current labor market. In Chapter I of this report, we discuss potential strategies to improve retention and with the staffing issues facing USCF, retention should be a higher priority.

Lack of Scheduling Innovation Exhibits a Status Quo Mentality at UDC

With extreme staffing shortages at USCF, scheduling innovations and strategy is imperative. Unfortunately, UDC has exhibited a status quo mentality in its scheduling approach and has kept the same strategy it has always used. In 2019, with construction underway, UDC made efforts to address USCF's staffing needs by hiring a consultant. We obtained the consultant's report and analysis provided to UDC at this time and followed up to learn the nature of staffing discussions. The consultant described different scheduling approaches like using different shift lengths and scheduling alternate start times for key shifts to ensure the largest number of officers work at peak demand



UDC has hired six staff to address recruitment and other support needs at USCF, but it has not hired staff to improve retention.



A consultant proposed different scheduling approaches for USCF's staffing shortage, but management largely kept the same 12-hour shifts.

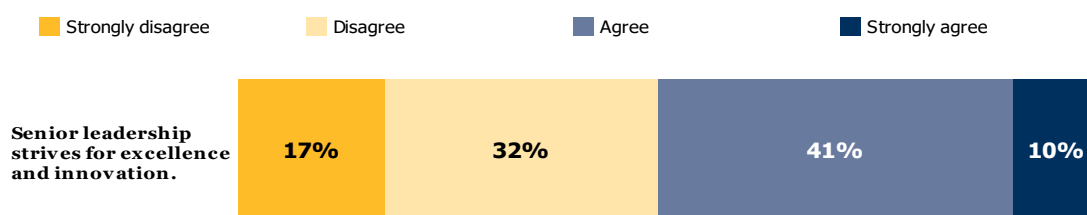


times during inmate movement. However, instead of utilizing these approaches, UDC management largely kept the same 12-hour shifts it had been using.⁵

When describing the challenges of supervising inmate movement with current staffing, one lieutenant lamented how unsafe it is. The lieutenant explained that the current twelve-hour shift ends at 6:00 p.m., which places officer shift handover in the middle of evening inmate movement. We do not recommend a specific policy but do recommend UDC leaders review policies with staff and industry experts and implement the most innovative policies.

The consultant's inability to help management think innovatively is an example of a status quo mindset at UDC. Many staff share this sentiment as 49 percent of respondents from our culture survey disagreed or strongly disagreed that senior leadership strives for innovation.

Figure 2.1 Staff Do Not Believe that UDC Senior Leadership is Innovative. Over 1,000 UDC employees responded to our culture survey.



Source: Auditor generated from culture survey data.

UDC's Complacency in Addressing Sick Leave Usage Exhibits Status Quo Approach from UDC Management

We are not concerned that sick leave is being used. It is understandable that unplanned medical needs arise. However, our audit work reveals that unplanned sick leave has been used at a sharply increasing rate since UDC moved to its new site. This appears to be a symptom of staff burnout and low morale at USCF. UDC's complacency in addressing these underlying issues is another example of a status quo mindset that has permeated UDC leadership for a long time and aggravates the challenges of staffing shortages.

Unplanned Sick Leave Use is Increasing. USCF data shows the average number of hours of unplanned sick leave one officer uses each month increased from 6.4

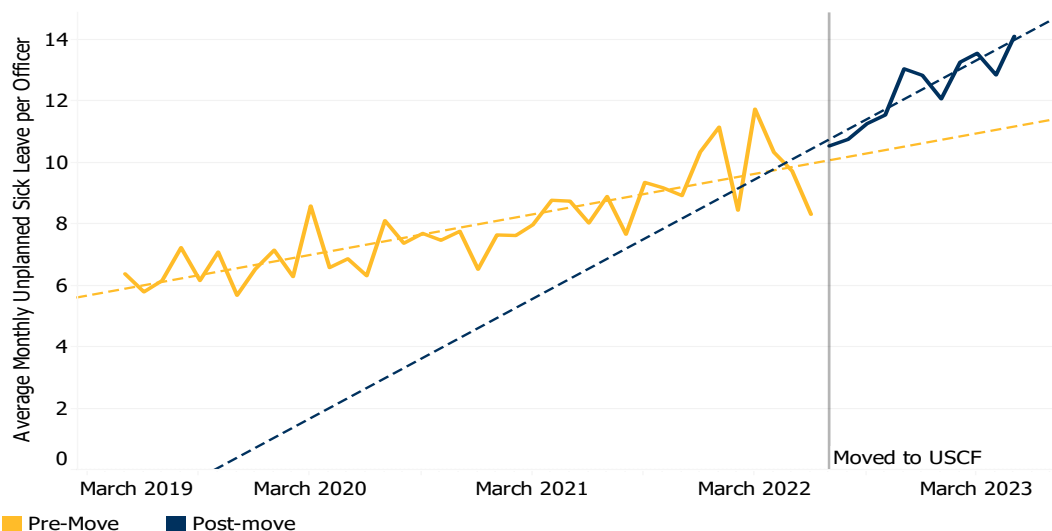
⁵ UDC reports it had internal survey data at the time indicating that 84 percent of officers preferred 12-hour shifts.



hours in May 2019 to 10.6 hours in July 2022 – a 66 percent increase. This may be expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020. However, in the time following the prison move, the average numbers of unplanned sick leave increased to 14.1 hours per officer per month as of May 2023 – another 33 percent increase in less than one year.

In addition, as USCF staff numbers have declined, officers have used more unplanned sick leave and we found cases where sick leave was potentially used to extend annual leave or to avoid overtime shifts. For example, one Central Utah Correctional Facility (CUCF) officer called in sick nine times when they were scheduled for mandatory overtime shifts at USCF over a six-month period. Figure 2.2 charts unplanned sick leave use since 2019.

Figure 2.2 Rate of Use for Unplanned Sick Leave. Use of unplanned sick leave has increased at a faster rate since the prison moved from Draper to USCF in July 2022.



Source: Auditor generated from UDC data.

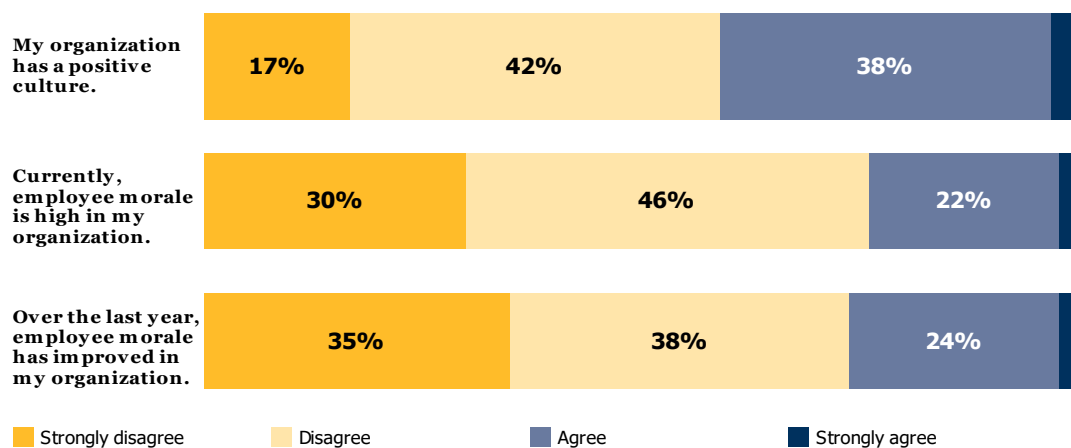
Note: Data as of June 2023

2.2 Negative Organizational Culture Has Been Developed Over Many Years at UDC

We are concerned that a negative organizational culture is impeding UDC's ability to operate USCF in a safe and secure manner. We surveyed UDC employees to better understand UDC's organizational culture and Figure 2.3 shows several survey responses that indicate a negative organizational culture.



Figure 2.3 A Negative Culture Exists at UDC. Over 1,000 UDC employees responded to our culture survey.



Source: Auditor generated from culture survey data.

Staff interviews confirmed these findings, as many raised concerns about a lack of support and ineffective communication from senior leadership. In addition to these findings, one-third of survey respondents indicated that they have looked for other employment in the last year.

Encouragingly, staff we interviewed were optimistic when we discussed UDC's new executive director, and it appears the new UDC management team has an opportunity to make impactful improvements in UDC's culture.



Encouragingly, staff we interviewed were optimistic when we discussed UDC's new executive director.

Rebuilding trust within the organization will be fundamental to creating a positive culture at UDC. We recommend that UDC management focus on areas highlighted by our culture survey to improve its organizational culture and to improve the safety and security of the prison.

Many Staff Lack Trust in Leadership and Do Not Feel Supported

Responses to multiple questions from our culture survey indicate a mistrust in UDC leadership. For example, many staff did not feel safe meeting for a confidential interview due to past experiences of retaliation for raising concerns. In addition, 36 percent of surveyed staff said mistakes bring punitive rather than corrective action, which suggests management is not using errors as opportunities to train. Half of all respondents did not feel appreciated.

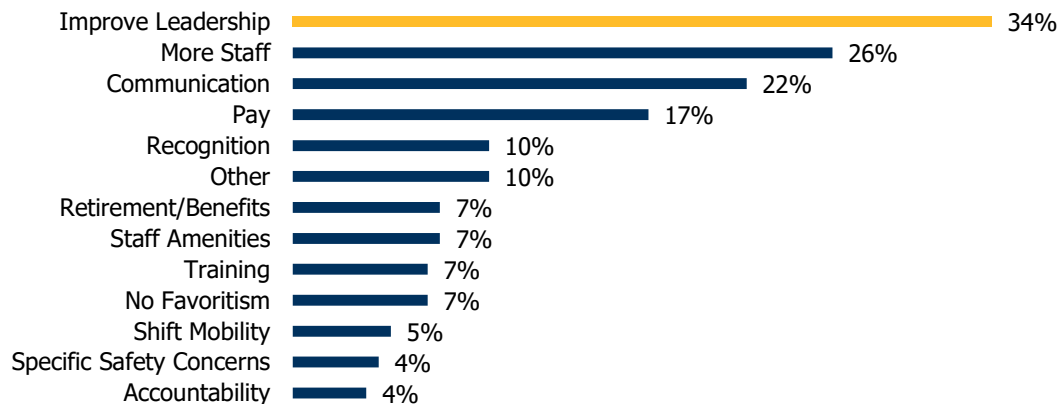


Many staff did not feel safe meeting for a confidential interview due to past experiences of retaliation for bringing up their concerns.



To understand staff's concerns further, we analyzed free responses they provided to survey questions. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 summarize this analysis.

Figure 2.3 What Can Be Done to Improve Job Satisfaction and Morale. Of 168 USCF responses, about 34 percent indicate improving leadership at UDC can improve their job satisfaction and morale.



Source: Auditor generated from culture survey data.

Note: Each category does not have duplication, but responses can be represented in multiple categories.

Some responses from the “Improve Leadership” category in Figure 2.3 include:

“Better leadership and not so much dictatorship.”

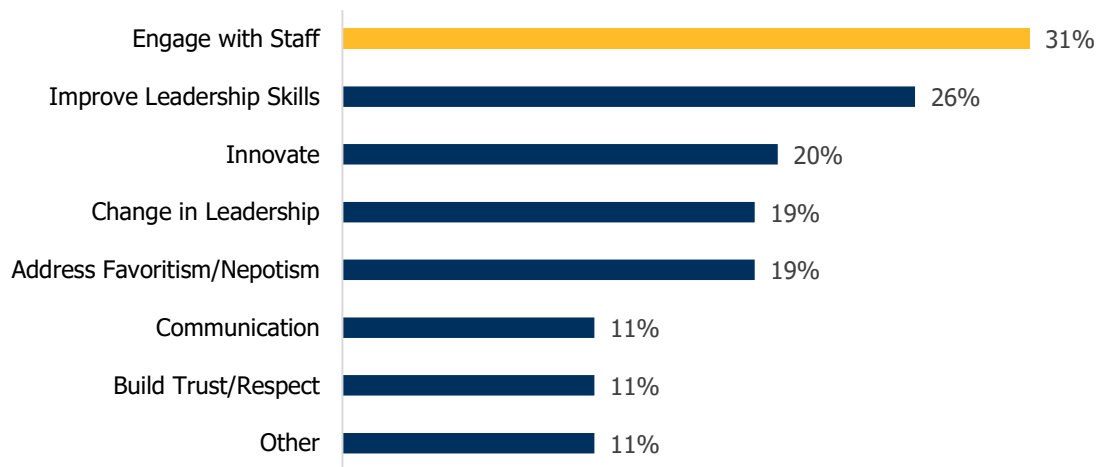
“Administration to act like they care about the staff that work for them. Administrations willingness to learn what is actually going on on the blocks instead of making decisions from behind a desk in the Stephen Anderson building.”

““Upper Administration needs a clear understanding of daily duties on the unit. They don't understand the workload and give directives that cause additional or multiple issues.”

In addition, we asked about ways that leadership can improve. Figure 2.4 summarizes these responses.



Figure 2.4 Ways to Improve Leadership. Of 97 USCF responses, 31 percent indicated that engaging with staff is how leadership can improve at UDC.



Source: Auditor generated from culture survey data.

Note: Each category does not have duplication, but responses can be represented in multiple categories.

Responses in the “Engage with Staff” category help understand staff frustrations:

“They are disconnected from the line staff they don't know what happens day to day and don't know how hard this has become since the prison move. They don't understand the impact that short staffing has had on the prison not just in general but in depth how rough it has been on all staff.”

“Senior leadership is dismissive of staff and ignores critical issues to make the department seem better than it actually is.”

“It would be helpful if leadership would sit down with those they supervise and have discussions on what is and is not working within the unit and then finding solutions to those problems together. There are a lot of problems within this prison with simple fixes, but it feels like no one is doing anything to help improve our processes and procedures.”



Our culture survey asked whether hiring, raises, and promotions are driven by clear criteria and two-thirds of all UDC respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

These cultural concerns demonstrate a need for senior leadership to make changes to foster a positive culture. To do so, we recommend that senior leadership work with experts to review the organization. Senior leadership should also take steps to address actions and mindsets that do not align with the new organizational values under the new leadership.



Two-thirds of survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that hiring, raises, and promotions are driven by clear criteria.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

The Utah Department of Corrections senior leadership foster a positive culture by working with industry experts and consultants to review the organization and address actions and mindsets that do not align with new organizational values.

Poor Communication Contributes to Lack of Trust in UDC Leadership

Poor communication contributes to a negative culture at UDC and widens the divide between staff and senior leadership. To foster a positive culture at UDC, senior leadership should improve its methods of communication with staff and provide opportunities to solicit feedback.

In *The Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*, which was published by our office, it says:

OLAG Best Practice Handbook:

"Those who are impacted by the organization are in the best position to inform the governing body, who then sets the vision that the organization ought to pursue. Consequently, the governing body should work closely and frequently with external and internal partners."

UDC Staff Do Not Feel Communication is Managed Effectively in the Department. From our culture survey, 60 percent of UDC respondents said strategies are not shared with staff. Additionally, 65 percent do not feel they



receive clear information on changes in the organization. It was also expressed that staff are not included in decision-making that directly impacts their work.

Revisiting Figure 2.3, our analysis of responses to an open-ended survey question suggests that better communication from UDC leadership is a key to improving job satisfaction and morale in the department. Additionally, Figure 2.4 indicates a need to work with staff more frequently. Greater staff engagement may help UDC address key issues and generate ideas to solve problems. This could also include involving staff in the planning process, which would help connect staff to the strategies and goals of the department. The survey showed that 53 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the organization is driven by goals and 60 percent do not feel that the organization is driven by performance measures. Communicating how decisions relate to strategies and objectives will strengthen staff buy-in. This will serve as a check on leadership to ensure that its decisions align with the organizational goals.

2.3 UDC's Current Strategic Plan Lacks Focus on Safety and Security and Needs Revision and Improvement

Our office's *Best Practice Handbook* states:

OLAG Best Practice Handbook:

"The Management Cycle is a continuous improvement framework managers can use to advance their goals and the mission of the organization... Because organizations operate within complex, dynamic, and cross-cutting environments, it is vital that they be agile and adaptive. The Management Cycle can assist organizations in identifying pitfalls and devising ways to overcome them..."

Comparing UDC's strategic plan to the standards set forth in the *Best Practice Handbook*, UDC has room for improvement and is missing an opportunity to communicate with its employees. For example, UDC's strategic plan lacks a vision statement, objectives, and performance measures which are elements that provide direction, purpose, and accountability for an organization. These elements can elevate a strategic plan from a task that needs to be completed to an organizational tool to communicate through all levels of an organization.



Strategic Plan Is Not Integrated into UDC Operations. Fifty-one percent of the staff who responded to our culture survey felt that management's decisions did not align with the strategic plan. One supervisor shared that the administration reaches out to them once a year about the strategic plan, but that is the only time it is mentioned. *The Best Practice Handbook* notes that planning is the first step in the Management Cycle, providing the structure, philosophy, long-term vision, strategies, and objectives of an organization. Effective communication must occur internally to positively impact the accomplishments of organizational objectives. Given the department's negative culture and mistrust of leadership, UDC management is missing an opportunity to constructively engage with its employees and create a culture of inclusivity. A strategic plan is a tool to accomplish both needs.



We recommend that UDC include safety and security as core values of its organization and disseminate these values throughout its chain of command.

Safety and Security Are Not Part of the Current UDC Strategic Plan. We spoke to some members of management who shared that safety was paramount, but this is not reflected in UDC's strategic plan. The absence of safety and security in UDC's strategic plan is a missed opportunity to promote a safety mindset in all department activities. We recommend that UDC include safety and security as core values of its organization and disseminate these values throughout its chain of command.

Washington State Department of Correction Prioritizes Safety. The Strategic Plan of Washington State Corrections' lists "People's Safety" as a core value.

Washington State's Value:

"Corrections believes in creating an environment that values physical, mental, and emotional security and well-being. We honor those who advance safety for all."

Washington State Corrections has implemented this value through the following practices:

- Developed policies, procedures, and practices designed to account for all staff in an emergency;
- Added equipment such as pepper spray, duress alarms, and cameras and mirrors to improve visibility;



- Created multidisciplinary teams to decide offender job placement and classification;
- Added specific security training, held security forums with first-line supervisors, and implemented monthly safety meetings for all staff;
- Added staff at each facility including a security specialist to coordinate and provide support for staff safety initiatives as well as manage the staff suggestion process.

In addition, Washington State Corrections created a statewide committee with representation across facilities and staff levels to advise the department on safety issues and staff concerns. It also created local committees at each facility to review staff safety suggestions and make recommendations. This represents a conscious effort to improve safety and security within prison facilities.

As we began our audit, UDC simultaneously created a committee similar to the one in Washington to assess safety across the department. We are encouraged by this development, as it provides UDC with an opportunity to unify its approach to safety and security across the department. However, safety and security must be part of the strategic plan. We therefore recommend that UDC appoint an individual within prison operations to implement and propel the mission of safety for UDC.



We recommend that UDC appoint an individual within prison operations to implement and propel the mission of safety for UDC.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

The Utah Department of Corrections revise its strategic plan and implement the Management Cycle, as outlined in the *Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

The Utah Department of Corrections include safety and security as core values and incorporate them within its mission and purpose statements.



RECOMMENDATION 2.4

The Utah Department of Corrections consider appointing a safety and security professional to implement and propel the mission of safety for prison operations.



BACKGROUND

Direct supervision is an inmate behavior management model that places officers inside the housing unit with inmates and encourages frequent interaction. The Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) was designed with direct supervision in mind but doing so greatly increased the need for more staff. Unfortunately, UDC failed to adequately plan to recruit and retain the required number of officers, creating potentially unsafe environments.

FINDING 3.1

Current Prison Design Was Driven by Multiple Factors that Resulted in a Need for More Staff

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to better implement direct supervision in Utah State Correctional Facility sections.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

The Utah Department of Corrections work with the Legislature to consider if other supervision models should also be allowed in statute.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

The Utah Department of Corrections work with consultants to conduct a review of the design of the Utah State Correctional Facility's maximum-security unit and evaluate how direct supervision should be used in these sections.

FINDING 3.2

Without Full Staffing, Design Changes Reduce Safety and Security of USCF

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Unit managers at the Utah State Correctional Facility provide resources for correctional officers to allow for better interactions with inmates.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5

The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to improve officer line of sight in sections at the Utah State Correctional Facility.

RECOMMENDATION 3.6

The Utah Department of Corrections work with USCF staff to prioritize officer consistency and presence in Utah State Correctional Facility sections when scheduling.



CONCLUSION

UDC must increase staffing levels at USCF while also finding ways to improve its ability to monitor and supervise its sections. UDC should also explore modifying their approach to direct supervision in the maximum-security facilities.





Chapter 3

Shortsighted Decision Making Amplifies Design Change of USCF

3.1 Current Prison Design Was Driven by Multiple Factors that Resulted in a Need For More Staff

The current design of the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) was driven by factors such as the budget, the supervision model, and the desired construction of utility and plumbing lines. When designing and planning for the new facility, previous leadership of the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) failed to consider serious staffing concerns. As discussed in Chapter I, the original Draper site experienced staffing concerns beginning in 2013, when UDC first required mandatory overtime for correctional officers (COs) at the facility. The new prison was built to implement “direct supervision,” a supervision model that emphasizes officer and inmate interaction. Due to safety concerns, the extent that direct supervision is used in maximum-security and mental health sections may require further review. Past UDC leadership failed to implement a plan to adequately recruit and retain the number of officers needed to staff a facility that would require more than twice the number of certified staff than was employed at the time of the move.



Due to safety concerns, the extent that direct supervision is used in maximum-security and mental health sections may require further review.

The project to build the prison encountered many challenges which is typical for many large projects of this scope. Decisions were made based on budget, supervision preference, and maintenance needs that created a space difficult to manage unless a significant amount of more officers were hired. Unfortunately, UDC failed to adequately plan to recruit and retain the required number of officers.

Importantly, a direct supervision model, combined with the chosen rectangular design, requires more staffing to operate the prison safely and securely. As detailed in Chapter I of this report, UDC management did not consider its capacity to hire sufficient staff to operate the prison accordingly.



Designs for Direct Supervision Sections Vary

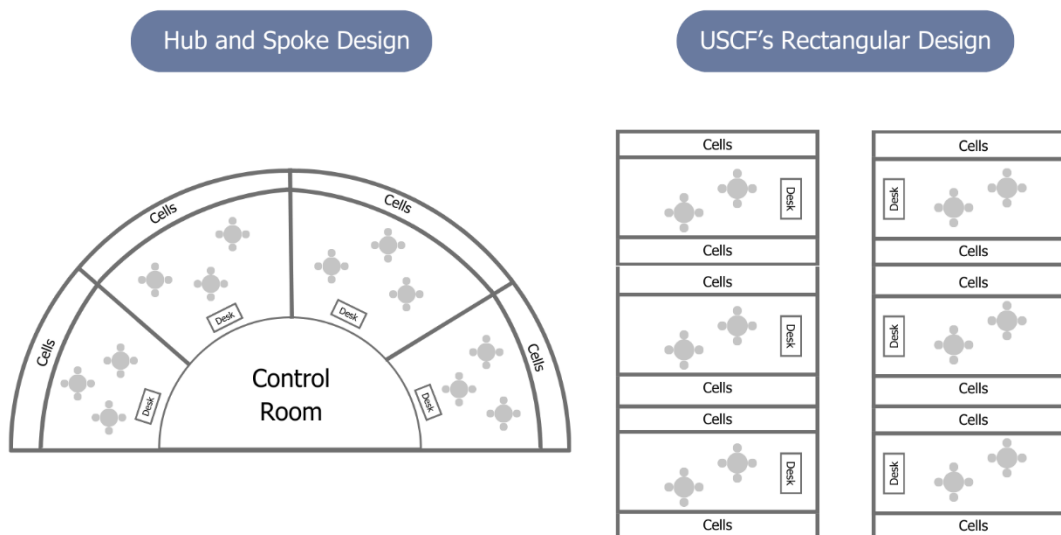
The rectangular design of the USCF differs from that of other correctional facilities we observed in Utah but is similar to correctional facilities found in other states.



Direct supervision sections in other Utah facilities use a "hub and spoke" design, which allows a control point operator to observe multiple sections from a secure location.

We visited sections in the Salt Lake and Utah county jails as well as in the Central Utah Correctional Facility (CUCF). The direct supervision sections we observed in these facilities resemble a "hub and spoke" design, which allows a control point operator (CPO)⁶ to observe multiple sections from a secure location. It also allows a direct supervision CO to easily view each of the cells in the section, which the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) says an officer

should have in areas under their supervision. In contrast, USCF primarily uses a rectangular design with an officer at a desk near the front of the section. The figure below shows examples of both designs.



Source: Auditor generated based on observations.

Officers we interviewed said coverage was best with a CPO located in the sections to keep an eye on the sections and enable quicker response times. The

⁶ Control point operator is a non-contact position that monitors and controls access of staff, visitors, and inmates through the use of video monitors, audio communications and operation of electronic doors.



new Ironwood pod at CUCF is a direct supervision building, designed like the hub and spoke picture above.

Other States Have Used a Rectangular Design. We spoke with representatives from other state corrections departments that were identified as good examples of successfully using direct supervision and found that the use of these designs varies depending on the classification and the needs of the facility. However, some of the states we spoke with do use a rectangular design in their direct supervision sections. While UDC may be able to successfully implement direct supervision using a rectangular section design, UDC has not fully implemented direct supervision at USCF due to inadequate staffing.

While UDC has taken steps to implement direct supervision at USCF, additional action is needed should it choose to continue with the model. In this report, we identify multiple concerns with UDC's implementation of direct supervision principles. Addressing the deficiencies in UDC's implementation of direct supervision principles identified in this report while also increasing staffing levels will assist UDC in its efforts to operate the facility as intended. Additionally, while *Utah Code* requires a system of direct supervision at new and modified facilities, UDC also should work with the Legislature to consider if the use of different inmate management techniques should be allowed in statute.



While UDC may be able to successfully implement direct supervision using a rectangular section design, UDC has not fully implemented direct supervision at USCF.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to better implement direct supervision in Utah State Correctional Facility sections.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

The Utah Department of Corrections work with the Legislature to consider if other supervision models should be allowed in statute.



Other Entities Do Not Administer Direct Supervision in Maximum-Security Facilities

Direct supervision was a major influence on the design of USCF, and the degree to which it is used at different security levels may need to be adjusted as more time progresses. *Utah Code* requires direct supervision at new and modified facilities but allows for variation based on the behavior of the inmate. This provides flexibility for UDC to provide incentives for inmates to improve their behavior which aligns with best practices.



***Utah Code* requires direct supervision at new and modified facilities but allows for variation based on the behavior of the inmate.**

Multiple states we spoke with have chosen to limit their use of direct supervision for inmates with high security levels. Instead, they use indirect supervision where an officer sits behind a barrier and monitors inmates moving freely in a common area or secured in their cells. Interaction still occurs between inmates and officers, but usually when the inmates are restrained or in their cells.

USCF's maximum-security unit (Antelope) was reportedly intended to align with best practices by allowing flexibility to house inmates according to their behavior. Unfortunately, current staffing levels and a rising inmate population restrict the UDC's ability to utilize Antelope as intended. The six sections that house the highest security level inmates use barriers to create small dayrooms that separate officers from inmates but still allow inmates time out of their cells as required. In the other four sections, no barrier exists between officers and inmates, but from our limited observations, it appears interaction is kept minimal. UDC reports it intended for higher privilege sections to have an officer present as in general population, but to enhance safety despite a lack of staff, it



Given the staffing shortage and current demands placed on staff, maintaining officer presence in all USCF housing sections appears currently unattainable.

has required two officers to accompany each other in these sections.

Given the staffing shortage and current demands placed on staff, maintaining officer presence in all USCF housing sections appears currently unattainable. As a result, we believe that the modified schedule that USCF currently uses cannot become a long-term solution and UDC must explore alternative ways to address these issues.

Furthermore, in maximum-security sections, CPOs monitor two sections each from a secure location and COs primarily handle tasks that require a certified



officer such as moving an inmate. For these sections, the facility design may warrant additional review to ensure the safety of officers. UDC should work with professional consultants as part of this review to identify ways to make improvements to the security of these areas. This may also include a cost-benefit analysis to determine if a new building for maximum-security is cost-efficient. As previously noted, we saw designs similar to the hub and spoke design for maximum-security in multiple county jails, CUCF, and other states. Alternative designs such as the hub and spoke may require fewer staff to operate. UDC could consider options that may provide a better long-term solution for maximum-security including adding additional CPOs, increasing the number of staff in these sections, or even a new unit. Additionally, while the philosophy of housing inmates according to behavior aligns with best practices, it is not yet clear to what degree direct supervision should be used in maximum-security sections. The value of direct supervision needs to be weighed with the current reality of staffing concerns and officer safety. We therefore recommend that UDC evaluate how direct supervision should be implemented in USCF's maximum-security unit.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

The Utah Department of Corrections work with consultants to conduct a review of the design of the Utah State Correctional Facility's maximum-security unit and evaluate how direct supervision should be used in these sections.

3.2 Without Full Staffing, Design of Prison Reduces Safety and Security of USCF

Because of inadequate staffing at USCF, the prison is unable to operate as intended, jeopardizing the safety of staff working in the facility. While we do not necessarily consider the design of the facility itself to be flawed, past leadership of UDC failed to address staffing needs at the new facility, which has amplified differences in the design of the new facility from that of the old facility. These low staffing levels impede USCF staff's



These low staffing levels impede USCF staff's ability to operate the facility as intended.



ability to operate the facility as intended. The differences in the facility design emphasize the need to address UDC's acute staffing needs mentioned in Chapter I of this report, but UDC should take additional action to ensure the safety of staff in the facility.

Rectangular Design Places Greater Weight on the Full Implementation of Direct Supervision

The design for USCF's sections reportedly relies heavily on assumptions that UDC would have the staff needed to have an officer present in each section and that officers would continually interact with inmates. We feel that these assumptions are impractical given the current staffing shortage. Our observations led us to conclude that officers spend much of their time at their desks which provide only a limited line of sight with the rest of the section.⁷ This allows inmates to act without adequate supervision. Figure 3.2 shows two photographs of empty sections taken from the point of view of the officer desks.

Figure 3.2 Images from Officer Desks in Two Sections Demonstrate the Poor Line of Sight. The view of many cells in these sections is not visible when an officer is at the desk.



Source: Auditor generated.

These images demonstrate line of sight issues for officers. While officers are at the desk, they are unable to see many of the cells at the far end on the main level and almost none of the cells on the top tier. To see what is happening in these parts of the section, officers need to walk several feet away from the desk toward the end of the section. We do not believe that this is being done frequently

⁷ Some camera monitoring is available in areas outside of the officer's view. However, cameras are not permitted in bathrooms, which is where we were told much of the illegal activity is taking place. Despite some footage of the cell area, officers acknowledge there were blind spots outside their view.



enough to mitigate the poor line of sight. This is based on our interviews with over 100 inmates and our observations of the sections which included viewing hours of video footage in multiple sections. While low staffing levels require additional responsibilities for officers, we believe that opportunities still exist to improve this aspect of direct supervision.

Current Officer Practices Do Not Sufficiently Mitigate Poor

Line of Sight. Most inmates that we interviewed said that officers generally remain at their desks during shifts but will interact with inmates while at their desk. Our observations confirmed that most interactions occur in this manner, contrary to the notion that officers would improve their line of sight by continuously moving throughout the section. Officers do conduct hourly security checks but most of these usually only last roughly three minutes. We also received reports from COs and leadership that inmates warn others in the section when officers leave the desk by calling out “walking.” This suggests that inmates are conducting prohibited or illegal activity. To reduce the potential for illegal activity in the prison, officers must maintain greater presence in the sections.



To reduce the potential for illegal activity in the prison, officers must maintain greater control in the sections.

To accomplish this, COs must proactively move around the sections and away from their desks. That said, we recognize that officers are tasked with multiple administrative duties that require the use of a computer. According to UDC



The design of the sections relies on officer behavior and their efforts to interact with inmates.

policy, unit managers shall assist section officers with methods to enhance time and management skills to maximize the time available to leave their desk areas and interact with inmates. Supervisors we spoke with reported that they attempt to do this, but we question the effectiveness of their efforts based on our observations of the sections and inmate interviews.

Using additional methods of time management such as setting aside time to move around the section as well as additional training and mentorship of new COs will aid officers in their efforts to have more interactions with inmates.



We recognize that some officers may prefer to spend most of their time at their desk, given the physical and psychological demand of continuously interacting with inmates throughout the section. Currently, the design of the sections relies on officer behavior and their efforts to interact with inmates. To enforce this behavior, UDC policy states,

UDC Policy:

The unit manager/designee will monitor and enforce the performance expectations for staff members working in a direct supervision environment.

These performance expectations include interacting with inmates throughout the shift and becoming familiar with all inmates under their supervision. We question the effectiveness of current efforts to enforce these expectations based on our observations of officer and inmate interaction. We believe that greater follow-up on direct supervision principles may improve these interactions.

Additionally, UDC may choose to increase officer line of sight in other ways such as moving the desk to an area of the section with greater visibility. We also found that other states using direct supervision in rectangular sections have taken steps to mitigate safety risks which include training officers to have frequent interactions with inmates, installing cameras in areas where line of sight is poor, and using additional officers or control unit staff to monitor the sections. UDC reports that it has taken steps to increase the number of CPOs in general population which is encouraging. We recommend that UDC continue to employ these or similar methods to improve the line of sight for officers in USCF sections.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Unit managers at the Utah State Correctional Facility provide resources for correctional officers to allow for better interactions with inmates.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5

The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to improve officer line of sight in sections at the Utah State Correctional Facility.



Staffing Shortages Do Not Allow for Consistent Officer Presence, Increasing Likelihood of Incidents at USCF

Although we see opportunities for USCF to increase officer line of sight, we recognize that staff are currently overextended. Still, adequate supervision requires officer presence in the section. Below, we note concerns regarding the ability of COs to supervise sections at USCF as a result of inadequate staffing:

- Many housing unit officers watch over two sections at once;
- Housing unit officers are frequently called away from their sections, leaving inmates unsupervised for extended periods of time;
- Greater workloads for officers result in fewer interactions with inmates and fewer opportunities to build trust;
- Problems of inconsistency in officer housing section assignments do not allow for full continuity across shifts.



We found that section assignments have some inconsistency. However, USCF's scheduling office reports that it does make an effort to schedule officers to the same building.

These issues are concerning given the emphasis that the design of the facility places on building relationships with inmates. For example, we found that section assignments have some inconsistency. However, USCF's scheduling office reports that it does make an effort to schedule officers to the same building. Posts also are frequently filled by officers from Adult Probation and Parole (AP&P) and the CUCF. While scheduling in this manner helps USCF maintain staffing under the modified schedule, it does

not fully allow for consistency with inmates. NIC recommends that officers be assigned to work the same section for at least 90 days before rotating assignments so that officers may establish adequate control in direct supervision. While we are unable to determine the consistency of assignments in each section, we estimate that roughly one in five shifts were covered by officers not working their regular assignments over the course of about a year after the move. This is shown in the graphic to the right.

1 in 5 shifts were likely covered by officers not working their regular assignment.



We are concerned frequent changes in officer scheduling do not allow adequate opportunities for COs to build trust with inmates and reduces officer control as recommended by NIC.

According to USCF leadership, issues of officer inconsistency and reduced officer presence create greater opportunities for inmates to control what happens in the sections. We received multiple reports of these events occurring at USCF including one report that inmates are being forced by other inmates to provide them with goods. One inmate that we spoke with said that he is housed with gang members and is scared for his life. Another inmate told us that he believes there are more drugs and violence at the new prison than the old one in Draper. While this is anecdotal evidence, it suggests a need for additional review by UDC. While we believe that staffing levels must improve to fully address this issue, UDC executive leadership should also work with USCF staff to find ways to improve officer consistency and presence in USCF sections. We believe prioritizing officer consistency and presence while simultaneously improving staffing levels will help officers establish greater control.



One inmate that we spoke with said that he is housed with gang members and is scared for his life.

RECOMMENDATION 3.6

The Utah Department of Corrections executive leadership work with Utah State Correctional Facility staff to prioritize officer consistency and presence in Utah State Correctional Facility sections when scheduling.



Complete List of Audit Recommendations





Complete List of Audit Recommendations

This report made the following 14 recommendations. The numbering convention assigned to each recommendation consists of its chapter followed by a period and recommendation number within that chapter.

Recommendation 1.1

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections prioritize recruitment and retention of correctional officers and procure professional consulting to create a focused recruitment and retention plan.

Recommendation 1.2

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to assist in carrying out a staffing analysis for the prison at full capacity.

Recommendation 1.3

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to complete an analysis of pay, benefits, and organizational culture.

Recommendation 1.4

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections evaluate prison operations in conjunction with a correctional expert at the Utah State Correctional Facility and identify ways to reduce the demand for staff.

Recommendation 2.1

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections senior leadership foster a positive culture by working with professionals to review the organization and address actions and mindsets that do not align with the new organizational values.

Recommendation 2.2

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections revise its strategic plan and implement the Management Cycle, as outlined in *The Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government*.

Recommendation 2.3

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections include safety and security as core values and incorporate them within its mission and purpose statements.

Recommendation 2.4

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections consider appointing a safety and security professional to implement and propel the mission of safety for the department.

Recommendation 3.1

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections take steps to better implement direct supervision in Utah State Correctional Facility sections.

Recommendation 3.2

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections work with the Legislature to consider if other supervision models should also be allowed in statute.



Recommendation 3.3

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections work with consultants to conduct a review of the design of the Utah State Correctional Facility's maximum-security unit and evaluate how direct supervision should be used in these sections.

Recommendation 3.4

We recommend unit managers at the Utah State Correctional Facility provide resources for correctional officers to allow for better interactions with inmates.

Recommendation 3.5

We recommend the Utah Department take steps to improve officer line of sight in sections at the Utah State Correctional Facility.

Recommendation 3.6

We recommend the Utah Department of Corrections executive leadership work with Utah State Correctional Facility staff to prioritize officer consistency and presence in Utah State Correctional Facility sections when scheduling.



Agency Response





State of Utah

SPENCER J. COX
Governor

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
Lieutenant Governor

Utah Department of Corrections Executive Office

BRIAN REDD
Executive Director

JARED GARCIA
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Deputy Director

November 6, 2023

Kade R. Minchey CIA, CFE, Auditor General
Office of the Legislative Auditor General Utah State Capitol Complex
Rebecca Lockhart House Building, Suite W315
PO Box 145315
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-5315

Dear Mr. Minchey,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Performance Audit of the Utah State Correctional Facility: An Examination of Staffing, Culture, Safety, and Security (Report #2023-17). The entire process was an engaging and valuable experience for our department. We appreciate the audit team's approach and express our gratitude for their willingness to collaborate and communicate with our department throughout the process. The recommendations in the audit are well reasoned and actionable. We believe, with support from and collaboration with our internal and external stakeholders, we can use these recommendations to improve our operations, culture and overall safety and security of Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) and our correctional system.

There is no greater responsibility of the department than to ensure the safety of our correctional professionals, incarcerated men and women, and create secure environments that support their safe return to our communities. As such, we concur with the recommendations in this report and have outlined our actions and intent moving forward. Our department will work together to ensure compliance with the recommendations while improving the overall safety and security of our state's correctional system. We are committed to improvement and value the insight and assistance we've gained from this audit.

Sincerely,

Brian Redd (Nov 6, 2023 11:50 MST)

Brian Redd, Executive Director

Chapter 1

Finding 1.1 - UDC Failed to Prioritize, Plan, and Execute an Adequate Hiring and Retention Plan for USCF.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1 - The Utah Department of Corrections prioritize recruitment and retention of correctional officers and procure professional consulting to create a focused recruitment and retention plan.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs that prioritizing and planning for improved hiring and retention will stabilize the department's correctional officer ranks.

What:

The efforts around recruiting, throughout the department's history, have varied over time. We recognize the value of a strategic recruitment and retention plan, and will evaluate opportunities to improve. Recently, the department added additional positions to the recruitment team, increased the number of background investigators for onboarding officers, and moved the team under the Executive Office to elevate the oversight and provide additional guidance. The Department commits to developing a more strategic recruiting effort to include analysis of the complete officer hiring process.

The department also recognizes the critical role employee retention plays in an overarching recruitment strategy. In October 2023, the department initiated a Direct Overtime program to pay staff who are required to be held past their shifts or are called out. The department also recently added a hiring referral bonus program for employees. The department is currently reviewing other proposals and industry-specific approaches designed to improve morale and retention.

In August 2022, department leadership, in conjunction with the governor and legislative leadership, provided significant support to increase pay for correctional staff in order to remain competitive with law enforcement agencies. The increased entry-level wage significantly improved hiring and retention. We are grateful for the collaboration and support of that effort and the positive impact it had on our department. Additionally, with recent legislative changes to allow correctional agencies to hire 19-year-olds, the department can reach out to new, potential candidate pools at high schools and community colleges. A Reserve Officer program was established to allow retired officers or officers from other agencies to work part-time at USCF.

A snapshot of our current recruitment and retention efforts shows that from February 2022 through December 2022 we had a net *loss* of 38 officers. Since the compensation and improvements to recruiting and retention, since the fall of 2022, we have had a net *gain* of 163 officers (including academy cadets). We appreciate the

Legislature for the substantial increase in funding for officer compensation which made an indisputable impact on recruiting and retention.

When:

The department will establish a strategic plan for recruiting and retention and continue to work with the Governor's Office, the Legislature and other experts/consultants to find ways to incentivize and enhance the positive trajectory. This will include solutions to address pay compression (affecting tenured employees and those in supervisory positions) and ways to improve retention of newer officers.

Finding 1.2 - Current Staffing Numbers Fall Far Short of Full Staffing Needs for Safe and Secure Operations at USCF

RECOMMENDATION 1.2 - The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to assist in carrying out a staffing analysis for the prison at full capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3 - The Utah Department of Corrections procure professional consulting to complete a pay, benefit, and culture analysis.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs staffing numbers fall short of staffing needs for safe and secure operations at USCF.

What:

Currently, safe and secure prison operations are deeply impacted by the shortfall in staff availability, negatively impacting USCF operations. To close the gap in staffing, each certified department member is working mandatory overtime to assist in this effort. It is also important to note USCF is operating on a "modified" staffing pattern. Meaning, housing operations largely operate with fewer staff than outlined in the facility's original design. In addition to mandatory overtime, the department relies on volunteer overtime hours to carry out its core functions at USCF.

It is clear the current staffing at USCF isn't sustainable. Recruitment and retention, as noted in the previous recommendation response, is the department's key focus. The entire department is collaborating and participating in the efforts to improve in this area..

In early 2023, the agency partnered with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) to conduct a staffing analysis training and review for both of our prisons. While this exercise and training was very beneficial for our team, we need to do more and welcome the recommendation to use a consultant to review our staffing model and pattern.

Notable areas where the department is focusing on security enhancements, in addition to hiring, include; training, security cameras, and control point operators. Improved and ongoing training is essential to creating

a culture where safety and security are prioritized. We have embedded a training division staff member at USCF to monitor and assist with training needs and enhance accessibility and responsiveness to situations that need urgent attention with regard to training. The need for security cameras is constantly being evaluated. We have installed new cameras and camera monitoring stations. We continue to add civilian control point operators and examine funding to add control point operators to the Antelope and Bear facilities. These positions increase the personnel monitoring and supporting security functions inside the housing units, which reduces the probability of errors, and increases efficiency during peak staff and inmate movement times.

In addition, the department is evaluating staffing patterns and the use of certified officer positions that could be converted to civilian positions and will make appropriate adjustments. We will evaluate the use of incentives (e.g. training, financial incentives, etc.) to attract experienced officers to work in areas of critical need. We welcome the opportunity to partner with expert consultants to review our staffing models, pay, benefits and culture.. Enhancing these areas are top priorities for the department.

When:

The department met with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB), the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) in preparation for the legislative session to discuss challenges and opportunities. We will work with GOPB and DHRM and other experts/consultants as needed to address current staffing challenges, identify ways to improve culture, and plan for future needs.

Finding 1.3 - Opportunities Exist to Increase and Maintain Staffing Levels Needed for Safe and Secure Prison Operations

RECOMMENDATION 1.4 - The Utah Department of Corrections evaluate prison operations in conjunction with a correctional expert at the Utah State Correctional Facility and identify ways to reduce the demand for staff.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs there are opportunities to increase and maintain staffing levels. We concur there may be additional ways to reduce the demand for staff.

What:

As outlined in the response to recommendation 1.2 and 1.3, we will review the use of civilian positions where appropriate and the use of incentives to retain experienced officers in critical areas of the operation. We welcome the opportunity to partner with a consultant and other experts in the field to identify ways to review and improve our staffing patterns, and determine possibilities for reducing the demand for staff.

When:

Within the next six months, the department will seek input from experts in the field of prison staffing and scheduling, through the RFI and/or RFP process. We will work to make adjustments based on the recommendations from experts and will inform the governor's office and legislature of the results.

Chapter 2

Finding 2.1 - Status Quo Mindset Leads to Entrenched Negative Culture and UDC

No Recommendation

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

We concur with the finding and are committed to overcoming a status quo mindset and negative culture associated with it. In its first few months, new executive leadership fully reviewed department operations, leadership and effectiveness. Leaders set the culture of a team, and ultimately an organization. Executive leadership is committed to making changes in leadership that will allow the organization to move forward in deliberate and transformative ways. Clear expectations of leadership will break up attitudes, beliefs and actions that create status quo mindsets and cultivate new and innovative ways of thinking.

Executive leadership will enhance leadership training and mentorship in the organization. We commit to ensuring leaders within the department adopt a servant-leader mentality with focus on modeling department values and supporting staff growth and well-being through engagement, mentorship, and involvement.

Additionally, executive leadership commits to increasing communication and involvement with staff to identify ways to express ideas, ask questions, improve operations and enhance the employee experience. Executive leadership is also committed to improving working conditions for our employees by streamlining processes and simplifying workloads through the use of technology.

FINDING 2.2 - Negative Organizational Culture Has Been Developed Over Many Years at UDC

RECOMMENDATION 2.1 - The Utah Department of Corrections senior leadership foster a positive culture by working with industry experts and consultants to review the organization and address actions and mindsets that do not align with new organizational values.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs that culture can be improved.

What:

The department has recently created a People Development Committee to help improve culture by seeking recommendations from staff to improve the department and engage staff members in personal development, wellness, and mentorship. As the audit indicates, the staff engagement will positively impact retention and improve culture. The department is looking forward to engaging other stakeholders to improve and increase our ability to keep staff members in several different essential areas. The department recognizes the importance of emphasizing the following areas to enhance agency culture within the strategic plan:

- 1) Emphasize active, involved, and supportive leadership
- 2) Promote enhanced communication with an emphasis on listening to our employees and other stakeholders
- 3) Increase focus on mental and physical health and overall well being
- 4) Create environments that support transparency and learning over punitive action
- 5) Enhance opportunities for professional growth and development opportunities

When:

The department is currently taking steps to address staff engagement and communication and will work with industry experts and consultants as appropriate. The department will improve leadership training and enhance staff involvement in the decision making process. The department will also take steps over the next year to improve our strategic plan and communicate our objectives across the department.

FINDING 2.3 UDC's Current Strategic Plan Lacks Focus on Safety and Security and Needs Revision and Improvement

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

The Utah Department of Corrections revise its strategic plan and implement the Management Cycle, as outlined in the Best Practice Handbook: A Practical Guide to Excellence for Utah Government.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

Executive leadership commits to reviewing and adjusting the Department's strategic plan and adopting the principles outlined in the Management Cycle.

What:

With recent changes in leadership at the department, executive leadership has plans to review and adjust the department's strategic plan to include principles of safety for staff, community, and those supervised by our department. The plan and objectives will be measured, reviewed regularly, and adjusted in accordance with the Management Cycle as outlined in the Best Practices Handbook. A key focus of our effort will be to emphasize safety and security with involvement and input from staff. The department will ensure the strategic plan is clear and effectively communicated to employees with feedback channels to inform adjustments.

When:

The new administration will begin updating the strategic plan before year's end and continue to develop and communicate the plan over the next year. The recently formed Safety and Security Council will evaluate issues that are raised by staff and create action plans for implementing changes that stem from these concerns. Their efforts will inform our strategic objectives to improve culture, safety and employee well being.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

The Utah Department of Corrections include safety and security as core values and incorporate them within its mission and purpose statements.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs with the recommendation.

What:

The current department mission statement is to “improve the lives of staff and offenders.” Adjusting the mission statement and emphasizing core values related to safety and security will focus the department on keeping staff, the community, and those within our supervision safe.. With a safe and secure facility, staff can focus on other important efforts including risk reduction and rehabilitation of offenders.

When:

The new administration will begin updating the strategic plan, mission statement and core values before year’s end. The department will continue to develop and communicate updates over the next year. The recently formed Safety and Security Council will help inform efforts and guide the implementation of staff-driven safety recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4

The Utah Department of Corrections consider appointing a safety and security professional to implement and propel the mission of safety for the department.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs that appointing a safety and security professional will bring a deliberate focus to this important aspect of prison operations.

What:

The department will create a new position for a safety and security professional. The individual will review safety incidents, evaluate risk, and ensure compliance to policy and best practices. The individual will work with the recently formed Safety and Security Council and staff to reduce risk and improve safety.

When:

We anticipate the safety and security professional will be employed within the next 90 days, subject to funding availability.

Chapter 3:

FINDING 3.1 - Current Prison Design Was Driven by Multiple Factors that Resulted in a Need for More Staff

RECOMMENDATION 3.1 - The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to better implement direct supervision in Utah State Correctional Facility sections.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs steps need to be taken to better implement direct supervision.

What:

To improve implementation of direct supervision the department must hire additional correctional officers. While continuing to focus on recruitment and retention, we also need to study and analyze how direct supervision is currently used across the department. Our study will inform areas for improvement or adjustment based on risk and need. The Department will strive to implement best practices and provide training to staff and the incarcerated population to enhance safety and increase consistency and predictability.

When:

By the end of Q2 2024, the department will evaluate current direct supervision practices and provide recommendations for modifications or adjustments at USCF as appropriate. The department will work with experts familiar with direct supervision and the Legislature for any statutory modifications necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2 - The Utah Department of Corrections work with the Legislature to consider if other supervision models should also be allowed in statute.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs that working with the Legislature to consider other supervision models will enhance the security and safety within USCF.

What:

Utah Annotated Code 64-13-14 governs the use of direct supervision in state correctional facilities. It was last updated during the 2021 general legislative session. The statutory language requires direct supervision to be implemented under certain conditions.

When:

The department is in discussion with legislators to determine if adjustments are needed to the current statutory framework to allow for variation of supervision methods based on facility, risk and need. The department is

evaluating various supervision models to increase safety and security while meeting objectives outlined in 64-13-14. This work will continue through the upcoming legislative session and any adjustments will be implemented through 2024.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3 - The Utah Department of Corrections work with consultants to conduct a review of the design of the Utah State Correctional Facility's maximum-security unit and evaluate how direct supervision should be used in these sections.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs that a review of the current design and operational procedures should be conducted in the maximum-security unit (Antelope facility) at USCF.

What:

Direct supervision in a maximum security facility presents challenges and requires additional resources, training and oversight. Design decisions for the Antelope facility were made several years ago, and don't appear to have taken into account the possibility of future staffing shortages. Given the current staffing shortages and the increased risk to correctional officers, the Antelope facility cannot be supervised under traditional direct supervision methods. USCF leadership continues to modify and enhance security procedures and evaluate potential improvements to the building layout. At least two staff members are now required when entering inmate housing areas. The department is committed to working with experts to identify best practices in the management of Antelope

When:

The department is currently in discussion with legislators to determine if adjustments are needed to the current statutory framework to allow for variation of supervision methods based on facility, risk and need. The department is evaluating various supervision models to increase safety and security while meeting objectives outlined in 64-13-14. This work will continue through the upcoming legislative session and any adjustments will be implemented through 2024. The department commits to utilization of consultants/experts based on current and future staffing and legislatively mandated supervision models.

FINDING 3.2 - Without Full Staffing, Design Changes Reduce Safety and Security of USCF

RECOMMENDATION 3.4 - Unit managers at the Utah State Correctional Facility provide resources for correctional officers to allow for better interactions with inmates.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs with the recommendation.

What:

The department agrees with the need to provide more consistent policy, structure, and resources for officers to better interact and communicate with inmates. When the prison relocated, direct supervision was mandated by policy, legislation, and building design. Staff received training on direct supervision principles prior to opening USCF. The department should enhance efforts to provide on-going training and elicit staff feedback. The direct supervision approach requires better communication and engagement by officers assigned to a section. This is in contrast to non-direct supervision sections where interactions between inmates and staff are less frequent and staff remain in a control point.

Direct supervision requires unit leadership to engage with staff and model best practices, particularly given the tenure of our correctional officers (approximately 40 percent have under two years experience). Support from unit leadership will ensure quality officer interactions and consistent enforcement of unit rules and incentives.

The department is working toward improved processes and systems, enhanced training opportunities for unit leadership and staff, and improved prosocial interaction between staff and inmates. Administration must ensure housing unit supervisors assume a strong leadership role to ensure section safety/security, and consistency, while allowing the incarcerated population to be supported and successful.

When:

Processes and systems are currently under review and enhancements will be implemented and documented over the next year.

RECOMMENDATION 3.5 - The Utah Department of Corrections take steps to improve officer line of sight in sections at the Utah State Correctional Facility.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs with the recommendation.

What:

The department is installing additional cameras throughout the institution to enhance visibility. We will implement improved risk management practices, provide enhanced training for walkthrough security checks, and ensure officers have the proper safety equipment. Where possible, physical improvements will also be implemented.

When:

Additional camera installation is in progress with an anticipated completion date of July 2024. Enhanced training is under development and will be implemented in the second quarter of 2024.

RECOMMENDATION 3.6 - The Utah Department of Corrections work with USCF staff to prioritize officer consistency and presence in Utah State Correctional Facility sections when scheduling.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The department concurs with the recommendation.

What:

Direct supervision is best implemented when officers are consistently assigned to a specific housing section where they can build rapport, model prosocial behavior and apply rules and incentives consistently. Direct supervision encourages prosocial interactions and discourages antisocial behavior. The department is unable to optimally implement direct supervision due to staffing shortages, which lead to frequent changes in staff who are working mandatory overtime at the facility. While unit leadership is able to provide stability in unit operations, direct supervision relies on the section officer to provide this experience. As the number of staff increases, the ability to provide consistency in the housing units will increase. Consistency will remain a challenge as long as the high volume of mandatory overtime continues. The department will evaluate staffing assignments, explore adding incentives, and make adjustments to create more consistency, particularly in high risk housing sections.

When:

The department will use quarterly staffing pattern reviews to evaluate improvements to staffing consistency, particularly in high risk areas. The department is committed to seeking consistency in scheduling. Each quarter, as the mandatory overtime shift coordination is reviewed, we will also look for opportunities to create consistent staffing for those shifts. We will also utilize the consultant as recommended in other sections of this report to assist with this recommendation.



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