

**John Howard Association Annual Meeting
Sept. 17, 2009
Director Michael P. Randle – Remarks**

Good afternoon.

Thank you for this opportunity to be a part of the John Howard Association's Annual Meeting. I count it a privilege and look forward to continuing the partnership our organizations have established through many years of working closely together.

It has also been a great honor to be appointed by Governor Pat Quinn as the director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. I look forward to working with the governor to ensure that his vision for public safety is realized for the citizens of Illinois.

As director of IDOC, I have the privilege of working with more than 10,000 employees who day in and day out do a job who most could not and would not do. The agency manages 46,000 adult inmates and supervises more than 33,000 parolees.

IDOC employees -- along with hundreds of partners -- are all important pieces of the puzzle -- that when put together the right way -- ensure that offenders are housed, supervised and re-enter communities with the best chance possible to succeed.

Reentry is a major focus of IDOC. It's important that offenders learn skills and build relationships among service providers to help them return to their communities and families as productive citizens.

Ultimately this department will be and should be judged -- not only our ability to ensure public safety -- but on our ability to reduce recidivism as well. As you may be aware, the recidivism rate in Illinois is 51.3 percent.

While the current rate is down from 54.4 percent in 2003, we must continue to reduce this number. In order to do that, IDOC must take a three-prong approach.

- 1st - We must reduce the number of offenders coming into prison. We know that 47 percent of the offenders who are released from the IDOC have been in our custody for six month or less. It is our belief that these mostly, low-level non violent offenders can be punished in less expensive community options.
- 2nd - For those offenders who do come to prison, we will need to expand and build on the successful rehabilitative programs within the department -- such as Operation Spotlight, Sheridan and Southwestern Illinois models.

- 3rd - We must continue the work of our community-based partners and other reentry supports like our Adult Transitional Centers and Day Reporting Centers.

Reentry as you know involves teamwork. Law enforcement, social service agencies and community-based organizations are all vital pieces to the puzzle.

In today's fallen economy, there will be many challenges facing IDOC.

And those challenged involve:

- doing more with less;
- using evidence-based programs with proven track records in reducing recidivism;
- and looking at how we operate.

We are currently reviewing every facet of IDOC to determine the most strategic approach moving forward. There will be many difficult decisions ahead for this agency, including reductions in staff, changes in our service delivery methods as well as operational and programmatic reforms.

(SB1289)

There are a number of criminal justice reforms on the horizon that IDOC will play a significant role in. One in particular is the implementation of Senate Bill 1289 -- the Illinois Crime Reduction Act of 2009 – in which Gov. Quinn recently signed into law.

The Act encourages the various components of the criminal justice system to take an integrated approach to crime risk and punishment.

This comprehensive reform package will fundamentally reshape the criminal justice delivery system by using best practices that are based on a continuum of risks and needs assessment instruments. These instruments will be used at various levels in the criminal justice system. These levels include **pretrial, probation, prison and parole.**

The purpose of the Act is to make better use of resources devoted to each of these functions and to provide a standardized set of validated risk and needs assessment instruments for use in the system.

- Judges will have the opportunity to review the risk and needs instrument of an individual before making a decision to commit a person to probation or prison.

- If sentenced to prison, IDOC staff would build on the pre-sentence or probation instrument as well as complete a prison risk and needs assessment.
- Finally an instrument will be used while a person is on parole.
- Overall, the automated integrated set of risks and needs instruments will help with the reentry plan but also reduce the risk of re-offending. The needs assessment portion will identify the resources and services needed -- such as:
 - Job placement, substance abuse programming, and determining education level, skills and attitudes of offenders that can all affect outcomes related to crime reduction.
- Finally because the system will be automated, information gathered on offenders could self-populate; thereby reducing redundant functions throughout the system.

The second part of this reform package focuses on reducing the number of offenders who are sent to IDOC.

- The Act provides financial incentives to counties that reduce the number of offenders they send to state prisons. This is being modeled after the Redeploy Illinois program for youths.

- Funds will be given to those counties who use community-based diversion programs to reduce the number of non-violent offenders, who would have received short prison sentences.
- When inmates are sent to prison for six months or less, they are not provided with the necessary programming to keep them from re-offending.
- The two landmark studies of the Pew Institute, the *One in 100: Behind Bars in America published in 2008*, and the follow-up, *One in 31 report: The Long Reach of American Corrections*, indicate that it is cheaper...and there are better outcomes... when low level non-violent offenders are punished locally rather than sending them to state prisons.
- The Illinois Crime Reduction Act gives us a blue print for reform that correlates with our IDOC three-prong approach.

In order to implement the components outlined in the Act, IDOC, other state agencies and county courts all must play a significant role in the implementation of this legislation. IDOC understands the scale of the task that is before us in terms of planning, resources and expectations. We also

understand the tremendous opportunity for reform that is contained in the Illinois Crime Reduction Act.

This blueprint for reform has been in the works long before my arrival at IDOC. I would like to commend Senator Kwame Raoul and Rep. William Burns and the many supporters for their hard work in developing this approach -- and to Gov. Quinn for signing this legislation and incorporating it into his vision for crime reduction in the State of Illinois.

(Tamms)

As you know, this agency has been looking at other reforms. One of the first directives I received from Governor Quinn was to review the conditions and management of the Tamms Correctional Facility. I recently submitted to him and received approval for the implementation of the Tamms Ten-Point Plan.

To give you an overview, Tamms opened during March 1998 with a capacity to house 500 inmates. There are three classes of inmates who are currently held at Tamms:

- Disciplinary Segregation inmates, which are inmates who have been found guilty of serious, assaultive, predatory, or violent offenses while incarcerated;

- Administrative Detention inmates, who are validated gang members; and
- Special Treatment Unit inmates, who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, but are clinically appropriate for Tamms placement.

Historically, there have been few inmates sent to Tamms among the entire prison population. Generally six-tenths of one percent of the prison population is housed there. These inmates have an extensive disciplinary history -- or heavy involvement in gang activity. Most transfers to Tamms are from maximum-security prisons. The overall average length of stay is about 5 years.

Based on my review... there **is** and will **continue** to be a need for Tamms to be operated by IDOC. As my report illustrates, there is ample evidence that note significant decreases in staff and inmate assaults within the correctional system that correlate with the opening and operation of Tamms.

There also have been significant decreases in gang activity since the opening of Tamms. While the need for such a facility exists, there are several operational reforms that will be implemented as outlined in the Ten-Point Plan.

(Point 1): The first of these is to allow each inmate placed at Tamms to have a Transfer Review Hearing.

- Specific timelines to conduct Transfer Review Hearings are being designated. Inmates will be given an opportunity to refute and/or offer information that may impact their transfer to Tamms.
- The inmate also will have the opportunity to directly appeal his placement with IDOC's chief legal counsel, which may impact the decision to the transfer.
- An audio recording of all Tamms' placement hearings will be maintained for these appeals.

(Point 2): Each inmate will be informed of an estimated length of stay and how privileges can be earned toward the eventual transfer from Tamms.

- This estimated length of stay will include information regarding the average length of stay for inmates at Tamms, based on the offense the inmate has committed.

- Staff will use professional correctional judgment to inform the inmate of a range of time he should expect to serve based on the reason for his placement.

(Point 3): There will be a medical and mental health evaluation process conducted prior to and after placement, for each inmate sent to Tamms.

- The mental health services provided at Tamms in the Special Management Unit are equal to -- and in some case -- exceed the level of services available at the agencies other two psychiatric facilities.
- Each inmate placed at Tamms will receive a full mental health evaluation by a clinical mental health staff member within 30 days of initial placement. This is beyond the initial screening that takes place during admission at Tamms.
- Mental health staff will make weekly rounds in all housing units to identify whether any inmate is decompensating as a result of his placement.

(Point 4): Increase inmate privileges throughout the Behavioral Level System to incentivize positive behavior at Tamms.

- Dependent on behavioral adjustment, the amount of out-of-cell recreation time, commissary, and frequency of showers will be increased. Telephone privileges will also be added to the Behavioral Level System at the facility.

(Point 5): Begin offering General Educational Development (GED) testing at Tamms.

- Historically, inmates at Tamms were not allowed to take the GED examination while at Tamms.
- The facility recently was designated as an approved GED testing site and inmates will be allowed to study and take the GED exams.

(Point 6): Depending on behavioral adjustments, inmates will be allowed to participate in congregate religious services for inmates at Tamms.

(Point 7): Additional access to printed materials will be granted to inmates.

(Point 8): The Implementation of a Reassignment Unit at Tamms is similar to those operated at other step-down units.

- This reassignment unit will be an intermediate step for inmates who pose the most risk if transferred from Tamms -- **but** have demonstrated appropriate adjustment as a first step toward their eventual transfer from the facility.

(Point 9): Plan a media, legislative and public outreach strategy that includes hosting a visit to Tamms.

- During these visits, the Department will emphasize the many mental health and program services available for Tamms inmates through this new open approach.

(Point 10): Reexamine the cohort of inmates having served extensive time at Tamms for transfer eligibility.

- A review of the inmates who have been housed at Tamms from 1998 through 2004 was conducted to determine if there were inmates who were appropriate for transfer. Of those cases reviewed, 45 were deemed eligible for transfer.

That concludes the overview of the Tamms Ten-Point Plan. Tamms is and will continue to be an important component in the effective management of our correctional system. While this Ten-Point Plan represents initial and immediate reform for Tamms, it is important to note that this is only one aspect of IDOC operations.

It is imperative going forward that we take a systemic approach in terms of evaluating IDOC operations, program services and our medical and mental health care delivery systems. In an effort to operate at the highest efficiency level, we must take a holistic look at our entire organization. It is very possible that there may be other changes in institutional missions and populations in various facilities...and even more changes at Tamms. While IDOC is complex, it is also dynamic and evolving.

The staff is to be commended for doing a great job. I would like to thank everyone who assisted with the interviews, research, inmate records and transfers and mental health services. All of those involved have contributed significantly in putting this plan together.

I specifically want to thank Warden Yolande Johnson, for her commitment and efforts in helping with this project. Warden Johnson and I spent countless hours discussing operations and the development of plan. I

have confidence that she can effectively implement the strategies that are outlined here. She had been serving as acting warden at Tamms, but is now the official warden there.

Again, we look forward to implementing the Plan...and we will continue to monitor and evaluate the reforms to ensure their effectiveness.

In closing...Someone once said ... “Never waste a good crisis.” It is with that attitude that this agency has and will continue to meet these challenges. We will also emerge a more effective and efficient agency...while maintaining our core values of protecting the public and changing lives.

We look forward to working with all of our stakeholders, who are important pieces of the IDOC puzzle. I would like to recognize Representatives Hamos, Washington and Arroyo and the Tamms Year 10 Committee for your commitment to this reform.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here at that John Howard Association’s Annual luncheon. I appreciate all of your efforts...and look forward to a productive and successful partnership.

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