



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 1, 2005
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Inmate transition program undergoing changes

Pierre, S.D. –A Department of Corrections (DOC) program designed to assist inmates with a successful transition back into the community upon their release from prison is undergoing a transition of its own.

In October 2004, the DOC began the Community Transition Program (CTP), which provides pre-release services and interim housing options for offenders so they can line up work and programs needed for a successful parole. The program also provides temporary housing and an opportunity to address re-entry programming issues for released offenders who have relapse/chemical dependency needs in lieu of revoking the parole or suspended sentence of these offenders.

A total of 2,228 offenders left South Dakota's prison system via parole or suspended sentence release and returned to the community in state Fiscal Year 2005.

"The success or failure of these offenders in the community is largely dependent on the offender's preparation for release, housing availability and opportunities for employment," said Ed Ligtenberg, Executive Director of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. "In an effort to increase the success rate in the community, the corrections staff have implemented programs that increase public safety, support a successful transition process and utilize scarce taxpayers dollars more effectively."

The DOC is revising the CTP to split the program into two phases. Phase one focuses on transition and community re-entry programming primarily in the areas of chemical dependency, employability, budgeting and money management, case planning for release and corrective thinking programming. Male inmates will reside at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield while females will be housed at the South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre.

During Phase Two of the program, inmates will reside at DOC minimum-security units in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Yankton, Pierre and Redfield as well as the Minnehaha County Correctional Center while working on securing housing and beginning employment in the community.

"The change to two separate phases will allow for increased programming, closer supervision, additional individual attention for high risk offenders, more involvement with community

programming providers and more efficient movement out of the system," said Ligtenberg. "The program concentrates resources on higher risk offenders and applies the evidence based practices introduced to Governor Rounds' Corrections Workgroup by Dr. Ed Latessa, the nationally recognized expert in 'what works' strategies for corrections programs."

The program targets those offenders:

- who are eligible for parole or suspended sentence release but have difficulty putting together an acceptable parole plan;
- who have been granted parole and ordered by the Board of Pardons and Paroles to participate in CTP as a condition of their release; or
- who have had relapse/Chemical Dependency issues after being released to supervision in the community.

From October 2004 through July 2005, a total of 464 inmates had been involved in the program. Of those offenders who have successfully completed the program, more than 75-percent have also been successful in the community.