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**Prison population rises sharply in 2005**

Pierre, S.D. - The prison population in South Dakota rose by more than 300 inmates during calendar year 2005, according to Corrections Secretary Tim Reisch.

"We started the year with 3,075 adult inmates in our system, and by year's end, that number had grown to 3,408, an increase of nearly 11-percent," said Reisch. "This follows back-to-back fiscal years when the average daily count of the prison population grew by less than 4-percent each year."

Corrections officials are concerned that the current trend may not subside quickly. "Through November 2005, Minnehaha County reported a 7-point-9 percent increase and Pennington County reported a 3-percent jump in their jail population numbers," said Reisch. "A portion of those folks being held in county jail will be coming to prison."

Both Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead and Pennington County Sheriff Don Holloway report an increase in methamphetamine activity. That is consistent with what corrections officials see as a growing problem as well.

Every person sentenced to prison is assessed to determine chemical dependency. From July through September of 2005, 41-percent of the women entering prison were found to have a primary substance dependence on amphetamine. That compares to 30-percent for FY 2005. Primary dependency numbers for men during the same periods rose from 14-percent to 17-percent.

In the spring of 2005, the Department of Human Services, Division of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, started a Methamphetamine Specific Treatment Program at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. The development of a methamphetamine treatment program was one of the recommendations that came out of the Adult Corrections Workgroup formed by Governor Rounds in 2003 to study the causes of prison population growth and to develop effective solutions. That program will be expanded to all adult prison institutions. At the same time, a treatment program for people with chemical dependency and mental health issues was started at the Penitentiary. That program is currently expanding to the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield and will be expanded to other adult prison institutions. Chemical dependency services have also been expanded for parolees to address an upward trend in parole violations attributable to drug and alcohol abuse.

Several neighboring states have also experienced significant prison population growth recently that they attribute at least in some part to the use of methamphetamine. In North Dakota, the growth rate for female inmates was 13-percent in 2005, and 8-percent overall. Wyoming experienced an overall growth rate of 5-percent, but they also report a noticeable increase in their female population attributable to meth use. Both North Dakota and Wyoming currently house inmates out of state because of prison capacity problems. Nebraska had a growth rate of just under six- percent for the year, and their prisons are operating at 139-percent of capacity.

"The data is clear," said Reisch. "Drug use is driving up prison numbers throughout the region. In South Dakota, we are directing our resources to address the issue head-on."

Parole numbers in South Dakota have continued to rise as well. The in-state caseload for the Parole Division topped 2-thousand last month for the first time ever. The Department of Corrections has requested seven more agents in the state fiscal year 2007 budget to more effectively handle the higher caseload.

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