



# OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### GAPS IN MONITORING AND DATA HAMPER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AT CORRECTIONS

DENVER—The Colorado Office of the State Auditor (OSA) has released its audit of the Behavioral Health Programs at the Department of Corrections (Corrections) and has found gaps in Corrections' data and monitoring of staff, hampering its ability to determine the effectiveness of the programs or whether regulations and standards are always being followed.

The Mental Health and Sex Offender Programs provide treatment for offenders managing mental illness, helping them to maintain appropriate behavior, ensure safety at the prison facilities, and promote successful reintegration into the community upon release. 6,926 offenders were identified as having moderate-to-severe mental health treatment needs and 1,979 offenders as needing sex offender treatment as of December 31, 2015.

The OSA found that Mental Health Program staff were sometimes late in assessing and recording offender mental health needs, did not always properly update offender treatment plans, and did not maintain the evidence needed to show that they had provided an adequate number of mental health contacts or that they had offered adequate out-of-cell time for offenders with serious mental illness. Senate Bill 14-064 prohibits the housing of offenders with serious mental illness in long-term isolated confinement unless exigent

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circumstances exist. According to Trey Standley, Audit Manager, “Limitations of the Department’s databases used to track offenders’ mental health information and out-of-cell time contributed to the problems we found and hampered the Department’s ability to monitor staff.”

Separately, the OSA found that Corrections has not established effective controls to ensure that sex offenders are adequately assessed and prioritized for treatment under the Sex Offender Program. The number of sex offenders enrolled in treatment each year decreased from 484 in 2012 to 465 in 2015; however, the number of eligible offenders awaiting treatment increased over the same period from 1,527 to 1,979.

Over Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016, Corrections had a staff vacancy rate, generally, of over 20 percent for the Mental Health Program and over 30 percent for the Sex Offender Program. The OSA found that staffing constraints contributed to a number of the problems identified.

The audit makes 11 recommendations.

The full report is available @ [www.colorado.gov/auditor](http://www.colorado.gov/auditor).

Under the direction of the state auditor, the OSA is the state’s nonpartisan, independent external auditor with broad authority to audit state agencies, departments, institutions of higher education, and the Judicial and Legislative Branches. The OSA’s professional staff serve the people of Colorado by addressing relevant public issues through high-quality, objective audits and reviews that promote accountability and positive change in government. Performance audits address whether programs operate in compliance with laws and regulations and in a manner that accomplishes intended program goals. Financial audits include annual audits of the state’s basic financial statements and federal grants on a statewide level. IT audits review procedures and technology to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the state’s critical computer systems and taxpayer data. The OSA also tracks about 4,000 Colorado local governments for compliance with the Local Government Audit Law.