

# **Report on Factors Contributing to High Attrition Rates of Correctional Officers**

*Report prepared for VT Department of Corrections*

*by VPM Consulting Team*

**Kevin Marshia, Agency of Transportation  
Marcia LaPlante, Agency of Human Services  
Chad Allen, Agency of Transportation  
Lynn Metcalf, Agency of Natural Resources**

**May 2005**



**Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary** ..... iii

**I. INTRODUCTION:** ..... 1

    Problem Statement:..... 1

**II. OBJECTIVES** ..... 1

**III. METHODOLOGY** ..... 2

    Exit Survey Data..... 2

    DOC Staff Survey ..... 3

*Survey Development* ..... 3

*Survey Deployment* ..... 4

*Survey Analysis* ..... 4

        Staff Satisfaction Index (SSI) ..... 4

**IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**..... 6

    IVa. Participation Rate ..... 6

*Table 1. Job Classification of Survey Participants* ..... 6

*Job Classification*..... 6

*Number of respondents* ..... 6

    IVb. Overall Staff Satisfaction Index (SSI)..... 8

*Overall Staff Satisfaction*..... 8

*Staff Satisfaction across the Five Categories of the SSI*..... 10

*SSI by Job Classification and Facility*..... 12

*SSI Conclusion* ..... 13

    IVc. Average Response per Question..... 14

*Analysis of the Average Response Data* ..... 17

    IVd. Summary of Narrative Comments ..... 18

*Question 36. If you were able to, what three things would you change about your job?* 19

*Question 38: What factors make it less likely that you would choose a career or long-term employment at Corrections?*..... 21

*Narrative Comments:*..... 22

*Question 37 What are the major incentives for staying at DOC and making Corrections a career?*..... 23

*Question 39. If you feel there are other issues or have other comments that would help us in evaluating DOC’s staff retention, please note them below.* ..... 24

        Other ..... 25

    IVe. Facility Summaries ..... 26

*Caledonia Community Work Camp*..... 27

*Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility*..... 27

*Dale Women’s Facility* ..... 27

*Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility*..... 28

*Northern State Correctional Facility* ..... 28

*Northwest State Correctional Facility*..... 28

*Southeast State Correctional Facility*..... 29

*Southern State Correctional Facility* ..... 29

*Northeast Regional (St. Johnsbury) Correctional Facility* ..... 29

    IVf. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ..... 30

<b>V. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>VI. CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>34</b>

## Executive Summary

The Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) asked a Vermont Public Manager's program consulting team (VPM Team) to examine ways to reduce high turnover rates among first year Correctional Officer I's at Vermont correctional facilities. Turnover at Vermont correctional facilities reached critical levels in 2004 with turnover among permanent Correctional Officer I's at 35% and among temporary correctional officers at 77%. Such high turnover results in large training and overtime expenses as well as significant stress to the remaining correctional officers.

After collecting relevant background information, the VPM Team decided to examine employee satisfaction of current Correctional Officers. The goals of the survey were to identify factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction among Correctional Officers and rank them in order of significance so that DOC would be able to focus their efforts to retain quality employees.

In January 2005, Correctional Officers at all facilities were invited to participate in an online staff satisfaction survey. The survey consisted of thirty-five statements where participants were asked to answer from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); four questions that elicited a narrative response, and demographic information.

A total of 231 surveys were completed, which equates to a 38% participation rate among Correctional Officers. Participation rates were higher among CO IIs (51%) than CO Is (34%). Temporary correctional officers were part of the target audience for the survey, but only two surveys were completed by this group.

### Key Findings:

- ◆ Overall, job dissatisfaction levels are high at all facilities, in all job classifications (CO Is and CO IIs), and among both new and veteran employees
- ◆ Job dissatisfaction is slightly greater among CO IIs than CO Is.
- ◆ Employees with between 2 and 5 years of service and more than 10 years of service have higher dissatisfaction levels than those with less than 2 years of service.
- ◆ Correctional officers as a whole indicated that they understood the goals of the department and their roles within the department.
- ◆ Overall, participants indicated that they had good working relationships and communication with their supervisors.
- ◆ Officers generally supported the shift bidding system, although longer tenured officers tended to be more supportive of it.
- ◆ A very high percentage of survey participants, 76%, provided responses to at least one narrative question. The responses were frequently detailed and thoughtful.

- ◆ Pay, work schedule, mandatory overtime, staffing levels, opportunities for advancement, and benefits were most frequently cited as issues the Correctional Officers most wanted to change about their jobs.
- ◆ When asked what incentives kept them at DOC, pay and benefits were most frequently cited. However, a number of respondents also said they liked their work, and found it interesting.
- ◆ Respondents also frequently cited communication as a significant factor. Many CO's expressed a desire for more two-way flow of information and a voice in decision-making. They wanted a forum for sharing their ideas for system improvement. Some expressed the perception that inmates have a voice in the system but the staff do not, and expressed a desire to see administrative staff make a visit the facilities during second and third shifts.
- ◆ Perceived lack of recognition was also cited as a contributor to low job satisfaction. Some respondents described a climate where bad performance was recognized but good performance was not. Several CO's expressed a sense that their work is not valued, nor is it considered a skilled role. Other workplace climate issues that were often cited as contributing to poor performance were lack of teamwork, back biting and favoritism. The phrase "good old boy system" came up in several narrative responses.
- ◆ Though job dissatisfaction seems to be the norm, there was considerable variability among facilities in terms of the issues that were cited as contributing to job dissatisfaction. Similarly, there was considerable variability among facilities in the issues that staff expressed as positive factors.
- ◆ The web-based survey proved to be an effective means for deploying the survey to correctional officers around the state and collating a large number of survey responses.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Develop a career ladder for all correctional officers within the department. This career ladder should not be limited to a focus on retaining new employees, but geared towards retaining quality employees that have been employed by the department for a number of years. Standards for promotion should be clear to all and consistently applied.
2. Investigate methods to improve the current work schedule structure. Items to be considered: incentives for not utilizing sick time, flexibility of schedule, alternatives to the 6/2 schedule, additional staff, reduction of the thirty (30) month waiting period for shift bidding.
3. Develop a reward and recognition program for all correctional officers. An emphasis of this program should include an increased presence of central office staff.

4. Improve the work environment, safety and employee status at each facility. Many individuals were concerned with their own safety and felt that inmates were treated better than they were.
5. Training and continuing education.
  - a. Improve the transition and applicability of the Training Academy. This should include a rotation of academy training with on site training at the facilities.
  - b. Provide a continuing education curriculum.
6. Look at the facilities where employees had more positive staff satisfaction and examine what those facilities are doing well and how it could be applied to other facilities.
7. Specifically examine factors that contribute to the high turnover rate of temporary employees.
8. Share the results of this survey with staff at the facilities.
9. Develop individual focus groups to address the recommendations listed above. These focus groups should consist of a diverse group of individuals from differing job classifications and facilities. Provide incentives for participation.
10. Consider working with a future VPM team(s) to further investigate specific issues at individual facilities, and to gather additional data on specific issues identified above.



## I. INTRODUCTION:

### ***Problem Statement:***

The Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) asked a Vermont Public Manager's (VPM) program consulting team to examine ways to reduce high turnover rates among first year Correctional Officer I's at Vermont correctional facilities. According to the Annual Workforce Report published by the Vermont Department of Human Resources, turnover rates for permanent Correctional Officer I's were 15.6% in 2003 and 35% in 2004. DOC's Human Resource Division, which also tracks attrition of temporary employees, measured the turnover rate for temporary employees to be 77% in 2004<sup>1</sup>.

The monetary cost of such high turnover is enormous. At a cost of approximately 6000 dollars to train each incoming correctional officer, the money spent training those who left after less than one year of service totaled approximately 500,000 dollars in 2004<sup>2</sup>. Still more important are the consequences for staff that remain at the facilities. Mandatory overtime, order-ins, a higher inmate to correctional officer ratio, and working with a revolving door of inexperienced correctional officers raises the stress levels and lowers the morale of the remaining correctional officers.

To address the issue of the high turnover rate among correctional officers, DOC convened a Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Correctional Officers (Task Force) which included DOC and Agency of Human Services (AHS) human resources staff, representatives of correctional facilities and a representative of the Vermont State Employees Association. The mission of the Task Force was to look at ways to improve recruitment and increase retention of Correctional Officers. To date, the Task Force has examined a number of ways to increase retention of Correctional Officers, and has implemented a few of them. After meeting with the Task Force and reviewing past Task Force meeting minutes, the VPM team concluded that, while all parties had general ideas about why Correctional Officers were leaving, it was apparent that DOC lacked statistical data upon which to develop a strategic plan for solving the high attrition rate of COIs.

The VPM Consulting Team decided to examine employee satisfaction of current Correctional Officers with the goals of identifying factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction among Correctional Officers and ranking them in order of significance so that DOC would be able to focus their efforts to retain quality employees.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the consulting project was to examine the cause of the high attrition rate among Correctional Officers I. Secondary objectives included providing recommendations to DOC about how to reduce this high attrition rate and prioritizing these recommendations to maximize monetary and personnel resources. A copy of the contract between DOC and the VPM team can be viewed in Appendix A.

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Smith, DOC Human Resources Director, personal communication, March 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Smith, DOC Human Resources Director, personal communication, May 2005.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The first step was to collate existing information about the reasons for high turnover among correctional officers at DOC. To that end, the VPM team interviewed Robert Smith, Human Resources Director for DOC (also DOC's contact for the VPM project), met with former DOC Commissioner Steve Gold, looked at Exit Survey data for permanent DOC staff that left in 2004, and met with the DOC Task Force. Through interviews with Mr. Smith and the Task Force, the team learned that while DOC possessed a general understanding of the primary factors, they needed to be able to verify and prioritize the issues in order to focus their efforts more effectively and efficiently.

The VPM Team determined that the best way to verify job or staff satisfaction levels among Correctional Officers was to survey them. In order to help identify underlying factors and pertinent issues to include in the survey, the VPM team reviewed exit survey data that had been collected in the previous year, examined literature from the corrections field, and met with the DOC Task Force.

#### ***Exit Survey Data***

The Vermont Department of Human Resources (VDHR) collects Exit Survey data from permanent employees who have voluntarily separated from state service. The four-page survey focuses on: the importance of twenty-five factors in their decision to leave state service; general employee satisfaction questions about the job they left, questions about their satisfaction with the state as an employer, and demographic data.

In FY 2004, VDHR sent out 52 Exit Surveys to former Corrections employees and twelve (12) were completed and returned, a 23% response rate. Of the 12 respondents, 55% left their job after less than one year of service and 82% left with less than five years of service.

One of the top three reasons for leaving for 75% of former Corrections employees was "workplace conflicts/tension/poor morale." Other top reasons for leaving cited by former Corrections employees were:

- "problems with coworkers" (cited on 33% of surveys),
- "problems with supervisor" (25%), and
- "problems with management" (25%).

In comparison, 30% of former employees from all departments in state government cited "workplace conflicts/tension/poor morale" as one of the top three reasons for leaving. Other frequently cited reasons in the statewide data were:

- "family reasons" (cited on 27% of the surveys) and
- "problems with supervisor" (cited on 25% of surveys).

In answering general employee satisfaction questions, former DOC employees all disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements "Department management created a positive work environment" and "a spirit of teamwork and cooperation existed in my work unit," and 84% disagreed or strongly disagreed that "my opinions seemed to count."

Among former DOC employees, 50% were dissatisfied with their supervisor, 75% were dissatisfied with their co-workers, and 91% were dissatisfied with the leadership of their

department/agency. These numbers are generally higher than the numbers for all former employees statewide.

The VPM team used this information to help identify themes to include in the DOC staff satisfaction survey.

### **DOC Staff Survey**

The VPM Team also used an article entitled “Building Commitment among Correctional Staff” by Lambert, et al, which appeared in the March 2002 edition of the *Corrections Compendium* to identify topics to include in the survey. This article discussed five subject areas that had been shown to contribute to overall job satisfaction among correctional officers. The areas included:

- organizational commitment,
- organizational fairness,
- promotional opportunities,
- job performance feedback, and
- job satisfaction.

The VPM Team developed seven questions within each of these categories. The Team then engaged a few interested Task Force members to review the draft survey and comment on the effectiveness of each question. Several constructive comments were received and modifications to the survey were completed.

After meetings with Mr. Smith and former Commissioner Gold it was determined that although DOC had limited experience in implementing a web-based survey, the internet was the best vehicle to distribute the survey. An electronic format was chosen because the logistics of distributing, collecting and collating paper surveys from (potentially) over 500 officers raised cost and time management concerns. Also, in the past, paper surveys within DOC had not produced high response rates. The advantages of using a web-based survey include ease of distribution, i.e., anyone with access to a computer with web browser could take the survey, higher degree of confidentiality, and ease of survey data management. In addition, if the participation rates were good, then DOC would have a reliable method of data collection for future efforts. The on-line survey was prepared and then tested by a few correctional officers from the St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility.

### **Survey Development**

Part I of the survey was based on a Likert scoring format where respondents were asked to rate how they felt about each of thirty-five questions; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The survey was also designed to encourage both negative and positive answers so that the questions did not necessarily invoke the same types of responses. The questions invoking a “negative” response were randomized throughout the survey with the goal of at least one per section.

In Part II of the survey, staff were asked four narrative response questions, including the following:

- Three things that they would like to change about their job;
- The major incentives for continuing employment with DOC;

- Factors that make it less likely they would choose a career in Corrections; and
- List any other issues that would help to evaluate DOC's staff retention issues.

Part III of the survey gathered demographic data regarding the staff, including employment status, years of service, job classification and facility location. The VPM team was concerned that survey participants might choose to exit the survey at this stage because they felt that they could be identified if they answered the demographic questions about their classification and years of service. However, the web-based survey program saved participants responses as they were entered on-screen, so that even if a participant didn't fill out the demographic information, their answers to the first two parts were recorded.

### **Survey Deployment**

A web-based survey hosting company, Zoomerang, was chosen as the survey host site. Correctional officers were given the website address for the survey in an email from former Commissioner Gold in support of the VPM Team's efforts. Officers could then click on the link in the e-mail and be directed to the introductory front page of the survey. As the officers answered the survey questions the results were submitted directly to a database maintained by Zoomerang.

DOC felt that most correctional officers had access to e-mail and a web-browser, but for those who did not, paper copies of the survey were made available at each facility. For ease of data management, completed paper copies were entered into the survey web site by the VPM team and collated along with the other surveys.

The web-based survey was deployed on January 14, 2005 when former Commissioner Gold sent an email to all correctional officers inviting them to participate in the survey. A copy of that email and the online version of the survey are included as Appendix B. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey online. The electronic survey closed on February 8, 2005 to allow members of the VPM team to enter paper surveys into the Zoomerang database.

### **Survey Analysis**

The survey results, including both partially and fully completed surveys, were downloaded from the Zoomerang database to a spreadsheet for analysis. Answers to the numerically-scored questions (1-35) were analyzed as a whole and also separated out by job classification, facility, and years of service for further analysis. Answers to each narrative question were analyzed by counting the number of responses that fell within general themes that emerged. Also, answers to narrative questions were grouped by facility and counted to see how the themes that emerged as important at individual facilities compared to the themes that were important for all correctional officers statewide.

#### **Staff Satisfaction Index (SSI)**

The staff satisfaction index (SSI) utilized the Likert scoring system where each response was assigned a numerical value (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). In order to be consistent with the predetermined scale, in which higher numerical values demonstrate higher staff satisfaction, the Likert values were

reversed for the responses to the questions that yielded agreement to a negative question. For example, Question 3: I feel that management believes that I am easily replaceable – a respondent who indicated “Strongly Agree” would normally be assigned a score of 5 for this answer but because the ideal answer “Strongly Disagree” lies on the other end of the spectrum, the scoring for this question was reversed to produce a score of 1 for this answer. Thus, using the reversed scoring method, a low SSI indicates dissatisfaction while a high SSI indicates satisfaction.

The survey questions were grouped into five categories used to rate staff satisfaction - organizational commitment, organizational fairness, promotional opportunities, job performance feedback, and job satisfaction. The scores of each category were then summed and used to evaluate the overall SSI. Average staff satisfaction indices were calculated for the survey respondents as a whole and by job classification, facility, and years of service as a State employee. The maximum score attainable was 175 points (thirty-five questions with a maximum score of five per question). For example, a participant who answered strongly dissatisfied for every question would have a total SSI of 35 while a participant who was strongly satisfied with his or her job would have a total SSI of 175. The SSI ranges related to job satisfaction areas follows:

- Strong Dissatisfaction 35 –70;
- Dissatisfaction 71-104;
- Neutral – 105;
- Satisfaction 106-140; and
- Strong Satisfaction 141-175.

In addition to the overall SSI, the VPM team broke down the SSI into five survey categories:

- Organizational Commitment - OC,
- Organizational Fairness - OF,
- Promotional Opportunities - PO,
- Job Performance Feedback - JP, and
- Job Satisfaction - JS

The scores of the seven questions in each category were summed to produce a category-specific SSI. Each category was evaluated on a similar scoring index as the SSI, a score ranging from 7 to 13 indicated strong dissatisfaction, 14 to 20 for dissatisfaction, 21 for neutral, 22 to 28 for satisfaction, and 29 to 35 for strong satisfaction.

## IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

### IVa. Participation Rate

The survey was completed by 190 Correctional Officers and 41 other participants ranging from Community Correctional Officers to Shift Supervisors. 204 participants completed the survey online and 27 completed paper surveys for a total of 231 surveys. Participation rates were analyzed by job classification, facility, and years of service (YOS).

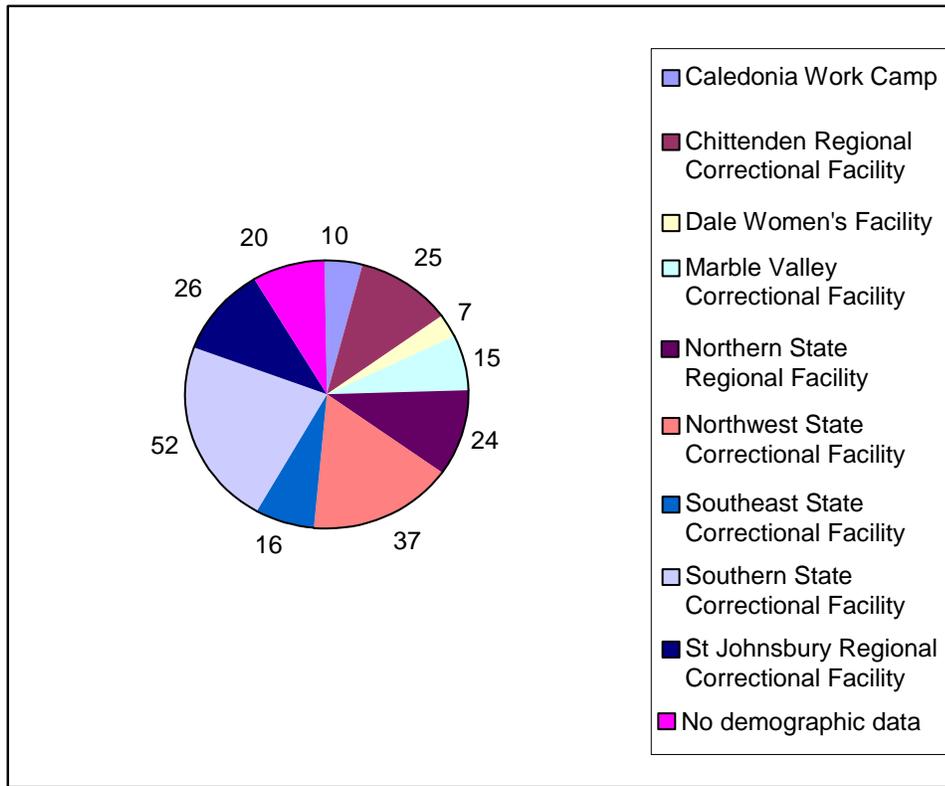
It is important to note that several respondents terminated their surveys prior to completing the demographic questions (Questions 41-46). These respondents were included in the "Other" category; when analyzing data by years of service and classification. In addition, when analyzing data by facility these respondents were referred to as "No Facility".

Table 1 summarizes job classification of participants.

Table 1. Job Classification of Survey Participants	
Job Classification	Number of respondents
Correctional Officer I	129
Correctional Officer II	61
Other*	41
<b>TOTAL Responses</b>	<b>231</b>

\* "Other" includes both those that listed their job classification as something other than a CO and those that did not answer Question 42.

The number of respondents per facility can be viewed in Figure 1.

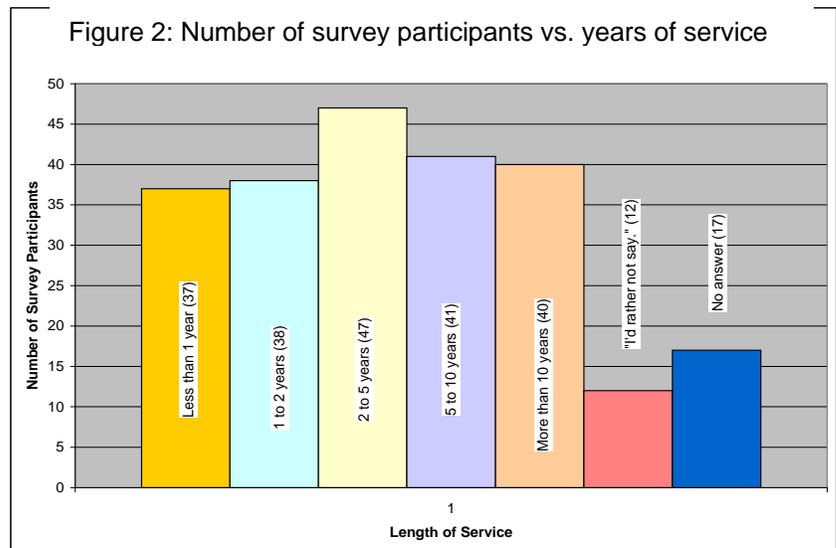


When presenting the data as averages later in this report it is important to note that Caledonia had 10 total respondents while Dale Women’s Facility had 7. Northwest State and Southern State had the largest number of responses. Table 2, summarizes the participation rates per facility and job classification. Northern (24%) and Marble Valley (26%) had the lowest participation rates, while Southern (56%) and Southeast (54%) had the highest participation rates.

Table 2. Participation Rate by Facility and Job Classification										
Facility	No. of COIs*	COIs Participants	% Response	No. of COIs*	COIs Participants	% Response	Total COs	Total Participants	%Response All COs	Surveys by Others
Caledonia Work Camp	11	4	36%	5	2	40%	16	6	38%	4
Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility	51	13	25%	17	9	53%	68	22	32%	3
Dale (Waterbury)	14	7	50%	4	0	0%	18	7	39%	0
Marble Valley (Rutland)	34	7	21%	16	6	38%	50	13	26%	2
Northern State Regional Correctional Facility (Newport)	68	15	22%	21	6	29%	89	21	24%	3
Northwest State Correctional Facility	64	23	36%	21	12	57%	85	35	41%	2
Southeast State Correctional Facility	20	11	55%	8	4	50%	28	15	54%	1
Southern State Correctional Facility	71	33	46%	16	16	100%	87	49	56%	3
St Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility	45	16	36%	10	6	60%	55	22	40%	4
Responses with no demographic information										20
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>41</b>

\*Counts of Correctional Officers per facility are based on DOC data as of April 2004

The participation rates for the respondents based on years of service can be viewed in Figure 2. The survey question on years of service (question 43) asked participants to pick from five date ranges (Less than 1 Year, 1-2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, more than 10 years) or “I’d rather not say,” for those who may have felt that their anonymity would be compromised by a numeric response. Figure 2 displays a relatively uniform distribution of participants among the several



different years of service categories.

#### **IVb. Overall Staff Satisfaction Index (SSI)**

##### **Overall Staff Satisfaction**

The mean overall SSI or staff satisfaction index was 93.4. Based on the limits discussed above in Section III – Methodology, the ranges of the satisfaction index are:

- Strong Dissatisfaction 35 –70;
- Dissatisfaction 71-104;
- Neutral – 105;
- Satisfaction 106-140; and
- Strong Satisfaction 141-175.

It is evident that there is dissatisfaction among COIs and COIIs, regardless of where they work or how long they have been employed, with the Dale Women's Facility being the lone exception.

Table 3 compares the SSI values calculated for each job classification, facility, and years of service the values appeared relatively stable with the majority of the values lying between the minimum (91.0) and maximum (95.34) overall confidence intervals. There were a few outliers (highlighted in pink on Table 3) especially when it came to analyzing the facilities, which will be discussed later in detail.

The average or mean value was computed for many different data sets tabulated in Table 3. In addition, the standard deviation was calculated based on the total population for that particular category and is a measurement of how widely the values are dispersed from the average value (the mean). Data sets with a low sample size will generally have a higher standard of deviation - a larger difference, or range, between the minimum and maximum confidence intervals. The minimum and maximum confidence intervals indicate that the VPM team can be 95% certain that the population's mean overall SSI lies between the two values indicated in Table 3. The sample size of each population or population subset is included for reference purposes.

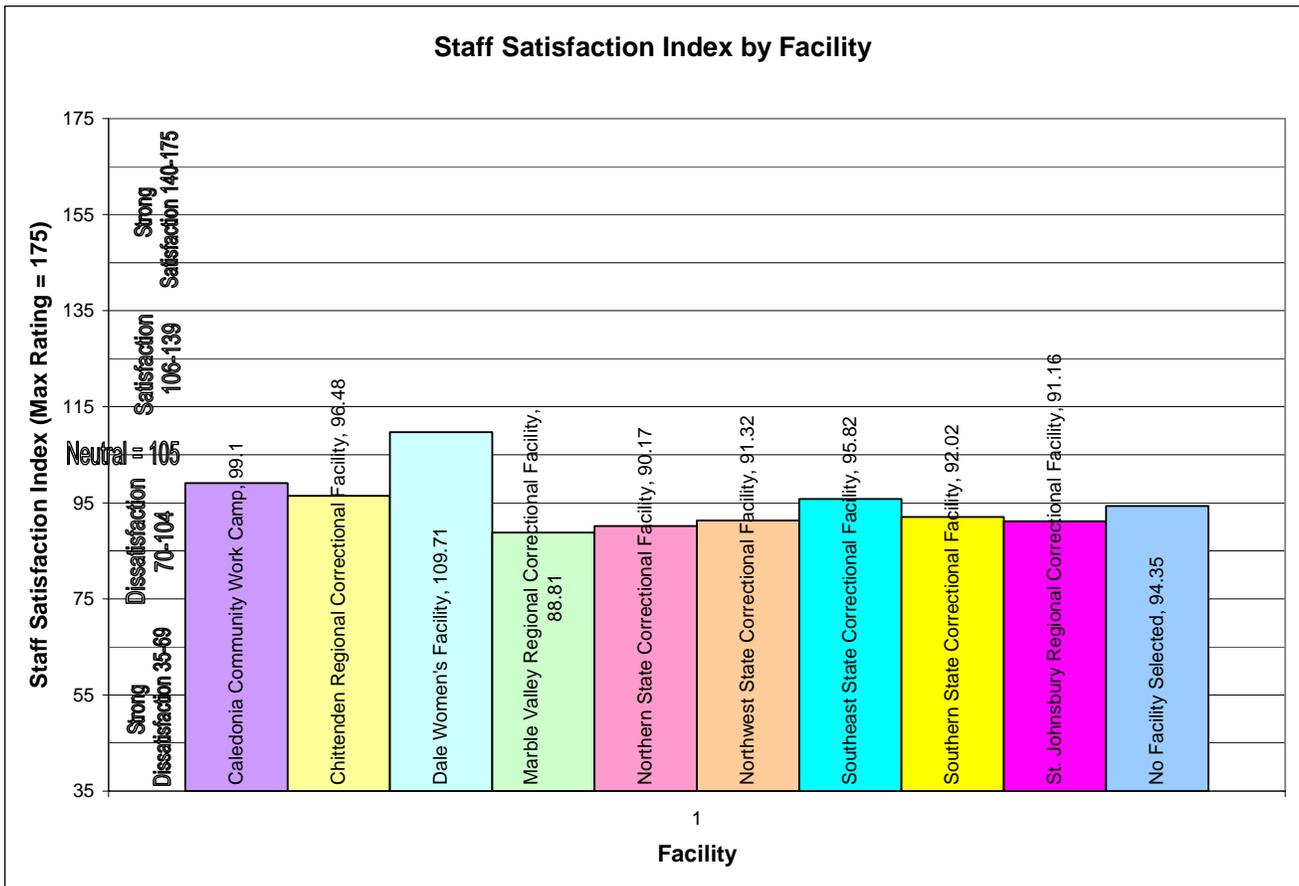
STAFF SATISFACTION INDEX		Mean	Standard Deviation	95% C.I. - min	95% C.I. - max	Sample Size
OVERALL - Max Score = 175		93.40	16.78	91.00	95.34	231
Years of Service	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	99.92	18.07	94.10	105.74	37
	1 - 2 YEARS	95.95	15.39	91.05	100.84	38
	2 - 5 YEARS	89.45	19.89	83.76	95.13	47
	5 - 10 YEARS	92.39	14.69	87.89	96.89	41
	MORE THAN 10 YEARS	89.78	14.93	85.15	94.40	40
	I'D RATHER NOT SAY	90.50	10.90	84.33	96.67	12
	NO ANSWER	94.35	13.84	87.77	100.93	16
Class	COI	93.4	17.85	90.31	96.48	129
	COII	91.21	14.97	87.42	95	61
	COI & COII	92.69	17.01	90.27	95.12	190
	OTHER	95.33	15.51	90.58	100.08	41
Facility	Caledonia Community Work Camp	99.1	21.12	85.95	112.25	10
	Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility	96.48	17.6	89.58	103.38	25
	Dale Women's Facility	109.71	18.5	96.9	122.53	7
	Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility	88.81	19.25	79.38	98.25	16
	Northern State Correctional Facility	90.17	13.38	84.81	95.52	24
	Northwest State Correctional Facility	91.32	16.19	86.11	96.54	37
	Southeast State Correctional Facility	95.82	14.51	88.93	102.72	17
	Southern State Correctional Facility	92.02	16.29	87.67	96.36	54
	St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility	91.16	15.61	85.04	97.28	25
	No Facility Selected	94.35	13.84	87.77	100.93	16

The mean SSI for COIs is 93.4 which mirrors the overall SSI determined by the survey. Based on this statistic one could infer that the survey results correlate well with the current feelings of COIs. It is important to note that the SSI of COIIs (91.21) is lower than that of the COIs

The SSI for those employed less than 1 year is 99.92 – relatively high. This fact in combination with the above statements suggests that the newly hired COIs may not be the most dissatisfied workforce as was initially thought. Those correctional officers employed longer than 1 year have a lower satisfaction index than the newly hired COIs; especially those with years of service between 2 and 5 years (89.45) and those with more than 10 years (89.78). Apparently the 99.92 satisfaction level decreases significantly after one to two years of experience.

Figure 3 shows that staff satisfaction is relatively consistent across the facilities except for Marble Valley where satisfaction is low and Caledonia and Dale where satisfaction levels are high. Note that Caledonia and Dale have low sample sizes.

Figure 3: Staff Satisfaction Index by Facility



**Staff Satisfaction across the Five Categories of the SSI**

Table 4 breaks down the overall SSI into five survey categories (Organizational Commitment, Organizational Fairness, Promotional Opportunities, Job Performance Feedback, and Job Satisfaction). The strongest categories for DOC appear to be Promotional Opportunities and Job Performance Feedback, while the weakest categories are Organizational Commitment, and Job Satisfaction (pay/benefits/work schedule). This finding is consistent across job classification, years of service, and facility.

An interesting finding is that for the Marble Valley facility, the Job Satisfaction category (representing pay, benefits, overtime) achieved the highest rating in comparison to the other four categories.

Table 4: Categorical SSI																			
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Satisfaction Levels</th> <th>Range</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Strong Satisfaction</td> <td>29-35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Satisfaction</td> <td>22-28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dissatisfaction</td> <td>14-20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strong Dissatisfaction</td> <td>7-13</td> </tr> </table>		Satisfaction Levels	Range	Strong Satisfaction	29-35	Satisfaction	22-28	Neutral	21	Dissatisfaction	14-20	Strong Dissatisfaction	7-13	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Fairness	Promotional Opportunities	Job Performance Feedback	Job Satisfaction	Overall
Satisfaction Levels	Range																		
Strong Satisfaction	29-35																		
Satisfaction	22-28																		
Neutral	21																		
Dissatisfaction	14-20																		
Strong Dissatisfaction	7-13																		
FACILITY	Caledonia Community Work Camp	17.6	19.9	19.3	21.1	21.2	99.1												
	Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility	17.8	19.2	21.3	22.2	16.0	96.5												
	Dale Women's Facility	21.0	22.1	21.3	24.7	20.6	109.7												
	Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility	15.9	16.9	18.6	18.6	19.4	89.4												
	Northern State Correctional Facility	16.4	18.9	19.4	20.3	15.2	90.2												
	Northwest State Correctional Facility	16.6	17.8	20.7	20.6	15.7	91.4												
	Southeast State Correctional Facility	17.2	20.0	19.9	20.7	18.1	95.9												
	Southern State Correctional Facility	18.0	18.4	20.4	20.4	14.8	92.0												
	St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility	17.5	19.1	18.5	18.2	17.9	91.2												
	No Facility	18.4	18.7	19.2	20.7	17.4	94.4												
CLASS.	COIs	17.6	18.6	19.6	20.9	16.7	93.4												
	COIIs	16.9	18.9	20.4	19.3	15.7	91.2												
	Other	17.8	18.8	20.3	21.0	17.4	95.3												
YEARS OF SERVICE	Less than 1 Year	19.6	19.1	20.1	23.1	18.0	99.9												
	1 to 2 Years	18.4	18.6	20.4	21.6	16.9	95.9												
	2 to 5 Years	16.4	17.5	19.6	19.3	16.5	89.5												
	5 to 10 Years	16.7	19.9	20.7	19.9	15.2	92.4												
	More than 10 Years	16.2	18.4	19.4	19.2	16.7	89.8												
	I'd Rather Not Say	16.8	20.1	19.7	19.6	14.3	90.5												
	No Response	18.4	18.7	19.2	20.7	17.4	94.4												
OVERALL		17.4	18.7	19.9	20.5	16.6	93.4												

SSI by Job Classification and Facility

Summarizing the key findings up to this point, the VPM team found that dissatisfaction levels existed among correctional officers statewide. COIs, especially those with less than a year of experience, are not the most dissatisfied group of employees. The trends in the data suggest that satisfaction levels decrease significantly after the first year; falling to a level that is fairly consistent across the different ranges of years of service. The data suggests that COIs are generally more dissatisfied than the COIs, and the VPM team chose to investigate what role the facility played in determining the SSI for each job classification.

Table 5 shows the categorical SSI for COIs and COIs at each facility. The differences in SSI by facility are more pronounced when further grouped by job classification. For example, Caledonia’s high satisfaction rate can be attributed directly to their COIs. Caledonia’s COIs feel a lack of organizational commitment and a lack of promotional opportunities. The COIs have a higher SSI at Caledonia, Northwest, Southeast, and Southern while the COIs have a higher SSI at Chittenden, Dale, Marble Valley, Northern and St. Johnsbury. The level of satisfaction among the 7 COIs at Dale Women’s facility certainly influenced the result that COIs have a higher level of satisfaction than COIs. In regards to the Dale Women’s Facility, the fact that no COIs responded to the survey may or may not be significant.

Table 5. SSI for COIs and COIs grouped by facility									
<b>SSI for COIs &amp; COIs by Facility</b>	Caledonia Community Work Camp	Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility	Dale Women's Facility	Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility	Northern State Correctional Facility	Northwest State Correctional Facility	Southeast State Correctional Facility	Southern State Correctional Facility	St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility
<b>COIs</b>									
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT	20.3	18.0	21.0	13.2	16.3	16.9	17.8	18.3	16.4
ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS	23.3	18.0	22.1	15.8	18.3	17.9	20.7	17.8	18.9
PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	21.8	20.2	21.3	15.4	18.8	20.5	19.5	19.6	18.1
JOB PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK	26.5	21.6	24.7	15.8	20.0	21.3	21.5	21.1	17.9
JOB SATISFACTION	23.5	15.5	20.6	17.4	15.3	16.1	19.3	15.4	17.3
OVERALL RATING	115.4	93.3	109.7	77.6	88.7	92.7	98.8	92.2	88.6
<b>COIs</b>									
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT	13.5	17.0	No COIs responded	16.2	16	16.8	15.5	17.2	19.2
ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS	18.5	19.0		16.3	18.9	18.0	19.0	19.4	19.8
PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	12.0	21.1		18.5	20.8	21.5	19.8	21.4	18.5
JOB PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK	15.5	20.8		17.0	22.3	20	18.0	19.3	15.7
JOB SATISFACTION	20	15.8		18.2	15.0	15.3	15.8	13.6	18.2
OVERALL RATING	79.5	93.7		86.2	93	91.6	88.1	90.9	91.4

For COIs the issues are not as pronounced when compared to the overall data. For COIs at five facilities (Dale, Northern, Northwest, Southeast, & St. Johnsbury), Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction were the two categories that showed the lowest

satisfaction, while COIs at two out of the remaining four facilities (Chittenden & Southern) showed the lowest satisfaction with Organizational Fairness and Job Satisfaction. COIs at the remaining two facilities (Caledonia & Marble Valley) provided responses that indicated that they were least satisfied with the survey statements pertaining to Promotional Opportunities and Organizational Commitment.

With the exception of Caledonia and couple of minor outliers, the COIs seem to be in agreement with the COIs. Notable differences include Marble Valley where COIs are least satisfied with Organizational Commitment and Organizational Fairness and at St. Johnsbury where COIs were least satisfied with Job Performance Feedback and Job Satisfaction.

When discussing the categorical SSI based on years of service, Table 4 shows that the less experienced staff members feel more commitment from the organization, most likely a result of the trainings and supervisory attention received over the course of the first year. However, those employed for less than 1 year cited Organizational Fairness and Job Satisfaction as the two areas where they were least satisfied. In general though, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment were the two issues that COs were least satisfied with, irrespective of years of service.

### **SSI Conclusion**

The average SSI for all participants (93.4), and the SSIs for virtually all subgroups (e.g., COIs, COIs, facilities and years of service) fell below the neutral overall staff satisfaction index of 105. This statistic indicates a pervasive feeling of job dissatisfaction among the DOC staff surveyed. The trends in the data also suggest that satisfaction levels decrease significantly after the first year; falling to a level that is fairly consistent across the different ranges of years of service. Similarly, the data suggests that COIs are generally more dissatisfied than the COIs,

Based on the high attrition rate of COIs one could assume that they represent the less satisfied population at DOC. Table 4 demonstrates that, to the contrary, the newest correctional officers are the most satisfied with their jobs. One explanation is that they are the staff members receiving constant attention by their supervisors and receiving training and any mentoring. Although the dissatisfaction seems to level out after the 2 year point, this may only indicate an acceptance of the realization that it's "as good as it gets".

When we look at the subject categories that the survey was organized around, the lowest levels of staff satisfaction were experienced within the areas of Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction. The highest levels of satisfaction were reported in the subject areas of Job Performance Feedback and Promotional Opportunities. These results are consistent across most categories.

In general, work force surveys indicate that pay and benefits are the issues that most employees are dissatisfied with. Certainly, in this survey, these issues (which fall under the category of Job Satisfaction) had low satisfaction levels, but data from this survey showed that issues of Organizational Commitment, and Fairness, and in few facilities, Promotional Opportunities, are also significant sources of job dissatisfaction. Job Performance Feedback is the area where most employees have indicated that they experience their highest levels of satisfaction.

#### ***IVc. Average Response per Question***

Table 6, is a summary of the data organized so that the reviewer may read the question that was asked on the survey and view the average response for that particular question broken out by facility, job classification, and years of service. This data presentation shows areas where a particular facility or job classification differs greatly from the average response for the group as a whole.

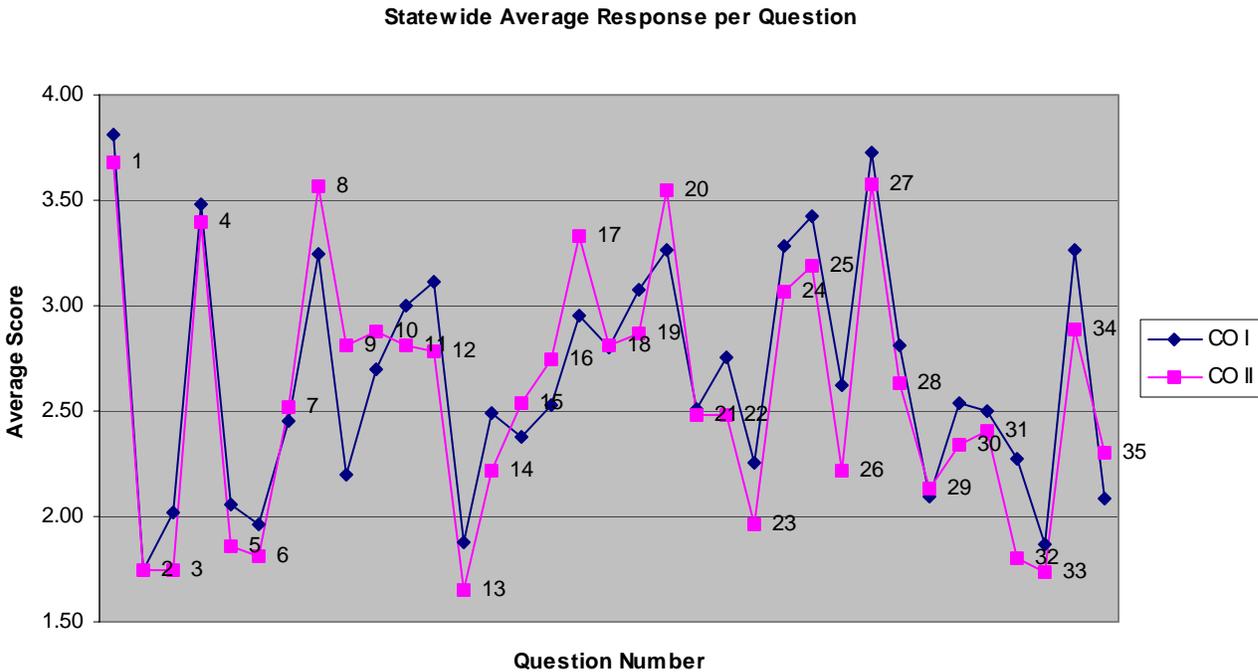
In addition, Figure 4 is a graphical representation of the average statewide response to each question using reversed values (described below) for questions invoking a negative response. As described earlier, the survey was designed to encourage both negative and positive answers so that the questions did not necessarily invoke the same types of responses. The questions invoking a “negative” response were randomized throughout the survey with the goal of at least one per section. In the analysis presented in Figure 4, the response was reversed (reversed values) for any question that yielded agreement to a negative question. For example, Question 3: “I feel that management believes that I am easily replaceable,” – a respondent who indicated “Strongly Agree” would normally be assigned a score of 5 for this answer but because the ideal answer “Strongly Disagree” lies on the other end of the spectrum, the scoring for this question was reversed and the score for this answer would be 1.

In Figure 4, CO I and CO II responses are plotted as separate lines to illustrate the peaks and the valleys that pertain to individual questions. Due to the reversing of the responses on the questions that yield negative answers, all of the average responses that have low values represent a negative point of interest for further focus. For additional information, graphs showing the results for each question displayed by facility, years of service, and Likert score by raw numbers and percentages are included in Appendix C.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS STAFF RETENTION SURVEY

						Average Response Per Facility														Avg Response by Class			Years of Service						No Facility, Class, or Years of Service Selected
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	OVERALL AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE	Caledonia Community Work Camp	Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility	Dale Women's Facility	Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility	Northern State Correctional Facility	Northwest State Correctional Facility	Southeast State Correctional Facility	Southern State Correctional Facility	St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility	OVERALL AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE	Correctional Officer I	Correctional Officer II	Other	OVERALL AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	More than 10 years	I'd rather not say		
Organizational Commitment	1	1	2	3	4	5	3.8	3.8	4.1	4.3	3.2	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.9	3.9	
	2	1	2	3	4	5	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.1	
	3	1	2	3	4	5	4.1	4.4	4.1	3.6	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.1	3.9	4.3	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.0	
	4	1	2	3	4	5	3.5	3.0	3.6	3.9	3.0	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.8	
	5	1	2	3	4	5	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.4	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.2	2.3	1.9	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.2	2.0	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.8	2.1	
	6	1	2	3	4	5	2.0	2.4	2.2	3.3	2.1	2.0	1.6	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.0	2.7	2.0	1.6	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.1	
	7	1	2	3	4	5	2.5	3.2	2.5	3.0	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.6	
Organizational Fairness	8	1	2	3	4	5	3.3	3.7	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.3	3.1	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.1	
	9	1	2	3	4	5	3.6	4.1	3.6	4.3	3.5	3.2	3.6	3.2	4.0	3.2	3.6	4.0	3.2	3.7	3.6	4.2	4.4	3.6	2.9	3.5	2.4	3.9	
	10	1	2	3	4	5	2.9	3.2	2.6	3.4	2.3	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.5	3.1	2.9	3.4	3.4	
	11	1	2	3	4	5	2.9	3.2	3.4	3.9	2.3	2.8	3.1	3.2	3.1	2.1	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.9	3.4	3.2	2.4	3.2	2.7	2.8	2.8	
	12	1	2	3	4	5	3.0	4.0	3.1	3.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	2.8	
	13	1	2	3	4	5	4.2	4.2	3.8	3.4	4.4	4.0	4.6	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.2	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.3	3.9	
14	1	2	3	4	5	2.4	2.1	2.6	3.4	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.5		
Promotional Opportunities	15	1	2	3	4	5	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.3	2.9	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.4	
	16	1	2	3	4	5	2.6	2.2	3.4	2.7	2.0	2.3	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.2	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.4	
	17	1	2	3	4	5	2.9	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.6	2.3	2.4	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.6	3.4	2.9	2.1	2.7	2.9	3.2	
	18	1	2	3	4	5	2.9	2.7	3.3	3.9	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.4	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.6	3.1	2.5	
	19	1	2	3	4	5	3.0	2.6	2.6	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	2.4	3.0	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.6	3.2	2.9	
	20	1	2	3	4	5	3.4	4.1	3.8	2.6	3.5	2.8	3.5	3.2	3.6	2.9	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.5	
21	1	2	3	4	5	2.6	2.8	2.7	3.3	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.7		
Job Performance Feedback	22	1	2	3	4	5	2.7	3.1	3.1	3.6	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.9	2.7	3.2	2.8	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.6	
	23	1	2	3	4	5	2.2	2.0	2.6	2.6	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.8	2.4	2.1	1.8	2.0	2.4	2.2	
	24	1	2	3	4	5	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.5	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.7	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.1	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.6	
	25	1	2	3	4	5	3.3	3.6	3.5	4.0	2.8	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.0	3.4	
	26	1	2	3	4	5	2.6	2.3	2.7	3.7	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.2	2.7	2.6	3.1	2.7	2.6	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.8	
	27	1	2	3	4	5	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.1	3.2	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.6	
28	1	2	3	4	5	3.3	3.3	3.1	2.6	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.8	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.2	3.5		
Job Satisfaction	29	1	2	3	4	5	2.2	2.8	2.1	2.4	2.5	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.3	1.7	2.3	
	30	1	2	3	4	5	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.1	2.3	2.9	2.4	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.1	2.7	1.6	3.1	
	31	1	2	3	4	5	3.5	2.4	4.0	2.4	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.1	4.2	2.8	3.5	4.2	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.3	
	32	1	2	3	4	5	3.8	3.3	3.8	3.6	3.7	4.0	3.9	3.3	4.2	3.7	3.8	4.2	4.2	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.9	3.8	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.7	
	33	1	2	3	4	5	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.3	2.6	1.8	1.5	1.9	1.6	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.5	2.1	
	34	1	2	3	4	5	3.1	3.5	3.0	3.9	2.9	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.4	2.7	
	35	1	2	3	4	5	3.8	2.4	3.8	2.4	3.2	4.2	4.1	3.5	4.2	4.1	3.5	4.2	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.9	3.6	4.3	3.7

Figure 4. Statewide Average Response per Question



The data examined in this manner allows one to see trends and variances more easily. It also allows the viewer the ability to obtain the average response for each question. This graph will also prove useful for future projects.

**Analysis of the Average Response Data**

The following is a brief summary of statewide average response rates that allowed the VPM team to narrow the list of potential issues to be recommended for improvement or to maintain. The questions are listed with the applicable score in parenthesis.

The five questions that elicited the most positive response statewide were questions 1, 27, 4, 25 and 8.

- Question 1 I understand the goals of my Department and am committed to achieving them. (3.8)
- Question 27 I have a good working relationship with my supervisor. (3.7)
- Question 4 I understand my role in the organizational structure of the Department. (3.5)
- Question 25 I feel that my supervisor listens to my concerns. (3.4)
- Question 8 I feel that the shift bidding is a fair and equitable system. (3.3)

The five questions whose response related to a negative point were questions 2, 3, 6, 13, and 33.

Question 2	DOC needs to develop a career ladder system to encourage staff to make Corrections a career. (1.8)
Question 13	The central office does not understand the day-to-day operations at the facilities. (1.8)
Question 3	I feel that management believes that I am easily replaceable. (1.9)
Question 33	Staffing is adequate to complete the unit's work. (1.9)
Question 6	I believe that there is a positive work environment at my facility. (2.0)

The following section illustrates five things that Corrections is doing well and five areas in which, if immediate improvement could be made, DOC would experience a significant increase in their staff SSI. The survey reflected the VPM Teams' attempt to address known problem areas that are reflected in the survey.

There are areas that may surprise DOC staff and therefore careful explanation and a strategic planning session or two is highly recommended. Blind spots should be noted and an effective plan set in motion prior to presenting the data to the staff.

There exists a dichotomous relationship between the less experienced staff (those with less than 2 years experience) and the tenured staff (those with 5 or more years of experience). For example, on Question 8 –shift bidding, those with minimal YOS thought it was not as fair a system as those who had already passed through it. Likewise, the less experienced also think that the 30 month waiting period for shift bidding rights is too long, surprisingly the experienced staff agree but not to the extent of the new staff. In general it appears that supervisors have been so concerned with keeping the new hires that they have forgotten that the experienced staff still requires training and encouragement, see Q14, Q19, and Q26.

In general the data shows that the more experienced staff is less satisfied than the new hires and if the organizational commitment of the department is to be increased it will need to start with the experienced staff. In addition, Figure 4 indicates that in most areas the Correctional Officer II's have a more negative outlook on the issues of the department than the Correctional Officer I's. Other than questions 8, 9, 15, 16 and 17; the COII's responses were either lower than or at the same average as those for CO I's. Although it is widely acknowledged that in general CO I's are not pleased with conditions surrounding their employment, the VPM team was quite surprised to learn that CO II's seem even unhappier with certain conditions.

#### ***IVd. Summary of Narrative Comments***

##### **Key Findings:**

- A very high percentage of survey participants, 76%, provided responses to at least one narrative question. The responses were frequently detailed and thoughtful.

- Pay, work schedule, mandatory overtime, staffing levels, opportunities for advancement, and benefits were most frequently cited as issues the CO's most wanted to change about their jobs.
- When asked what incentives kept them at DOC, pay and benefits were most frequently cited. However, a number of respondents also said they liked their work, and found it interesting.
- Respondents also frequently cited communication as a significant factor. Many CO's expressed a desire for more two-way flow of information and a voice in decision-making. They wanted a forum for sharing their ideas for system improvement. Some expressed the perception that inmates have a voice in the system but the staff do not, and expressed a desire to see administrative staff make a visit the facilities during second and third shifts.
- Perceived lack of recognition was also cited as a contributor to low job satisfaction. Some respondents described a climate where bad performance was recognized but good performance was not. Several CO's expressed a sense that their work is not valued, not is it considered a skilled role. Other workplace climate issues that were often cited as contributing to poor performance were lack of teamwork, back biting and favoritism. The phrase "good old boy system" came up in several narrative responses.

These findings are consistent with the National Institute of Corrections 1996 study on employee retention, "Managing Staff: Corrections' Most Valuable Resource". It found that staff satisfaction was as much related to what they perceived as the quality of management, as with salary and incentives. Job satisfaction was improved where "management staff" were visible and made it clear they listened to the concerns and ideas of line staff.

The following is a summary of the themes that repeatedly emerged from narrative responses to the four survey questions. The themes are listed in order of frequency of response. The numbers indicate the number of participants who mentioned the theme. Only items cited by 5 or more respondents are included.

**Question 36. If you were able to, what three things would you change about your job?**

- Better Pay (62) Some respondents suggested higher starting pay while others believed there should be higher step raises or incentives for length of service or education.
- Work Schedule (57). Respondents cited a need for more flexibility, and particularly referred to need for time off on weekends and summers. Several specifically cited the 6 days on/2 off schedule. Such new structures as rotating weekends and holidaysoff, 12 hour shifts 7 out of 14 days, 4 days on/2 days off (3), 5 days on/2 days off (2), and 4 days on/3 days off(1) were suggested.
- Reduce or end mandatory overtime (29). Respondents identified mandatory overtime as a significant stress to family life. The ordering in system was discussed. An increase in time frame for ordering in to 72 hours was suggested.

- More staff (27) Some respondents believed that additional officers would reduce the need for overtime and save DOC costs over the long run.
- More and improved advancement opportunities (23). Many respondents believed that promotions were made on the basis of favoritism, or the “good ole boy system”. They disagreed on the best criteria on which promotion should be based: time in grade not service; experience not educational degrees; experience plus participation in leadership course/certification exam (like CA).
- Improved benefits (19) Several respondents commented that their benefits should be more consistent with those of correctional officers in other states. Retirement benefits (12) were most frequently cited. Recommended improvements included: full retirement benefits after 20 to 25 years, consistent with the law enforcement field; sick time buy out; 401 (k) with joint state and staff contributions. General and mental health services requested for officers included on site counseling available to them directly after a suicide or hostage situation.
- More involvement, voice in decision-making, two-way flow of information, staff meetings (18)
- More recognition for good performance, valuing, respect, support (17) “Not just when I make a mistake.”
- Reduce favoritism and “good ole boy system; treat staff more fairly (15)
- Improve teamwork. Reduce conflict, back stabbing poor morale (14)
- More training (14) Most of these respondents wanted more training applicable to staff in facilities, with a focus on security, self defense and “edge weapon defense” . Other training topics specifically cited were emerging drug trends and leadership.
- More staff accountability, consistent evaluation, consequences for unprofessional conduct (12)
- Treat CO’s as well as inmates (11). Several respondents felt that inmates were listened to more than staff, and treated more fairly
- Better self-defense equipment and training in how to use it (9) - Batons, pepper spray, use of vehicles/transportation issues etc.
- Shift bidding (9). Some respondents wanted to do away with 30 month of service before eligibility for shift bidding, and change it to 6 months. One respondent suggested that shift bidding rights should be based on performance rather than seniority.
- Move DOC to a more military/law enforcement climate (7); Respondents suggested moving DOC from AHS to Public Safety, and that promotions be based on military rank scale.

- Increase inmate accountability (7). Some respondents felt disciplinary action with inmate should be more prompt and one respondent wanted to take away “unearned inmate privileges”.
- Central Office/Administration visit our units, know what we do, visit at times other than between 9 and 4 (6)
- Make security a priority (6) Several respondents wanted more consistent policies re: security and staff safety
- Make security a priority (6) Several respondents wanted more consistent policies re: security and staff safety
- Increase the consistency with which policies are enforced, all through the system (6)
- Job shadowing and staff mentoring opportunities in the facility (5).
- It was recommended that Academy recruits have an opportunity to shadow current staff for a 2 week period.
- VSEA support/DOC work within contract (5)

**Question 38: What factors make it less likely that you would choose a career or long-term employment at Corrections?**

- Pay/Benefits not fair for the work performed (46)
- Forced Overtime with no thanks (29) (Summer the worst)
- Work stress/safety (26)
- Backbiting/Petty Office Politics/Lack of teamwork (23)
- Favoritism/Good Old Boy System/Based on Seniority (20)
- Treatment from Central Office/Lack of Support from Management/Management doesn't understand the work we do (15)
- Shifts/Work schedule (15)
- No flexibility to accommodate my personal life (13)
- No recognition for job well done (9)
- Retirement after 30 years instead of 20 (6)
- Inmate rights more important than staff rights (6)

- Not adequate financial compensation for time in system (5)
- No supervisor support (5)

**Narrative Comments:**

“When new employees see the disciplinary system within corrections not effecting the inmate population, i.e. picking up major DRs and getting back out on furlough or not them nor affecting custody level they have to wonder if the job is worth it...”

“management seems to be indecisive about certain policies. It seems nobody wants to commit because they are unsure or scared about law suits. It also appears that management sides with the inmates at times. For the most part I haven’t experience this but have seen it going on around me.”

“...With Department Values and Principals that give line staff and general public less than the offenders get. With the hole CYA with everything you do, because you don’t feel like the department will support you on your decisions, even though they are not giving proper direction.”

“The shift bidding process. If I don’t get to go on the rotating 12 hour schedule, there are too many people here w/more seniority than me who won’t be leaving soon. I wouldn’t have a scheduled weekend off for at least 10 yrs.”

“ Being treated by administration as an expendable commodity more often than being treated as a valued staff.”

“Most of the people who run things and make the decisions don’t have a clue what it is like to work a unit let alone in a jail.”

“Stress is high. Rarely do you get positive reinforcement for good job performance. Lack of manpower.”

“We’re one of the few states that does not consider corrections law enforcement.”

“...no ability to make plans for time when not scheduled to work because of possibility of being ordered in.”

“working weekends after many years of service, retirement needs to include 50% pay out on sick time not used and life time health benefits after 30 years of service.”

“...Money has a higher priority than safety or morale.”

“I believe the Supers at the jail are in a big-time no-win situation.... But that was of little good as I watched 1 of my co-workers cry into his hands because he was missing his daughters graduation that night after he had missed another daughters birthday a week before....Staff are expected to treat all offenders with dignity but staff often fail to receive that very same thing....”

**Question 37 What are the major incentives for staying at DOC and making Corrections a career?**

- Benefits/health and other (54) (JS)
- Pay/Increases for length of service (42) (JS)
- Job Security (38) (JS)
- Career potential/promotional opportunities (28) (PO)
- Retirement benefits (24) (JS)
- Like my work/job satisfaction/interesting work (16) (JS)
- Like my co-workers (6) (OC)
- Too much time in, can't afford to leave (6) (OTHER)
- Overtime (5) (OF)
- Time off/paid holidays (5) (JS)
- I make a difference (4) (OC)
- Location/mobility/work stations around the state (4) (JS)
- DOC is changing and I want to be a part of it (3) (OC)
- Schedule (2) (OF)
- Training opportunities (2) (PO)
- Central office concern for CO's (1) (OF)
- Staff recognition (1) (JPF)
- Union representation (1) (OTHER)

**Question 39. If you feel there are other issues or have other comments that would help us in evaluating DOC's staff retention, please note them below.**

***(Note: Recurring themes in responses are summarized by question category.)***

#### Organizational Commitment

- Infighting and lack of team effort between security and non-security staff
- Low morale and negative atmosphere particularly hard on new staff

#### Organizational Fairness

- Lack of staff, mandatory overtime and "order in's"
- Perception that some staff are ordered in more than others and this contributes to low morale.
- Hold inmates more accountable. There was a perception that offenders are treated more fairly than staff. In a related issue, staff requested more timely investigations when staff are accused of violations.
- A perceived "good ole boy system" is a contributor to low morale. Sometimes this was discussed as specific to promotions, sometimes more general.
- Staff should have more voice in how the system is run. They requested that staff ideas for improving work conditions be listened to, documented and piloted. More two-way communication.

#### Promotional Opportunities

- Recruitment process - better screening, stricter background checks and mandatory drug testing. Some respondents believe money could be saved if candidates could observe work on the unit before hiring. Academy training should include more time in the facility, perhaps one week at a facility then back to Academy for one week, throughout the training period. Training should include updated self-defense and "take-down" methods, as well as people skills in dealing "one on one" with offenders. New CO's could benefit from being assigned an on site mentor who is allowed to have regular paid after shift check-in's with new CO. Respondents indicated new job shadowing strategy instituted by DOC was a good idea.
- Provide more training for existing CO's and more promotional opportunities. Some staff indicated that education is not considered enough in promotion process. Some felt it was considered too much.
- Move DOC to Public Safety, and develop a military rank structure for promotions.

### Job Performance Feedback

- Recognition of good performance, and stronger messages that line staff are valued and respected. “Don’t react just when someone does something wrong.”
- Hold staff more accountable, and be consistent across shifts in how discipline is handled; for example, for officers bringing in contraband. There was, at the same time, a call for respectful treatment by supervisors. For example, staff did not want feedback to be delivered in front of inmates. There was a complaint that “line staff are all painted with the same brush by management. If someone breaks a work rule, we all suffer the consequences.”
- Management staff should be visible visiting the units during different shifts, and “walk in my shoes”.
- Line staff should have the ability to provide feedback as part of performance evaluation of managers.

### Job Satisfaction

- Compensation was the most frequently cited theme. Pay is “good for Vermont” but did not reflect the stressful and dangerous nature of the work, or the fact that CO’s rarely get weekends and holidays off.
- More staff said it was “next to impossible” to get time off, requiring a request 6 months in advance. They said the 6 days on/2 off schedule was too stressful. Several requested a change to every other weekend off. Some requested a 4 days on/2 off schedule. Safety concerns related to “skeleton crews” and a high number of transports were cited.
- Benefits, particularly health insurance and retirement, were cited as needing improvement. Again, full retirement benefits after 20 or 25 years was suggested.
- Stress of working in the culture of the facilities. Some staff requested more training on stress management, more mental health support for staff on site, or a break time from the unit in the middle of the shift to relieve stress. One respondent requested that broken food shoots be repaired, to make it more difficult for offenders to throw urine and feces at the officers.
- Some respondents said the entry level CO’s and temps should get something extra – pay, time off, benefits

### Other

- Line staff are asked to participate in these workplace surveys, but never get the results.
- If experienced staff are happy, more recruitment will happen from word of mouth and newer staff will observe better morale.

- Paperwork is time consuming and costly
- "???" "We have an FTO program that is good and sound. What good is a program if Waterbury does not enforce it at the facilities?"

**Narrative Comments:**

"...there is NO recognition, from management, the public, advocacy groups, etc., for the dozens, if not more, of suicides we, as facility and field staff interrupt, or prevent entirely...no one ever seems to want to hear about that, tho."

"There is still the lingering feeling that management still subscribes to the philosophy that they can train monkeys to do my job!"

"...in the Academy all I heard was if your going to CRCF "may god have mercy on your soul" Now I see why."

"...no one really looks at DOC employees that work in the facilities and how it effects them. There are no services offered at the facility, and you are told you can call EAP, and only told this when your headed downhill. Who really asked for help, when their mind isn't in the right place at the time? An offender that does a 5 yr sentence does his time and still becomes institutionalized to some degree. A line staff who does 20 yrs equates to 5 yrs straight time, not including their overtime....Yes, we get to go home...we've all heard that line. But when we're here we're doing everyone's time.....We HAVE TO deal with the offenders and their issues. They tell us that we teach the offender pro-social skills. With a 50 to 1 ratio, who's learning what from whom? Correctional Staff are just as "institutionalized" as offenders who max out a sentence. Yet it is never addressed, and no one wants to talk about what line staff see, deal with, and go through on a daily basis and how it effects them long term...."

"I saw some dark days, but some great ones as well. The single most important thing in my opinion is to expect professionalism from everybody including offenders. Convey to staff they are important, we DO want to keep you, you are not disposable."

**IVe. Facility Summaries**

In order to see if particular facilities had issues that were different than the overall issues, we sorted both the numeric answers (questions 1 through 36) and the narrative responses by facility. The following are summaries of significant facts and key findings for each facility.

*Note: The source for statistics on average age and years of service for officers at each facility was the DOC Human Resources Division statistics from April 2004.*

### **Caledonia Community Work Camp**

- One thing to note about answers for this facility is that the sample size is relatively small - 6 out of 16 correctional officers and 4 others.
- The correctional officers at this facility tend to be older (average age 47 years) and more experienced than at most facilities (average years of service for correctional officers was 7).
- Morale at Caledonia appears to be relatively good based on the officers' above average responses to questions which asked about positive work environment, a spirit of cooperation and teamwork, and feeling like a member of the team.
- Respondents had above-average satisfaction with work schedule and pay.
- Respondents had below average satisfaction with promotional opportunities and ongoing training.

### **Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility**

- Employees feel very committed to achieving the goals of the department.
- A large majority of the respondents expressed concern about an excessive amount of overtime. Several responded that the amount of overtime had a very negative impact on their personal lives.
- At this facility, there was a strong sentiment that recognition of achievements needed to be more formal and frequent.
- Communications between supervisors and staff appear to be positive.
- Several comments indicated that inmates are not held accountable for their actions and that in some cases, inmates were treated better than staff.
- Overall, job satisfaction at this facility is low due to excessive overtime, understaffing and safety.

### **Dale Women's Facility**

- All responses to the survey (a total of seven) were from Correctional Officer I's.
- All respondents had been employed by DOC for less than two years.
- In general, this facility's responses were the most positive of any facility statewide.
- Several of the respondents commented that they enjoy the team that they are working with.

### **Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility**

- This facility had one of the lowest overall response rates to the survey.
- Several respondents to the survey were not CO Is or CO IIs. Their responses indicated that they had a much more positive view of the department and facility than the correctional officers.
- Respondents had a lower level of satisfaction with communications and relationships between supervisors and staff than at many other facilities.
- Respondents only cited state benefits as an incentive to continue a career with DOC.
- Staff at this facility feel disconnected with the central office.

### **Northern State Correctional Facility**

- Almost all respondents mentioned that the facility is understaffed and that overtime was excessive.
- There appears to be a strong sentiment that promotions and evaluations are not equitable amongst staff.
- In response to Question 2, "I feel that management believes that I am easily replaceable"; it should be of concern that almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.
- In general, the morale at this facility appears to be at the low end compared to other facilities statewide.

### **Northwest State Correctional Facility**

- Respondents indicated below average satisfaction to questions about positive work environment and management's appreciation of extra effort.
- Respondents from this facility voiced the strongest dissatisfaction of all facilities with the connection between the central office and the facilities.
- Respondents at this facility had the highest level of dissatisfaction with staffing levels.
- Respondents had higher than average level of satisfaction with the promotions being based on job performance, but the issue of promotions based on favoritism was cited by four respondents in the narrative response to Question 36 (things they'd like to change), so the satisfaction level is not unanimous.

### **Southeast State Correctional Facility**

- Participation rate (54%) is second highest of all facilities
- Southeast has the third highest overall job satisfaction level of all facilities.
- Respondents at Southeast are more satisfied than the average correctional officer with benefits, hours of overtime, and safety conditions at their worksite.
- In narratives responses, a number of officers expressed the opinion that inmates were treated better than the correctional officers.

### **Southern State Correctional Facility**

- This facility had the highest participation rate (56%) of all facilities. All COIs completed the survey.
- Officers have the second lowest average age (34) and the lowest average years of service (1).
- Respondents show a high degree of dissatisfaction with the 30-month waiting period for shift bidding rights. This finding is not surprising since most of them have been at the facility less than 30 months.
- Respondents expressed greater than average dissatisfaction with the high frequency of overtime and with their work schedules interfering with their personal obligations.
- Respondents were strongly dissatisfied with the safety conditions at their work site.
- When asked about things they would like to change, respondents most frequently listed (in order of decreasing frequency) pay, work schedule, the amount of overtime required, low staffing levels, and benefits.

### **Northeast Regional (St. Johnsbury) Correctional Facility**

- Respondents were more satisfied with work schedules than the overall average and less likely to feel that they are working too many overtime hours.
- Respondents voiced greater than average satisfaction with the training they received at the academy, but less than average satisfaction with ongoing training.
- Respondents from this facility were less satisfied with their working relationships with supervisors, and with communications between supervisors and staff. In addition, respondents were the most dissatisfied of all facilities with favoritism and unequal treatment of all staff by supervisors.

**IVf. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The following list is a summary of key findings from throughout the Results sections of this report:

- ◆ A total of 231 surveys were completed, which equates to a 38% participation rate among Correctional Officers. Participation rates were higher among CO IIs (51%) than CO Is (34%)
- ◆ The web-based platform proved to be an effective means of deploying the survey to correctional officers around the state.
- ◆ Overall, job dissatisfaction levels are high at all facilities, in all job classifications (CO Is and CO IIs), and among both new and veteran employees
- ◆ Job dissatisfaction is slightly greater among CO IIs than CO Is.
- ◆ Employees with between 2 and 5 years of service and more than 10 years of service have higher dissatisfaction levels than those with less than 2 years of service.
- ◆ Correctional officers as a whole indicated that they understood the goals of the department and their roles within the department.
- ◆ Overall, participants indicated that they had good working relationships and communication with their supervisors.
- ◆ Officers generally supported the shift bidding system, although longer tenured officers tended to be more supportive of it.
- ◆ A very high percentage of survey participants, 76%, provided responses to at least one narrative question. The responses were frequently detailed and thoughtful.
- ◆ Pay, work schedule, mandatory overtime, staffing levels, opportunities for advancement, and benefits were most frequently cited as issues the Correctional Officers most wanted to change about their jobs.
- ◆ When asked what incentives kept them at DOC, pay and benefits were most frequently cited. However, a number of respondents also said they liked their work, and found it interesting.
- ◆ Respondents also frequently cited communication as a significant factor. Many CO's expressed a desire for more two-way flow of information and a voice in decision-making. They wanted a forum for sharing their ideas for system improvement. Some expressed the perception that inmates have a voice in the system but the staff do not, and expressed a desire to see administrative staff make a visit the facilities during second and third shifts.

- ◆ Perceived lack of recognition was also cited as a contributor to low job satisfaction. Some respondents described a climate where bad performance was recognized but good performance was not. Several CO's expressed a sense that their work is not valued, nor is it considered a skilled role. Other workplace climate issues that were often cited as contributing to poor performance were lack of teamwork, back biting and favoritism. The phrase "good old boy system" came up in several narrative responses.
- ◆ Though job dissatisfaction seems to be the norm, there was considerable variability among facilities in terms of the issues that were cited as contributing to job dissatisfaction. Similarly, there was considerable variability among facilities in the issues that staff expressed as positive factors.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study began, it was clear that there were several key issues that would need to be focused on to be able to draw some clear impressions of the workings of the department. Based on the interviews that we have had with individuals, including former Commissioner Gold, review of studies performed by other state department of corrections, an extensive web based survey and participation at a task force meeting, this team has been able to reach consensus on several recommendations for the department. These recommendations have been generated based on the scoring of the responses and extensive comments received from the survey of DOC correctional officers. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Develop a career ladder for all employees within the department. This career ladder should not be limited to a focus on retaining new employees, but geared towards retaining quality employees that have been employed by the department for a number of years. Standards for promotion should be clear to all and consistently applied.
2. Investigate methods to improve the current work schedule structure. Items to be considered: incentives for not utilizing sick time, flexibility of schedule, alternatives to the 6/2 schedule, additional staff, reduction of thirty (30) month waiting period for shift bidding.
3. Develop a reward and recognition program for all correctional officers. An emphasis of this program should include an increased presence of central office staff.
4. Improve the work environment, safety and employee status at each facility. Many individuals were concerned with their own safety and felt that inmates were treated better than they were.
5. Training and continuing education.
  - a. Improve the transition and applicability of the Training Academy. This should include a rotation of academy training with on site training at the facilities.
  - b. Provide a continuing education curriculum.

6. Look at the facilities where employees had positive staff satisfaction and examine what those facilities are doing well and how it could be applied to other facilities.
7. Specifically examine factors that contribute to the high turnover rate of temporary employees.
8. Share the results of this survey with staff.
9. Develop individual focus groups to address recommendations listed above. These focus groups should consist of a diverse group of individuals from differing job classifications and facilities. Provide incentives for participation.
10. Consider working with a future VPM team(s) to further investigate specific issues at individual facilities, and to gather additional data on specific issues identified above.

It is important to note that these recommendations are based on an unbiased review of conditions within the department. However, they are also based on a snapshot of the department from the perspective of the consulting team. Many of these recommendations require an extensive effort by the entire department to improve conditions statewide. Other recommendations may be able to be focused more on individual facilities or specific issues.

In addition, there were several areas that the VPM has concluded from this study that are positive points within the Department of Corrections. It is recommended that DOC ensure that the following positive issues be maintained while managing change within the department:

1. There are many employees within DOC that are committed to their jobs and clearly understand their roles of their positions within their facility.
2. Although many employees expressed concern of the thirty-month waiting period on shift bidding, many felt that the overall shift bidding process was fair and equitable.
3. Overall, communications between all levels of staff, including supervisors, within the facilities is good.
4. It is apparent that the majority of the employees surveyed understand the severity and seriousness of their duties. It is that understanding that makes them feel that they are important members of the DOC team.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

As previously mentioned, in researching and preparing this report, the consulting team has had a unique opportunity to learn about a very important department. Although this study has focused on problems or issues within the correctional facilities, it should be noted that the results of this effort have indicated that there are a number of positive features within the department.

The Department of Corrections certainly has critical issues that require immediate attention. It has been apparent to the members of this VPM team that the Task Force that has been formed is a large step in the right direction. However, the issues that face the DOC

are more numerous than the Task Force can fully tackle with the resources and authority that it currently has. The Department management as a whole must continue to focus on improving the work environment, safety and employee status of correctional officers, which will allow them to focus on providing the highest quality of protection to all Vermonters.

## **REFERENCES**

Vermont Department of Personnel, 2003 State of Vermont Annual Workforce Report Fiscal Year 2003, xx p.

Vermont Department of Human Resources, 2004, State of Vermont Annual Workforce Report Fiscal Year 2004, xxp.

Lambert, E., Hogan, M.L., and Barton, S.M., 2002, Building Commitment Among Correctional Staff, in Corrections Compendium, vol. 27, no. 3.

Camp, G.M., Camp, C.G., and Fair, M. V. 1996. Managing Staff: Corrections' Most Valuable Resource. National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, January 1996.

Paul, K.B., and Bracken, D.W., 1995, Everything you always wanted to know about employee surveys, in Training & Development, January 1995.

Spector, P.E., 1999. Job Satisfaction Survey and Instructions for scoring.

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Contract between VPM Team and DOC
- B. Copy of former Commissioner Gold's cover email and web survey
- C. Graphs of results for each of first 35 questions.

## **Appendix A**

### **Contract between VPM Team and DOC**

## **Contract for Personal Services**

### **I. General**

**A. PARTIES:** This is a proposal for personal services between the Vermont Department of Corrections (herein referred to as DOC) and a Consultation Team (herein referred to as the "Team") from the Vermont Public Managers Program

**B. SUBJECT MATTER:** The subject of this proposal is the provision of personal services for the purposes of generating a set of recommendations and strategies to improve retention rates of Correctional Officer I s in the Department of Corrections.

#### **C. CONTACT PERSONS:**

The contact person for the Team shall be:

Kevin Marshia  
Vermont Agency of Transportation  
1 National Life Drive - Drawer 33  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5001  
Email: [kevin.marshia@state.vt.us](mailto:kevin.marshia@state.vt.us)  
Phone: 828-2664  
Fax: 828-2437

The contact person for the DOC will be:

Robert Smith  
Department of Corrections  
103 South Main Street  
Waterbury, VT 05671  
Email: [bobs@doc.state.vt.us](mailto:bobs@doc.state.vt.us)  
Phone: 241-2292

**D. AGREEMENT TERM:** The period of the Team's services shall commence on the date of the execution of this contract and end on or about May 30, 2005.

**E. CONFIDENTIALITY:**

1. All oral presentation and written reports generated by the Team will not disclose the names or any other identifying information of employees or former employees who participates in the information gathering process that is used for the final products.
2. In contacting DOC personnel, members of the team will identify themselves as Consultants for DOC and will agree to keep confidential any information relating to or obtained from current or former DOC personnel.

**II. SCOPE OF PROBLEM:****PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

DOC would like to improve the retention rates of Correctional Officer I's. Currently, the attrition rate for Correctional Officer I's is 44%. The goal of this Team will be to research and identify factors that contribute to the attrition rate of Correctional Officer I's.

**III. SPECIFICATIONS OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED:**

**A. DESCRIPTION OF WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:** The team will use yet unidentified assessment tools that might include, review of written documentation (for example, current DOC recruitment and screening procedures, and published "best practices" from other states), meetings with current and former employees, surveys and other forms of data collection. The team will then analyze this information and recommend strategies to improve retention rates among Correctional Officer I's. To accomplish this goal, the Team will preform the following tasks:

- Task 1:** Reach agreement with DOC on the Scope and contract for this project. Completion date: 11/12/04.
- Task 2:** Identify the data gathering instruments to be used. Completion date: 11/8/04.
- Task 3:** Develop the format and produce the data gathering instruments. Completion date: 11/19/04.
- Task 4:** Work with DOC to determine the appropriate individuals to contact during the data gathering stage of the project. Completion date: 11/19/04.
- Task 5:** Gather and organize all relevant data. Completion date: 1/15/05.
- Task 6:** Identify and prioritize the top three issues identified during data gathering; to include both positive and negative reinforcement. Completion date: 1/26/05. (If at this point in the project, more clarity is need on the issues; the Team will use data gathering instruments such as focus groups to obtain additional information.

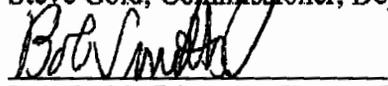
- Task 7:** Prepare recommendations on how to address the issues identified in Task 6. Completion date: 2/15/05.
- Task 8:** Draft report with summary and recommendations for review. Completion date: 3/14/05.
- Task 9:** Finalize report. Completion date: 04/18/05.
- Task 10:** Present report and findings to DOC. Completion date: 5/15/05.

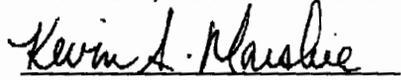
**B. WORK PRODUCTS:** The products of this work will be a written report and an oral presentation of the Team's findings and recommendations to DOC.

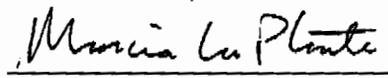
**C. DOC RESPONSIBILITIES:**

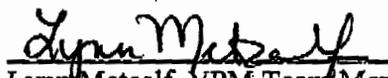
1. Generally, DOC will provide the Team with the resources, contacts and feedback necessary to complete this scope of work in a timely fashion.
2. DOC will designate a single contact person as the representative for itself, who shall have authority to issue instructions to, and accept correspondence from, the Team.
3. DOC will notify all applicable stakeholders of this project and ask them for support and cooperation. It will meet with the Team when necessary and be available to answer questions during other times.
4. DOC will be responsible for printing, copying, distributing and returning any and all questionnaires or surveys to a Team member in the Waterbury facility.

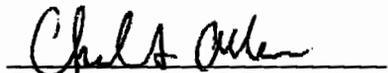
  
Steve Gold, Commissioner, Department of Corrections Date: 12/22/04

  
Bob Smith, Director - Human Resource Development Unit, DOC Date:

  
Kevin Marshia, VPM Team Member Date: 12/22/04

  
Marcia LaPlante, VPM Team Member Date: 1/4/05

  
Lynn Metcalf, VPM Team Member Date: 12/22/04

  
Chad Allen, VPM Team Member Date: 12/22/04

## **Appendix B**

### **Commissioner Gold's cover email and web survey**

From: Steve Gold  
To: All Staff  
Sent: Friday, January 14, 2005 5:09 PM  
Subject: Fw: Survey from the VPM Group

We have contracted with a consulting team from the VT Public Manager's Program to look at problems with low retention rates among Correctional Officers. The consulting team has prepared a job satisfaction survey for all Correctional Officers that can be taken on-line. Below is a link to the survey and attached is a letter from the consulting team explaining the project. The survey should only take about 15 minutes. Your information will be very helpful to us.

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB22429U4Y3E7>

Superintendents: You know who among your Correctional Officers does not have e-mail. Please print the attached PDF document and assign someone to distribute it to those officers. Please have that person return the completed survey to HRD.

Thank you.

*Note that the questions in the online version of the survey (shown in Appendix B) are in a slightly different order than those in the paper version of the survey as well as in the results spreadsheet. This difference was noted early on and the data table of online survey results was re-ordered to reflect the order of the paper survey. In this report, the order of the questions on the paper survey is used when presenting data (such as in Table 6).*

Paper Survey Question Number	Online Survey Question Number
1	3
2	1
3	2
14	15
15	14

# DOC Correctional Officer Staff Survey

## Part I: Staff Survey

- 1 DOC needs to develop a career ladder system to encourage staff to make Corrections a career.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- 2 I feel that management believes that I am easily replaceable.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- 3 I understand the goals of my Department and am committed to achieving them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- 4 I understand my role in the organizational structure of the Department.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- 5 I feel that the Department is dedicated to retaining quality staff.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6 I believe that there is a positive work environment at my facility.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7 A spirit of teamwork and cooperation exists in my work unit.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8 I feel that shift bidding is a fair and equitable system.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9 The 30 month waiting period for shift bidding rights is too long.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10 Overtime is distributed equally.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------	-------	----------------

1

2

3

4

5

11 My supervisor treats everyone equally.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

12 I am satisfied my work schedule.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

13 The central office does not understand the day-to-day operations at the facilities.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

14 Academy training and orientation adequately prepared me for my job.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

15 I feel that my extra effort at critical times is recognized and appreciated.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

**16** I feel that there are sufficient opportunities for promotions within Corrections.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**17** Promotions within Corrections are based on seniority not job performance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**18** My supervisor encourages me to seek promotional opportunities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**19** My department provides me with adequate on-going training.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				



## DOC Correctional Officer Staff Survey

**20** There should be a formal ceremony to recognize achievements and promotions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**21** The job duties and performance expectations required for a promotion are very clear.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**22** My supervisor provides me with timely and specific feedback on my work performance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**23** Management values my contributions to the department.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**24** Communication between myself, my supervisor, and my coworkers is encouraged.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**25** I feel that my supervisor listens to my concerns.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------	-------	----------------

1

2

3

4

5

26 When I do a good job it is recognized.

Strongly  
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly  
Agree

1

2

3

4

5

27 I have a good working relationship with my supervisor.

Strongly  
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly  
Agree

1

2

3

4

5

28 Annual performance evaluations are not performed in a professional manner.

Strongly  
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly  
Agree

1

2

3

4

5

29 I am being compensated fairly for the work that I perform.

Strongly  
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly  
Agree

1

2

3

4

5

30 I am satisfied with the benefits that I receive.

Strongly  
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly  
Agree

1

2

3

4

5

**31** I am required to work too many overtime hours.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**32** I am concerned with the current safety conditions of my work site.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**33** Staffing is adequate to complete the unit's work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**34** I feel that I am an important member of the team at my facility.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				

**35** My work schedule does not allow adequate flexibility to accommodate my personal and family obligations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>				



# DOC Correctional Officer Staff Survey

## Part II

**36** If you were able to, what three things would you change about your job?

**37** What are the major incentives for staying at DOC and making Corrections a career?

**38** What factors make it less likely that you would choose a career or long-term employment at Corrections?

**39** If you feel that there are other issues or have other comments that would help us in evaluating DOC's staff retention, please note them below.



# DOC Correctional Officer Staff Survey



## Part III



The following demographic data is being obtained in order to determine if there are other variables that may be contributing to the low retention rates for Correctional Officer I s. In order to ensure confidentiality, no personal information such as position or employee numbers is being requested.



Please answer the following questions:



**40** Facility where you currently work:

- Caledonia Community Work Camp
- Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility
- Dale Women's Facility
- Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility
- Northern State Correctional Facility
- Northwest State Correctional Facility
- Southeast State Correctional Facility
- Southern State Correctional Facility
- St. Johnsbury Regional Correctional Facility



**41** Employment Status

- Permanent
- Temporary



**42** Present Job Classification:

- Correctional Officer I
- Correctional Officer II
- Other, Please Specify

**43** Years employed with DOC:

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years
- I'd rather not say

**44** Years of employment with State of Vermont  
(Optional):

**45** Years of service in current job (Optional):

