

Statewide Inmate Family Council Meeting

7-10-2014

I. Old Business:

A. Cashless Vending

Pilot at Folsom State Prison was successfully completed and newly purchased cash-free vending machines will be delivered in July. Cashless vending will now be expanded to 8 soon to be determined other prisons as well as state hospitals and roadside rest areas in the future.

Mr. Virbel requested end of visit refunds of unused monies and SIFC agreed with that recommendation.

B. Medical

1. Medical Form 7385 (Authorization for Release of Medical Information)

This is a unique form among medical release forms because authorization for the release of verbal information does not expire. SIFC pointed out that the requirement for specific dates for written/hard copy information is problematic as most of the time when written information is requested by a family member, it's at a time when the inmate/patient is incapacitated and unable to fill out a form. Many inmates may fill out a form specifying dates in advance (e.g. for the following year) in order to meet the specified date requirement. This will ultimately create a lot more work for everyone.

SIFC requested the Receiver's Office reconsider this and allow an "expiration event" be applied to the written information section in the same way it is applied to the release of verbal information.

2. Social Security/Medicare

Pre-release social security applications have been filled for inmates requesting this service since 2008. Ms. Long (SIFC Co-Chair) introduced concern that inmates who do not register for Medicare by age 65 are penalized with premiums for Medicare Part B increased 10% for every year after 65. This amount is deducted from a person's social security. It is unfair to penalize inmates who don't register for Medicare when clearly they're not able to do so. Mr. Robert Storms from CDCR will research this concern and follow up at our next meeting.

SIFC also requested that CDCR consider registering inmates who are 65 or older for Medicare Part A (which covers hospitalization) as there are no premiums required for Part A and it seems as though it would be financially advantageous to CDCR to have Medicare cover hospitalization costs for inmates who are 65 or older.

3. Expanded Medical Parole

In February the Three Judge Panel ordered CDCR in consultation with the Receiver's Office to "finalize and implement an expanded parole process for medically incapacitated inmates." Please see attached Memo (6-16-2014) that

details this process. The first parole hearing for expanded medical parole cases will be August 15, 2014 and the sickest inmates will be evaluated first.

“Sickness” is determined by medical personnel scoring a 16 point Resource Utilization Guide IV or RUG IV which is also attached.

After this medical assessment is completed, cases are referred to the Parole Board where hearings are conducted to assess suitability for release. If release is granted, the inmate will be sent to a licensed healthcare facility with appropriate security for placement. No home releases are considered at this time.

For those inmates with successful Parole Hearings the Receiver’s Office will locate both placement and funding within the required 120 day period. They have contracts now for this process and are currently looking to expand their contracts and contracted facilities.

C. California Identification Cards

CDCR working with Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is reducing barriers to pre-release issuance of California ID Cards. Survey of 2600 inmates released in the last 8 months indicated that 76% were eligible for ID Cards. The remainder did not qualify for a variety of reasons most commonly because they had never had a driver’s license before incarceration. CDCR has facilitated issuance of several hundred ID cards at re-entry hubs and funding has been allocated to expand the program to prisons not designated re-entry hubs as well.

Ms. Long of SIFC provided statute (California Code of Regulation Title 13 Division I, Chapter 1, Section 15(e2)) indicating that DMV would accept CDCR verification of date of birth and legal presence for ID card issuance. There is no mention in Title 13 or on DMV’s website of any exclusion of inmates who have not had a driver’s license or an I.D. card for the past 10 years. In fact, Title 13 states CDCR certification is acceptable verification of date of birth and legal presence in order for a person to receive an original I.D. card. Millicent Tidwell, Director, Division of Rehabilitative Programs, promised to check with DMV about this.

D. Visiting

1. Processing of visitors who do not have VPASS appointments is delayed at some prisons and color charts also are not honored at some locations. Mr. Virbel will address these concerns in his regular calls with visiting personnel. Also, Director Stainer will review the policy at the upcoming Warden’s Meeting.

2. Dogs/Scanning Update

Both methods of contraband detection will be used in visiting areas as well as within prisons statewide. Both “passive” and “non-passive” dogs are used and each prison is slated for three canine teams. The passive dogs are used in the visiting area.

SIFC again requested that when these methods suggest contraband and an unclothed body search required to continue visiting, visitors be informed of their right to have a witness during the body search.

E. Third Party Lockboxes (update) Facilitating Money Deposits to Inmates

A 9 month pilot at Folsom State Prison, Mule Creek Prison and CSP-SAC will be initiated soon. The expected holding period is 7-10 days. Currently fund transfer can have a holding period up to 45 days, so this is a significant improvement. SIFC appreciates this Finance Department initiative that improves conditions greatly.

F. Contract Facilities

Currently 8988 California State Prison inmates are housed out of state. This number has remained constant; however, recent opening of an Arizona SNY yard necessitated transfer of appropriately classified inmates.

In state there are 6 contracted facilities whose total inmate population is about 3000. These facilities are at capacity now. Contact visiting is available at each site. Family visiting is not available. Within the next 6-12 months these facilities will be included in the VPASS system. Transition from existing phone systems to GTL is ongoing. Programs are being instituted and inmate property considerations and accounting systems are the same as at other State Prisons.

G. GTL

Focal access problems remain. VSP is one prison where evening problems have been frequent. CDCR representative, Ms. Irwin, and GTL management have been working to resolve problems. They have developed a survey tool to be used first at VSP and later at CIW, two prisons that have provided much documentation on ongoing issues. Other prisons will be included in the survey process over time.

H. Inmate Property

1. Laundry Detergent

SIFC (and many others) are thankful that decision was made to continue allowing this needed product. We advocated for sanitation and health by submitting letters during the comment period. SIFC requests notification of future comment periods when significant changes to inmate property are being considered.

2. Remote Control Devices

These are not allowed statewide because there is concern that the frequencies of remote operation might interfere with security systems.

3. Digital Media Devices on Enhanced Programming Yards

At this time there is no plan to expand this program to other yards.

4. Clarification for stamps, labels, and glitter in the mail. This is not really a property issue and will be redirected to Warden's Meeting along with approval of address labels on mail. After that discussion we request follow up at the next SIFC meeting.

II. New Business

A. Arts in Correction

CDCR as well as the California Legislature has recognized the importance of this program with a \$2.5 million dollar commitment over the next 18 months. 14 prisons will have a variety of programs within the oversight of rehabilitative services. Thank You! In recognizing value of the arts in rehabilitation, SIFC would

like to see Inmate Welfare Fund dollars supporting these programs as well. Such support was the intent of SB 542.

SIFC requests CDCR guidance in supporting an Arts in Correction Program at each prison.

B. Friday Visiting

SIFC requests statistical support on number of visitor terminations per visiting day at busy prisons. This information would be used to support expanding Visiting Budget for the 2015 California Budget. Visitors need to get termination notices when they are terminated due to overcrowding. SIFC also requests a tally of visiting room capacity per prison and number of visitors per day to identify sites of overcrowding.

C. Website

SIFC now has a website and along with being a source of information for visiting families we hope it will help visiting families communicate with one another. In the spirit of communication we would like to see local IFC's at each prison. We have distributed a survey of local IFC Chairs and are currently compiling results. These will be reported at a later meeting. We thank the Ombudsman's Office for help in getting local IFC contact information.

D. Obscenity Reclassification

Mr. Stein described this change as a move toward uniformity rather than a fundamental change in materials deemed obscene. Now decisions about what is obscene will be made centrally rather than at a local level. The comment period for this change in inmate property is now closed and over 200 comments made are being reviewed. SIFC requests updates on this process as they occur.