



Corrections

New Mexico operates six state-owned prisons with a capacity of 4,000 beds and contracts with five private prison operators to run facilities, including the women’s prison, with a capacity of 3,900 beds. Additionally, between 18,000 and 20,000 offenders are in the state’s probation and parole system. Since the 1980 prison riot, the prison population has multiplied seven-fold.

Inside

Roughly one-twentieth of the state’s general fund spending is used for housing inmates and prison-related expenses, such as recidivism-reduction programming, inmate education, inmate health care, and maintenance. Over the past five years, incarceration spending has hovered around \$300 million, with slightly more than 80 percent of that going to prison operations.

New Mexico spending on inmate health care, which has increased almost 20 percent over the last decade, typically puts the state in the top 15 nationally. The Corrections Department typically spends about 15 percent of its annual budget on the inmate health care, including primary health care, women’s health care, dental care, hepatitis-C treatment, pharmaceuticals, behavioral health care, and chronic care. The three major drivers of this spending are the distance of prisons from hospitals and other providers; the prevalence of infectious and chronic diseases, mental illness, and substance use disorders; and an aging inmate population. The most promising areas to contain corrections healthcare costs are through tele-health services, Medicaid financing, and medical or geriatric parole.

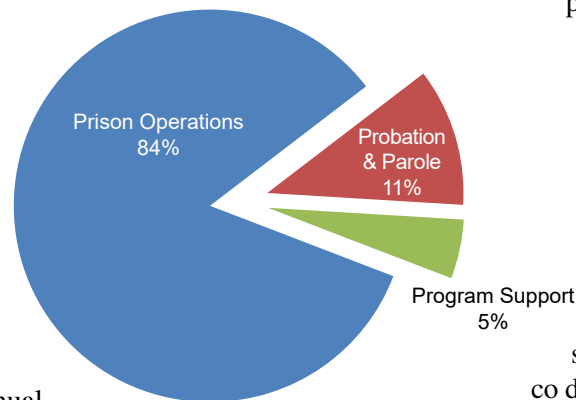
With the average age of state-owned facilities at almost 40 years, and with a substantial level of deferred maintenance, the department has roughly one-quarter of a billion dollars in capital outlay needs. Adding to this, many of New Mexico’s prisons were designed to fulfill functions that have changed over the years. Planned in the wake of the prison riot, for which a contributing cause was overcrowded dormitories, the state’s public prisons are inefficiently designed with small 48-cell housing units with each cell designed to hold only one inmate – leading to increased operational expenses.

Outside

The Community Offender Management Program (COM) provides community supervision, intensive supervision, behavioral health services, drug courts, half-way house placement, and offender assistance programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Behavioral health services for offenders in the community are administered by various contracted providers and account for about 20 percent of COM’s overall budget. The state also funds several halfway houses, although the capacity in “outside” services and programs in New Mexico does not match need.

On average, at any time, about 200 inmates eligible for release are serving parole in a much more expensive prison setting because of this lack of capacity. While a prisoner serving time inside costs about \$104 a day, a parolee, even under the most intense supervision, costs about \$10. Decreasing the number of inmates serving parole inside a prison by improving the availability of community services could save as much as \$10 million a year. In addition, parolees who receive outside services are more likely to stay out of prison; inmates who finish parole inside are not eligible for services.

Corrections Department Spending



For More Information:

- General information on Corrections Programs is available at the Corrections Department website: <http://corrections.state.nm.us/>.
- More indepth research and data on the New Mexico corrections system is available at the New Mexico Sentencing Commission website, nmssc.unm.edu.
- The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics maintains a clearinghouse on corrections information on its website: www.bjs.gov.
- Statutes governing correctional institutions are in Chapter 33.