

Our Mission

The Department of Correction shall strive to be a global leader in progressive correctional practices and partnered re-entry initiatives to support responsive evidence-based practices aligned to law-abiding and accountable behaviors. Safety and security shall be a priority component of this responsibility as it pertains to staff, victims, citizens, and offenders.

From the Commissioner



In just a little over a week from now, on March 9, we will be “springing ahead” and setting the clocks forward one hour. The shift in time is a great example of the nature and importance of change. Come the early morning hours of the ninth of March, change is coming – like it or not. Bottom line, change is inevitable. It can affect you either positively or negatively, the key is how you choose to respond to change. Many people resist change, falling

back on the “that’s the way we’ve always done it” way of thinking.

There are basically two choices when it comes to change, you can either spend a lot of time and energy resisting it, or you can act proactively to prepare for and embrace it.

As Commissioner of this Agency, it should come as no surprise that I opt to put my energy on preparing for unavoidable change, rather than fighting to maintain the status quo. I believe that by focusing on potential changes, you can foresee problems and minimize them before they arise.

As I have in the past, I am committed to being at the table with stakeholders, policy influencers, and legislators to help define and shape the future changes that will affect our organization.

The acceptance of a new way of doing things begins with the awareness of just exactly what the change may entail, and what the potential benefits of the changes may be. I promise to make every effort to openly communicate the need and reasons behind a particular change. I also believe in empowering you, our staff members, to participate in the change process – to be agents of change. By doing so, you can not only shape the future of the agency, but your own personal futures as well.

To that end, I am pleased to share with you that there recently was an extremely productive three-day training conducted by Amend, a consultant group which is part of University of California San Francisco. Representatives from Amend and UCONN’s Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) trained participants from the York and Garner facilities on new methods to interact with problematic incarcerated individuals.

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New Employee Wellness Center at York CI

The staff members of the York Correctional Center now have a calming space to decompress thanks to the combined efforts of York staff members, UCONN's Health Improvement Through Employee Control (HITEC), and New York University's Marron Institute of Urban Management. The decompression space, which could easily be mistaken for a three-room apartment, was officially unveiled during a ribbon cutting ceremony on December 3, 2024.

The decompression area has been a top priority for the HITEC York design team. The HITEC framework relies on staff members to figure out the best way to address workplace concerns.



The relaxation room in the York CI Decompression Space

“All of the solutions here are based on the feedback of the people who are working the line,” said Warden Trina Sexton during the ribbon cutting ceremony. “They are the ones who are in the thick of it every single day.”

The space is comprised of three separate rooms. Upon entering the space, the first room serves as a transition from the correctional environment. The middle room is designed as a yoga and meditation room – complete with yoga ball and mats. The last room is focused on relaxation, with a low sofa and oversized beanbag chair.

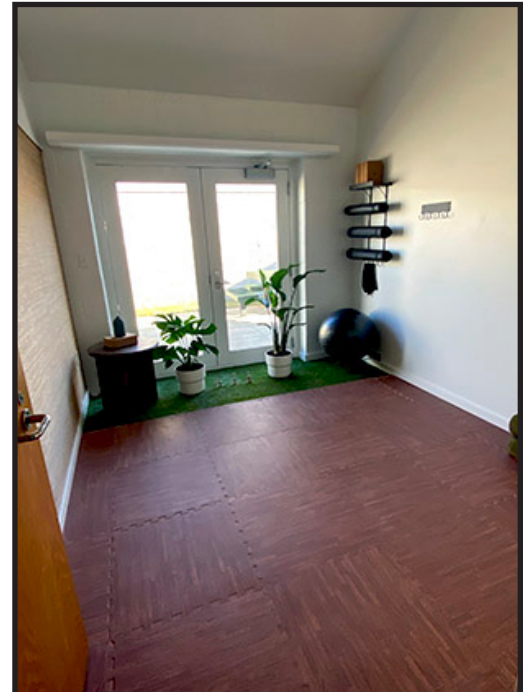
Angela Hawken, the director of NYU's Marron Institute of Urban Management, who was an integral part of the pilot project, said during the unveiling ceremony, the focus was to design a “nature informed space” focused on staff wellness.

The emphasis to incorporate nature was evident throughout the space, from several carefully selected plants, to bamboo wallpaper, to landscape artwork, to flooring with a wood pattern.

One item that was conspicuously absent from the decompression space was a television. This was not an oversight, but an intentional omission according to members of the design team. They wanted to give the staff members using the space the opportunity to unplug and unwind. If there was a television in the room, users of the space might watch the news, and the designers thought that would be counterproductive.

The cost to refurbish the space was approximately \$15,000 which was funded by the Marron Institute.

One of the HITEC design team facilitators Correction Officer Caleb Cooper said at the ribbon cutting ceremony the next step is to formalize the rules and policies for use of the space by staff.



The yoga and meditation room of the York CI Decompression area.

Meet the Director

David Snyder, the Director of Offender Classification and Population Management

What is your background with the DoC?

Over 21 years with the agency. I started as an officer in 2003 at MWCI on second shift then moved up and around throughout my career. Counselor, Parole Officer, Counselor Supervisor, Deputy Warden, and now Director of OCPM/SCIM.

What did you do prior to joining DoC?

I worked in a DOC sponsored Half-Way House in Hartford for three years before getting hired by the agency.

Briefly explain your current duties/responsibilities?

I am the Director of Offender Classification, Population Management, Sentence Calculation and Interstate Management. I manage everything behind the scenes for the agency. From inmate transfers, special management, central records, interstate offenders, Assessment, protective custody, separation profiles, etc...

What do you think most people don't realize about your job/role?

How there are more moving parts to our unit than they think. We are involved in every facility every day.

What is your biggest challenge as Director?

At this time, the biggest challenge I have is trying to find beds as the population continues to climb. We have to get creative in housing offenders.

What is your favorite aspect of being the Director/what do you like most about your job?

At this stage in my career, I am enjoying teaching and training. Passing along my knowledge to the next generation of staff. Working with other state agencies like the AG's, public defenders, state's attorneys and judges during trainings and presentations is also rewarding.

What is the primary thing you would like to accomplish as Director?

To provide solid support for the facility staff to keep them safe every day. To provide clear direction and decisions on the matters my units oversee to keep all of us safe.

Who has been the biggest source of inspiration in your life?

My family. They are the reason I keep doing this to the best of my ability.

What is something about you few people know?

I am a very private individual. My outward public/work appearance at times may be very different from how I carry myself in my personal life.

What do you do to maintain a healthy work/life balance?

I do my best to leave the job at work when I am off duty to devote my energy to my loved ones. Trying to keep that balance in perspective has been huge for me.

Do you have any hobbies?

I enjoy reading, being outside in the nice weather, golfing with friends, and the occasional cigar.

What one word would you use to describe yourself?



Director of Offender
Classification and Population
Management, David Snyder

New HITEC Logo

Submitted by Janet Caldwell Cover, UConn Health

The Health Improvement through Employee Control (HITEC) program is dedicated to promoting the health, safety and well-being of Connecticut's correctional staff. Introduced to the Connecticut Department of Correction (CT DoC) in 2006, HITEC takes a bottom-up approach to creating meaningful changes by allowing staff members to play a central role in developing solutions, such as the new decompression space at York CI (see story on page 2). This collaborative initiative involves the department's administration, UCONN, staff, and bargaining units working together towards positive outcomes.

Organized by groups called Design Teams (DT), DoC staff members participate in creating solutions for their facilities, based on their knowledge of the problems. There are five active DTs including, Manson Youth Institution, 391 Ambassadors, York CI Custody, York Health Services Unit, and CSC Supervisors Design Teams.

Each DT brings together talented workers from front-line custody staff, including officers, counselors, and maintenance, to health services personnel and educators. Some DTs are facility-based; some group together regionally, while others are formed based on their roles at the CT DoC. Several unions support HITEC and applaud the health benefits workers receive. The Design Teams meet up to two times a month and use a research-vetted process called the IDEAS tool. UConn academic advisors support each DT throughout the process; holding regular workshops, and assisting team leaders or facilitators with preparing for meetings, writing reports, and creating presentations.

In an effort to increase awareness of this staff-driven program, the DoC DTs and UCONN designed a new HITEC logo in May of 2024. With a motto of "for staff, by staff," the new logo is being placed in many correctional facilities throughout the DoC to heighten awareness of the program. As the program expands, additional HITEC Design Teams will be formed.

Thank you to all those who support HITEC interventional projects and to the administration for providing staff relief for regular meetings.

For more information and to watch the HITEC video go to:

hitec-doc.com.



Around the Cell Block

NEW YORK - More than 6,500 National Guard personnel were on duty Monday, February 24 to help run the New York state prison system as an illegal strike by corrections officers entered its second week.

COLORADO - Disability rights advocates and the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) recently reached a new settlement to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing inmates. The case addressed longstanding complaints related to communication accommodations and healthcare access within the state's prison system.

FLORIDA - A 37-year-old woman reportedly was in the process of stealing a car from a dealership in Tampa, Florida when she called 911 so she "could do it legally" says Lee County Sheriff's Office. The woman apparently thought calling 911 and filing a report made taking a vehicle that is not hers okay.

**Total CT DOC
Supervised
Population
on
February 28, 2025
14,024
On February 28, 2024
the population was
13,564**

Change for the Better from page 1

Around the same time, staff members from Cheshire CI and Corrigan CC met with representatives from Chicago Beyond, a national philanthropic organization that works to promote positive changes to the criminal justice system. More specifically, the individuals from Chicago Beyond shared their recommendations to promote Holistic Safety, which essentially supports the mental health of both correctional staff and incarcerated individuals.

I want to point out that both the teams from Amend and Chicago Beyond relied heavily on input from our staff in order to develop their recommendations tailored to our specific organizational needs. Also, their efforts to bring new ways of thinking and acting are just getting started. Ideally, the practices being developed and implemented will eventually spread to all our facilities.

The fact is that without change, there can be no growth. One thing will not change, and that is my faith and trust that you – the finest correctional professionals anywhere – will meet, and adapt to any future changes that come your way. My goal is to implement changes that create safer, more humane correctional facilities - changes, I believe, we can all live with.

Garner CI Celebrates Black History Month

Warden Jeanette Maldonado and Deputy Warden LaRue McNish joined staff members for a potluck luncheon organized Garner's Diversity Committee in honor of Black History Month.



OCPM Director David Snyder cont. from page 3

What are your plans for when you retire?

Find something to do that fulfills me and stimulates my brain. That and living as long as I can to enjoy the rewards from this well-earned career.

If you could have dinner with three famous people from history, who would they be?

George Carlin, Buddha, Julia Child.

What is your favorite book or movie?

Favorite book is "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" by Robert Fulghum.

If you could have one superhero power, what would it be and why?

Flight. The change of perspective would be great.

Anything else you would like to add?

We can always do more to better ourselves. Be respectful to yourself and others. Apologize when you make a mistake. Keep learning.

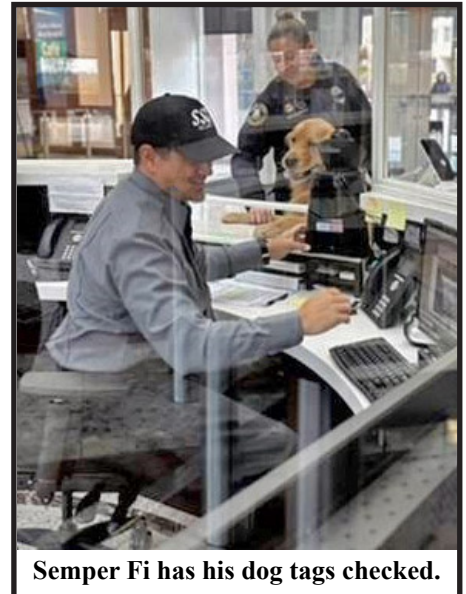
Dog Tales

No (unchecked) Dog Allowed

Despite the goodwill and joy that Semper Fi, the Department of Correction's therapy dog, spreads throughout the Agency and beyond, he is not always welcomed with open arms. Back in November, Semper Fi along with his K9 Officer Kristen Thibault traveled to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) offices on Columbus Boulevard in Hartford at the request of DAS Commissioner Michelle Gilman. The Commissioner requested their presence to help uplift staff spirits following the unexpected death of a beloved colleague.

The only problem was that they first had to get past the security officer in the lobby. Semper Fi and his leash holder had to be checked and cleared prior to gaining access to the building.

Once cleared, Semper Fi worked his usual magic to help those grieving the loss of their coworker. There is an unsubstantiated rumor that the individual working the lobby is the owner of several cats.



Semper Fi has his dog tags checked.



The DoC's new therapy dog, Remy.

New Therapy Dog

Semper Fi now has a helper to provide therapy to the department's staff members. Chief of Staff Ronald Cotta is pleased to announce the agency's newest member of the therapy dog team, Remy, an adorable golden retriever. Remy, who is roughly three-months-old, is partnered with Correction Officer Katherine Carlson. Together they have already visited Central Office, Hartford Parole, New Haven Parole, York CI, Corrigan CC, Hartford CC, Cheshire CI and MacDougall-Walker CI.

Pet Project

Not just one, but four animal control facilities recently benefited from the generosity of the York Correctional Institution's staff. On the day before Thanksgiving last year, Warden Trina Sexton and other facility staff members delivered a total of two truckloads worth of donations to the Old Lyme, Waterford/East Lyme/New London, Groton and Westerly, Rhode Island animal control centers. The supply drive, organized by Lieutenant Sarah Maltz, resulted in donations of animal food, toys, treats, litter, leashes, harnesses, scratching posts and cleaning supplies. All told, 57 cats, 34 dogs, 4 doves, 2 rabbits, 2 guinea pigs, and a parakeet were the beneficiaries of the donations. A worker at the Westerly facility said, "we have never received a donation like this before," adding, "you guys rock."

York staff members were also easily persuaded to help with cuddling kittens, and spending time with Red and Boomer, two amazing adoptable dogs.

Barksgiving

The staff of the Cybulski Community Reintegration Center held the first annual "Barksgiving" drive for Dog Star Rescue in Bloomfield, CT. In what hopes to be an annual event, staff members collected (and delivered) food, toys and supplies for the dogs in need at the shelter.



Lieutenant Sarah Maltz (L) and Warden Trina Sexton cuddle kittens.



Cybulski Warden Nicole Thibeault (L) with other staff members deliver their "Barksgiving" donation.

Carl Robinson CI's Looks Back at 2024

These are a just a few highlights from the Carl Robinson staff from 2024. Last May the facility hosted a family day, which included presentations from the Central Transportation and K9 Units. Staff and family alike enjoyed the event.

The facility's garden produced awesome amounts of produce during the past growing season. At Halloween, staff got a chance to show off their creativity with



A Friendsgiving buffet courtesy of CRCI's QWL Committee

spooky door decorating. Counselors had an opportunity this year to train for a day at the lake house.

QWL hosted a Friendsgiving potluck. It was a huge success, so much food.

Finally, staff members donated 40 gifts to help make the holidays happier for children under the care of the Department of Children and Families.

It was a busy year at CRCI and we anticipate even more staff-related activities this year.



Carl Robinson's Correction Officer Nelson Rosado and Warden Zely Caron (R) show off some of last summer's bounty.

DoC Season of Giving Wrap-up

As is always the case during the holiday season, the generosity of the staff of the Department of Correction was on full display. Below are photos of the various facilities charitable efforts.

