State Hiring Practices and Illinois’ Corrections: A Complex Problem in Need of Straightforward Solutions

October 29, 2015

The understaffing of key positions in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) and the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) is a serious, longstanding problem. The failure to adequately staff facilities and to promptly fill vacancies undermines institutional and public safety, prevents inmates from receiving essential services, exponentially increases State spending through overtime, and embroils Illinois in costly litigation, which will not be resolved without correcting staffing levels. JHA herein sets forth some of the challenges in the process and recommendations for short and longer-term reforms.

While additional factors, such as the remote location of some correctional facilities, may contribute to chronic understaffing in a small percentage of professional positions, the longstanding inefficiency and dysfunction in State hiring practices is a major contributor to IDJJ’s and IDOC’s persistent staffing crises. In a vicious cycle, understaffing at facilities means that staff frequently are required to work overtime shifts, which in turn, increases staff stress and burnout which, in turn, perpetuates understaffing. This understaffing also causes more staff to leave for other jobs, retire, or take sick time, personal time, or a leave of absence. The problem of chronic understaffing would be more easily solved if it was only the product of poor agency administration or human resources mismanagement, but the problem has historically been compounded by a statewide hiring system put into place by past Administrations.

Currently Illinois’ state hiring process involves multiple rules, procedural steps, and levels of review. Some of these procedures were put into place decades ago out of necessity in response to federal litigation to address a longstanding history of unconstitutional hiring practices which conditioned state employment on an applicant’s political affiliation in violation of the First Amendment.1 By most accounts, the hiring rules that grew out of this litigation (commonly referred to as the Rutan rules), and changes to Illinois’ Personnel Code and Rules have been helpful in diminishing improper political influence in the correctional hiring context with regard

to Union positions. Political considerations can still come into play with regard to non-Union high level administrative positions, such as Warden.

The complex rules and protections designed to ensure fair, uniform, merit-based state hiring are also interwoven with rules governing labor relations and collective bargaining agreements. The involvement of multiple state agencies including the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget (GOMB), Shared Services, and Central Management Services (CMS) in approving and overseeing correctional hiring adds additional layers of complication and bureaucracy. The process of applying for state employment is further complicated by technologically antiquated systems and mired in rigid, often inscrutable formalities. Ultimately, the patchwork of procedures, rules, agencies, processes, and bureaucratic review that has been stitched together over time and today makes up Illinois’ state hiring system is extremely difficult to navigate for prospective employees, and for IDJJ and IDOC administrators seeking to fill positions. The absence of an accessible, efficient, flexible, merit-focused state hiring system undermines IDJJ’s and IDOC’s ability to timely fill vacancies, to attract the most qualified candidates, and to deliver critical services to juveniles and adults in Illinois’ correctional facilities. While the system works better when vacancies can be filled from within the agency or facility under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, the time delays in getting approval to post and fill positions are often lengthy and unnecessary.

Recognizing intrinsic problems and serious inefficiencies in the existing state hiring process, on July 16, 2015, Governor Rauner issued Executive Order 15-16, giving GOMB, in consultation with CMS, the authority to “replace, modify or terminate” the current state hiring system (commonly known as the Electronic Personnel Request or “EPAR” system). As of October 2015, however, staff and administrators in IDJJ and IDOC facilities reported that the EPAR process was still in place and that state hiring processes remained unchanged.

An ongoing barrier to reform is that the procedures and rules that govern correctional hiring (and state hiring in general) can be so complex and impenetrable that they elude meaningful examination and public scrutiny. JHA attempts to address this issue in the instant paper by examining some of the more important and accessible rules, procedures, and obstacles involved in correctional hiring. In this paper we discuss: Staffing Correctional Facilities: Authorized Headcounts; Obtaining Authorization to Fill Staff Vacancies: Electronic Personnel Action Requests; Application Process: Screening Applicants and Determining Eligibility & Grades; Interviews, Background Checks, and Hiring; and Use of Temporary Staff Assignments in Lieu of Permanent Hiring. We conclude with recommendations for improving the state hiring process — and the correctional hiring process in particular — based on input from IDJJ and IDOC staff and administrators, best practices in human resources, and reforms undertaken in other jurisdictions.

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3See State of Illinois Executive Department, Executive Order 15-16, July 16, 2015, Rescinding Executive Order Number 2003-01 (Executive Order 03-01, which was issued by former Governor Blagojevich led to the creation of today’s complex EPAR state hiring system by requiring written approval by the Governor’s office as a precondition to any state hiring or promotion), available at https://www.illinois.gov/Government/ExecOrders/Documents/2015/ExecutiveOrder2015-16.pdf.
Among long-term reforms, JHA believes that GOMB and CMS should exercise their authority under Executive Order 15-16 and conduct a data-driven analysis of the correctional hiring process, and state hiring in general, to identify bottlenecks, delays, inefficiencies and obstacles to timely filling vacancies, and in attracting, hiring, and promoting the best, most qualified candidates. This analysis should include soliciting direct input from facility administrators, correctional staff and union leaders, and new job hires on how the hiring process could be improved. In the short term, however, JHA also believes that immediate actions should be taken to improve the correctional hiring process, including: eliminating the requirement that GOMB give hiring approval as a prerequisite to IDJJ and IDOC filling staff vacancies within the authorized headcount; providing applicants with clearer information and instructions on job criteria and the job application and interview process; implementing an expedited process for applicants to renew employment grades; and increasing the amount of government staff and resources devoted to performing pre-employment background checks to reduce delay.

Efforts to reform state hiring too often focus solely on pitting collective bargaining units against taxpayers on issues of employee compensation and benefits to the exclusion of all other considerations. However, the best measure of a human resource system’s efficiency is not how much it spends per employee, but rather the quantity and quality of public services produced per dollar spent; although compensation levels are important, reducing or increasing compensation of employees does not in and of itself make for better government. An efficient, equitable state hiring system must also be grounded in the principle that employees are fairly recruited, selected, and promoted under conditions of political neutrality, equal opportunity, and competence. Ultimately, the effective delivery of correctional services, as paid for by the citizens of Illinois, should be the end goal and standard by which all hiring practices are measured. In order to evaluate the efficiency of correctional hiring in Illinois and to make reforms consistent with our shared values, however, we must first understand how this system works.

**Staffing Correctional Facilities: Authorized Headcounts**

While IDJJ’s and IDOC’s hiring processes vary to a degree, the hiring of state employees in corrections follows a basic trajectory. As described by staff and administrators, the process begins with determining the number of staff positions needed at each correctional facility to operate. Agency leaders and a staffing review team create an annual staffing roster to estimate the number of personnel needed for a facility to function in the year to come, to adequately staff security, support, and program posts. The staffing requested by the facility, known as the “requested authorized headcount,” ultimately is subject to review and budgetary approval by GOMB, the Governor, and the Legislature. Together, the Governor and the Legislature ultimately have final say in determining the “authorized headcount” for each IDJJ and IDOC facility — that is, the number of staff positions that are, in theory if not in practice, funded and authorized to be filled for the coming year.

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5 GOMB is a state agency tasked with preparing the Governor’s annual state budget, advising the Governor on the availability and allocation of funds for agency programs, and analyzing, and evaluating the personnel, resource, and operating needs of state agencies. See GOMB website, available at [http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/budget/Pages/AboutUs.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/budget/Pages/AboutUs.aspx).
Ideally, authorized headcounts should be based on a determination of the level of staffing needed for the facility to function safely and effectively. However, political considerations frequently come into play that can run contrary to the goal of ensuring adequate facility staffing. The individual political agendas of lawmakers and the Governor, alongside budgetary pressure to save the State money in the short term (even if this means generating greater costs long term), can act as powerful influences in setting authorized staffing levels at an artificially low level. Political considerations aside, authorized staffing levels are often set unrealistically low because prospective staff retirement, transfers, promotion or leave of absence are not reasonably taken into account in projecting the number of staff needed by the facility to function. Without a cushion in the headcount to account for turnover, hiring cannot proceed until a position is actually vacant. Given the slow pace of the hiring process, the position will often remain vacant for many months.

That a staff position is sanctioned under a facility’s authorized staffing headcount, however, is no guarantee that the position can or will be filled. A complex system that involves multiple steps, set out below, must take place before a staff vacancy can be filled.

**Obtaining Authorization to Fill Staff Vacancies: Electronic Personnel Action Requests**

Under the existing State hiring system, when a correctional employee quits, retires or is promoted leaving a staff vacancy at a given facility, the head administrator of the facility (the Superintendent in the case of IDJJ facilities, and the Warden in the case of IDOC facilities) must submit an Electronic Personnel Action Request (EPAR) to the agency’s Director, Chief of Staff, and Chief of Operations for review and approval. The contents of the EPAR must include an up-to-date, complete job title, class specifications, and description of job duties and requirements as approved within the preceding three years by Central Management Services (CMS), the state agency that oversees state employment. The EPAR must also include up-to-date information with respect to the job title’s pay level, grade, and classification as provided under Illinois’ job title classification system and Personnel Code. If the duties, responsibilities or qualifications necessary to a position have changed as the facility’s needs and the number and characteristics of the population have changed (as is often the case), an updated job description must be drafted and submitted by facility administrators to the Public Safety Shared Services Center (Shared Services) and CMS for review and approval — a process that reportedly can take between three to six months. CMS, GOMB, and Shared Services must verify that a *bona fide* staff vacancy in an authorized staff position exists and whether it is subject to *Rutan* rules.

In the event facility administrators determine that an additional staff member is needed for the facility to minimally function, they must compile and submit a detailed justification to GOMB and the agency director for review and approval before the EPAR process can begin.

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6 See CMS website, *Employee Services, Personnel*, available at [https://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/Personnel/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/Personnel/Pages/default.aspx).

7 Shared Services acts as a consolidated umbrella agency that performs common administrative and human resource functions (hiring processes, personnel transactions, job descriptions, procurements, etc.) for several public safety agencies, including IDJJ, IDOC, the Emergency Management Agency, the State Fire Marshal, and the State Police. In 2006, Illinois’ Governor and Legislature created several shared service centers to consolidate human resource management with the aim of increasing efficiency and reducing costs. See Illinois General Assembly website, *Summary of Shared Services Centers*, available at [http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lac/audits/shared_services_summary.pdf](http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lac/audits/shared_services_summary.pdf).
example, if a facility determined that an additional mailroom clerk was needed to reduce backlogs in processing mail due to a large increase in the inmate population, the facility would have to submit data specifically documenting its mail backlogs and the volume of incoming and outgoing mail at the facility over the preceding months to justify adding staff. While some correctional facilities have a designated human resources person on staff to help orchestrate the time consuming EPAR process, many correctional facilities do not. Facility administrators sometimes are also sometimes placed in the difficult position where approval by GOMB to hire staff to fill a position is conditioned upon the facility cutting staff from another area — leaving administrators in the difficult position of having to choose an area where understaffing will cause the least amount of harm.

On receiving an EPAR from a facility seeking to hire additional staff or fill an existing staff vacancy, the agency director has the power to approve or deny the EPAR. If the Director denies the request, the EPAR process comes to an end and the position remains vacant. If the Director approves the request, the EPAR must then be forwarded on to CMS for the next step in the hiring process. While agency directors ostensibly have substantial discretion and power in the hiring process, the reality is they also operate under a chain-of-command within a system that is mediated by rules, regulations, and budgetary constraints over which they exercise no control.

Again, political and budgetary agendas of lawmakers and the Governor, coupled with court orders mandating the staffing of certain positions to remedy unconstitutional prison conditions (often at odds with executive and legislative budget priorities), severely circumscribe the ability of agency and facility administrators to make autonomous staffing decisions based on their professional experience, judgment, and personal knowledge of individual facilities’ needs.

Application Process: Screening Applicants and Determining Eligibility & Grades

On receiving an EPAR approved by an agency director and approved by GOMB, CMS is responsible for posting the position. Again, there can be substantial delays of a few weeks to many months from the time an agency submits an EPAR request to the time that CMS actually posts the position — particularly if the position’s duties and qualifications need to be updated and approved.

CMS is also responsible for screening candidates’ job applications to determine their basic eligibility, reviewing and assigning “grades” to candidates’ applications, and assembling a list of eligible candidates for a facility to interview. New candidates are screened and graded according to a set point scale. In IDOC, that grading scale is generally set at 1 through 100, with 100 points being the highest grade, while in IDJJ the scale runs from 1 through 130, with 130 being the

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highest a grade. Screening, application, and grading procedures, however, can also vary according to the specific job title in question.

All candidates, including prospective new employees, existing correctional employees seeking transfer or promotion, and correctional employees who are eligible for promotions through Illinois’ Upward Mobility Program, must be screened for basic job eligibility and graded. A candidate’s grade expires and the candidate must reapply and go through the CMS grading process anew: (1) after one year if the candidate is not an existing State employee and instead is seeking a position through open competitive bidding; or (2) after six years if the candidate is a current staff member seeking to be promoted or transferred into a job title.

The grading system is intended to rank and prioritize eligible applicants according to merit from highest to lowest with respect to skills, experience, education, and ability to successfully perform the duties required for the job title in question. Collective bargaining terms also come into play in grading to give employees with seniority priority over other candidates of equal ability and qualifications.

The grade that an applicant receives in relation to a particular job title, and relative to other applicants seeking the same position, ostensibly is based on uniform, objective factors including relevant experience, skills, education, test scores, seniority, and job performance evaluations by supervisors (in the case of existing state employees). However, the actual process by which CMS grades each applicant can also be highly subjective in many respects because grades can vary greatly depending upon the particular CMS staff who grades the particular application.

The process of submitting an application and obtaining a grade from CMS (or “bidding” for a position in the case of current state correctional employees seeking transfer or promotion to a new position) is inefficient, time-consuming, and labor-intensive. Lack of accessibility, timeliness, and flexibility in the application process can cause talented new job candidates and existing employees seeking promotions to abandon the process altogether.

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10 The Upward Mobility Program is a career mobility and advancement incentive created through a joint venture between CMS and AFSCME, the union that represents the majority of staff in Illinois’ adult and juvenile prisons. Through the program staff are encouraged to pursue additional education and training for correctional leadership positions. In some instances, staff’s college tuition can be reimbursed by the State in exchange for their agreement to remain in state service for a period of time. Staff who register and enroll in the program, and who successfully complete required training and educational programs and testing, are placed on a special eligibility list that gives them priority over other candidates in filling vacancies for targeted positions. The purpose of the Upward Mobility Program is to develop qualified staff within agencies to fill positions that otherwise can be very difficult to recruit for and fill. Governor Rauner, however, has proposed terminating program to eliminate the reported $4 million spent annually on the program. CMS website, Employee Services, Education, Upward Mobility Program, available at http://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/Education/ump/Pages/UpwardMobilityProgramEligibility.aspx.

A number of factors contribute to candidates’ dissatisfaction with the state hiring and grading process. First, the application process itself is antiquated and not technologically efficient. Employment application forms can be completed electronically online in a PDF format on CMS’ website. Nevertheless, job applicants still must submit cumbersome paper-form applications to CMS by mail because the system is not set up to allow for electronic signatures or filing.

Second, applicants are not provided with clear, explicit instructions on CMS’ specific criteria for determining job eligibility and grades in reviewing applications. Consequently, applicants who otherwise are highly qualified for a position can be prematurely or unfairly eliminated because they unknowingly fail to use the particularized jargon or terminology to describe their relevant experience and qualifications. Lack of transparency, clarity, and predictability in screening and grading processes contribute to candidates’ sense that state hiring procedures are arbitrary and capricious. To illustrate, one candidate who initially was found eligible, highly qualified, and given an “A grade” for a correctional staff position described being downgraded to a “B grade” by CMS without explanation when he later reapplied for the position — although the job title and duties, and the candidate’s qualifications and background remained unchanged. Similarly, another candidate and longtime correctional employee who under all listed objective criteria was highly qualified for a position was erroneously labeled “ineligible” and had his application rejected on the grounds that it was “incomplete” because he failed to include the desired technical language and “buzzwords” in describing his past and current job duties in IDOC.

Finally, and most importantly, long delays and substantial backlogs at CMS in grading candidates mean that many candidates (particularly the most qualified and sought after) have already accepted other job offers by the time facilities are even at the point of scheduling job interviews. Facility administrators do not have the authority to interview any candidates except those deemed eligible and graded by CMS. Depending on the position and the volume of applicants, it can take CMS anywhere from several months to half a year to complete grading an applicant pool. CMS itself has a large number of staffing vacancies that are driving these delays.

To illustrate the problem of such delays, administrators at one IDOC facility described an instance where delays effectively eliminated all the qualified “A grade” candidates from consideration for a critical staff position, leaving administrators with no option but to interview poorly qualified candidates graded at 30 and below on a 100-point scale. This situation is present and problematic at every level of hiring in IDOC and IDJJ.

**Interviews, Background Checks, and Hiring**

*Rutan* rules and Illinois’ civil service rules strictly limit whom IDJJ and IDOC can interview, the way that interviews are conducted, and the factors that can be considered by administrators in selecting and making a job offer to a candidate. In addition to grading, seniority governs between candidates whose qualifications have been found to be relatively equal.

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Facilities are required to conduct interviews of candidates from the ranked, graded roster of eligible candidates provided by CMS. These interviews must adhere to highly-formalized, strict procedures to comply with Rutan and state hiring regulations. To begin, the interviews must be conducted “blind,” meaning the facility administrators or staff conducting the interview cannot review or refer to the candidate’s application and resume prior to or during the interview. The only information available to interviewers during an interview is the candidate’s name and grade.

Where a current correctional employee is a job candidate, interviewers may refer to the employee’s work performance evaluations completed by the employee’s supervisors. However, the reliability, thoroughness, and accuracy of prior performance evaluations vary greatly depending upon the supervisor. Oftentimes up-to-date performance evaluations are unavailable for state employees because supervisors have yet to complete them. In other cases, performance evaluations may be incomplete or performed in a haphazard, cursory manner, shedding little light on an employee’s actual job performance. Reports of the Illinois Auditor General’s Office on IDJJ and IDOC have documented that employee performance evaluations often are not performed timely or at all. Interviewers generally believed that allowing them greater leeway and discretion to review and refer to candidates’ resumes prior to and during interviews would enhance their ability to reliably assess candidates’ abilities.

The interview process itself is highly formalistic and contrived, rather than conversational or open-ended in nature. Interviewers are limited to asking candidates a set number of pre-selected, pre-approved questions. Candidates’ answers are subsequently weighted according to a predetermined scale that gives greatest weight to answers that include buzzwords most relevant to the job title’s criteria and qualifications. Unbeknownst to most candidates, they must specifically mention any and all relevant prior job experience, skills, and education at the time of the interview or it cannot be considered by the interviewers — even if the relevant information is otherwise included in the candidate’s job application and resume. A substantial amount of weight is placed on candidate interviews. Thus, candidates who are otherwise highly qualified but fail to include and mention relevant job experience and skills during the “blind” interview process can end up being erroneously downgraded or eliminated from consideration. In some situations, IDJJ and IDOC administrators have little discretion but to hire a specified candidate to fill a vacancy, regardless of the candidate’s particular background or affinity for the job title.

Once a candidate or group of candidates are found eligible and selected for hiring, criminal and personal background checks must be conducted and candidates’ references confirmed before a


start date for employment can be set. Alongside delays in CMS grading, delays and backlogs in performing background checks are major obstacles to hiring over which IDJJ and IDOC administrators have no control. Shared Services acts as a human resource clearinghouse orchestrating all prospective employee background checks for IDOC and IDJJ, as well as other public safety state agencies including the State Fire Marshall and the State Police.

Depending on the nature of the job title and position, background checks can be quite extensive and time consuming, requiring a computerized criminal history check through the Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS, the computerized statewide data system that collects both state and federal criminal justice-related information on Illinois residents) and a check for records of involvement in abuse and neglect proceedings through the Department of Children and Family Services. According to administrators, lack of resources and inadequate staffing in Shared Services often result in delays of several weeks to over a month in completing criminal and personal background checks and reference confirmations for prospective employees.

Again, undue delays in the completing background checks and setting start dates for new hires can encourage the most highly qualified candidates to accept employment elsewhere. As it stands, delay and inefficiency in state hiring seriously impede IDJJ’s and IDOC’s ability to satisfy minimum standards of care. Illustrative of this problem, although IDJJ has been chronically understaffed with teachers and unable to meet minimum standards in providing youth with education, under the state hiring system it takes on average between six to eight months for a facility to fill a teacher vacancy.15

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem, on December 30, 2014, the Illinois Legislature and Governor passed SB2992 into law (Public Act 98-1146), which exempts teachers who apply for positions within IDJJ from having to submit to the grading process, competitive examinations and eligibility lists generally required by CMS.16 The intent of the legislation was to allow IDJJ to fill teaching positions in youth facilities more quickly and efficiently. While this goal was laudable, many IDJJ facilities today still remain severely and chronically understaffed with teachers.17

15See Expert Report, Peter E. Leone, Ph.D, Education Services and Supports for Students in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, p. 10: “Another significant challenge is the current system for hiring teachers and other education staff. Currently, all teachers as State employees are hired through a centralized system that is cumbersome and inefficient. Principals stated that it takes from 6 to 8 months to replace teachers. Further, notices of teaching vacancies at IDJJ facilities are not advertised through the State Board of Education. Many of the best and most highly qualified teachers who have applied for IDJJ have found jobs by the time that the IDJJ staff is able to interview prospective candidates.” Available at http://www.aclu-il.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/RJ-v-Bishop-Expert-report-on-education-Peter-Leone-9-23-13.pdf.


17 To illustrate, when JHA visited the IDJJ facility IYC-St. Charles in September of 2015, there were ten open vacancies for teachers.
Use of Temporary Staff Assignments in Lieu of Permanent Hiring

Faced with budgetary constraints and pressure to contain costs, correctional administrators are often asked to defer the time and expense of hiring new staff in favor of temporarily assigning existing staff to fill vacancies. This solution, however, is only provisional and not an effective answer to chronic understaffing for a number of reasons.

First, temporary assignments for most vacancies typically cannot last longer than 60 days from the time of a job posting without IDOC and IDJJ obtaining approval. This 60-day limitation was implemented to stop the practice of circumventing rules governing equitable hiring and promotions by “temporarily” assigning employees to higher paid positions for extended periods of time, even years, with little or no oversight. The 60-day limit ordinarily can be relaxed where the State is actively seeking to fill a position. However, this restriction remains important because it encourages the state to permanently fill vacant positions, rather than rely on temporary assignment, as needed for staff development and facility stability.

Second, reliance on temporary staff assignments is more costly than permanent hiring. An employee temporarily assigned to a position in a lower pay grade than his permanent position still must be paid at the higher level of his permanent position; likewise, an employee temporarily assigned to a higher pay grade than his permanent position must also be paid at the higher grade rate as well.

Third, overreliance on temporary assignments in lieu of permanent hiring perpetuates a “rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul” scenario that can have disastrous consequences for facility safety and stability. To illustrate, temporarily assigning security staff to clerical staff positions for extended periods of time (as often occurs in IDOC due to chronic understaffing in this area) may help a facility to catch up with essential data and record keeping, but it at the same time stretches security staffing thin and further exacerbates the need for overtime. Absent adequate security staff, prisoners necessarily have fewer opportunities for out-of-cell time and programming. Lack of movement and programming, in turn, tends to increase frustration, aggression, and tension between prisoners and staff, which ultimately can manifest in facility disruption and violence.

Recommendations:

(1) To increase efficiency and institutional and public safety, and reduce taxpayer costs long-term, the General Assembly and the Governor’s office should:

- Set realistic headcounts at each IDJJ and IDOC facility based on a data-informed analysis of the population’s needs.

- Provide IDJJ and IDOC with the resources needed to perform comprehensive workforce planning and data-based analysis of authorized headcounts, to include: an examination of current and historical workforce data and staff overtime hours; projections regarding future staff attrition, retirements, and resulting gaps in workforce skills; the needs and goals of the agency and each facility for the coming year and in the long-term (taking into account the size and characteristics of the prison populations
at issue and their treatment and service needs); and the knowledge, skills, training, and experience needed by the workforce to accomplish both individual facility and agency goals;

- Grant IDOC and IDJJ more flexibility to begin the hiring process before critical positions become vacant;

- Invest greater resources in correctional employee training and development, and find additional ways to tie promotion and compensation for both staff and administrators to job training, continuing education, and job performance.

(2) Under the authority granted pursuant to Executive Order 15-16, GOMB and CMS should take both long-term and short-term actions to reform correctional hiring.

In the long-term, GOMB and CMS, in cooperation with IDOC and IDJJ should:

- Evaluate and audit correctional hiring processes to identify bottlenecks, sources of delay, and inefficiency in individual facilities, IDJJ and IDOC as a whole, and in relation to other agencies involved in correctional hiring, such as Shared Services;

- Solicit direct input from facility administrators, staff and union leaders, as well as correctional cadets and new correctional hires regarding their experience with the hiring process and ways that the process could be improved;

- Investigate and invest in technologies shown to enhance efficiency, timeliness, and accessibility in the job application process, which could include technology to allow job applicants to submit applications electronically.

In the short-term, GOMB and CMS, in cooperation with IDOC and IDJJ should also take immediate actions to:

- Eliminate the requirement that GOMB give preapproval for hiring as a prerequisite to IDJJ and IDOC filling staff vacancies under the authorized headcount;

- Streamline the application process, and provide applicants with clearer information and instructions on job criteria, applications, and interviews;

- Implement an expedited process for applicants to renew employment grades or extend the period of time for which grades are valid;
• Increase the amount of government staff and resources devoted to performing pre-employment background checks to reduce delays; and

• Assess the screening and assessment tools used to identify and grade candidates’ for jobs in corrections to ensure accuracy and fairness, and that that grades relate to experience that is actually relevant to the position.

• Provide increased training to human resources personnel who evaluate, screen, and grade candidates for correctional positions.

(3) To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the correctional hiring process, IDOC and IDJJ should also take steps to:

• Prioritize and ensure that supervisors complete staff performance evaluations in a timely, thorough, and thoughtful manner to better assist managers in making informed hiring decisions;

• End the practice using temporary staff assignments to fill critical positions for lengthy periods of time, and increase permanent hiring;

• Work with GOMB and CMS to review and revise the interview process and the standardized questions used with correctional job candidates to allow interviewers to fully consider all of a candidate’s relevant prior job experience, skills, and education at the time of the interview; and

• In consultation with the Governor’s Office, CMS, GOMB, and Labor Unions, explore ways to enlarge facility managers’ ability to exercise professional judgment in hiring decisions while still protecting against discrimination and partisan political influence within the parameters of civil service and collective bargaining rules.