

Governor Carney, Commissioner Phelps Release Final Report of DOC Special Assistant

Report details measurable progress implementing recommendations of Independent Review

SMYRNA, Del. – Noting a commitment to publicly document implementation of needed prison improvements, Governor John Carney and Department of Correction (DOC) Commissioner Perry Phelps released a [report](#) today detailing the measurable progress made implementing the recommendations in the Final Report of the Independent Review of Security Issues at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC).

Over the past year, hundreds of cameras have been installed at JTVCC for the first time since the facility was built in 1971. DOC has strengthened officer safety, communication and training, increased officer recruiting and retention efforts, modernized operations and intelligence gathering and improved services and programs for inmates.

“Since last February, we have committed to publicly documenting the serious challenges at the Department of Correction, and to implementing reforms in a way that will hold us accountable to the public every step of the way,” said **Governor Carney**. “We have made significant progress in implementing recommendations of the Independent Review team, and taking steps forward that will make our prison system safer for officers and inmates alike. This is not a short-term mission. We have more work to do. But we are committed to doing what’s right, to making necessary changes, and to holding this process accountable publicly. I want to thank

Commissioner Phelps for his leadership throughout this process, and Special Assistant Claire DeMatteis for her careful work in assisting Commissioner Phelps' team as they implement lasting reforms."

"Our overarching motivation to strengthen the Department's operations and security was to honor the ultimate sacrifice and service of Lt. Steven Floyd," said **Commissioner Phelps**. "Having a one-year time frame to implement the reforms channeled our motivation into action and positive results."

Of the 41 recommendations, the DOC has implemented and measurably addressed 40 of them, which is detailed in the report written by DeMatteis, who was assigned as Special Assistant to the DOC for one year to work with Commissioner Phelps on the needed reforms.

"Some of the recommendations could be implemented with a single directive or action; others, such as efforts to improve communication and culture and issues involving inmate classifications, have been implemented and entail ongoing efforts," **DeMatteis** said. "This has been a year of continuous improvement for the Department of Correction. Not all problems are solved, but the Department is stronger than it was 18 months ago, one year ago, one month ago."

The one recommendation that requires additional time to address is the need to reduce mandatory overtime. While enhanced recruiting efforts could take another 18 to 24 months to yield substantial results in lower officer vacancies, DOC leaders are actively seeking short-term solutions, particularly at JTVCC, to reduce the high number of overtime shifts required to operate the facility safely. These solutions are expected to be carried out beginning this fall.

Progress documented in the implementation report includes:

- After years of budget constraints when funding for officer trainings was reduced, DOC partnered with

Wilmington University to conduct a 6-hour training course for all correctional officers in the areas of risk management, de-escalation skills, communication skills and cultural competency. More than 1200 officers completed the mandatory training from January-July 2018 from experienced, skilled law enforcement officers who are Wilmington University professors. Wilmington University law enforcement professionals also conducted an 8-hour training course for 400 correctional leaders in supervisory management and leadership skills.

- Officers' starting salary increased to \$40,000 in FY18 and \$43,000 in FY19.
- A new career ladder and revised promotional standards have been implemented.
- DOC is offering an incentive signing bonus of \$3,000 for new officers who graduate from the Academy, and who stay with the Department for at least 2 years.
- DOC also is offering a referral bonus of \$1,000 to existing officers who refer a recruit who graduates from the Academy who stay with the Department for at least 2 years.
- Programs and services offered to inmates at the JTVCC have improved over the past year. There are new culinary, horticulture and automotive technician programs available to inmates to give them critical job-skills.
- Several non-profit groups have resumed operating programs at JTVCC, including: Victims Voices Heard, Prison Arts Program, Alternatives to Violence Program, Gamblers Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics, Echoes of Joy Choir; and the Kings Garden Project.
- The Inmate Advisory Council, which was initiated by Warden Dana Metzger in the fall of 2017, holds formal monthly meetings with the Warden and his senior staff, medical providers, counselors and treatment staff. The goal is to foster discussion and problem-solving between inmates and corrections officials.

As **DeMatteis** stated in the Implementation Report: “The public should be confident that the Department of Correction is focused every hour of every day on public safety, rehabilitation and the law enforcement training, safety of operations, intelligence-sharing and communication required to prevent another inmate uprising that led to the hostage crisis and tragic death of Lt. Steven Floyd in February 2017. Dedicated to his memory, ultimate sacrifice and service over self, correctional officers are committed to performing an extraordinary public service for the people of Delaware.”

[Click here](#) to read the full report.

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