

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

INTRODUCTION This report contains the results of our performance audit of Substance Abuse Services (SAS)*, Department of Corrections, for the period July 1, 1992 through January 31, 1996.

AUDIT PURPOSE This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*.

BACKGROUND SAS consists of various programs within the Department and independent contractors responsible for the process by which drug testing and substance abuse services* are developed, delivered, monitored, and evaluated. The Department programs include the Substance Abuse Program Section (SAP)*, Correctional Facilities Administration (CFA), and Field Operations Administration (FOA). According to SAP's 1992-93 annual report, the mission* of SAS is to develop and implement substance

abuse programs for persons under the jurisdiction of the Department and to develop and monitor the departmental drug testing program. SAS's related goals*, as indicated in SAP's 1992-93 annual report, are to improve rehabilitation efforts for persons whose substance abuse* has been closely tied to their criminal behavior and to deter drug use by prisoners, parolees, and probationers.

To help achieve SAS's mission and goals, SAP uses various independent contractors to provide substance abuse and drug testing services. SAP is responsible for assessing the performance of independent contractors. CFA, FOA, and the independent contractors are directly responsible for providing substance abuse and drug testing services to prisoners.

As of January 31, 1996, SAP had five employees. In fiscal year 1994-95, the Department expended \$10.1 million to provide educational and treatment substance abuse services to 11,392 prisoners. In fiscal year 1994-95, the Department also expended \$2.5 million for prisoner drug testing. During our audit period, the Department determined that 67% of all new prisoners had a substance abuse problem.

**AUDIT OBJECTIVES,
CONCLUSIONS, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Audit Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of SAS by determining if it met its mission and goals.

Conclusion: SAS's drug testing program was generally effective in deterring drug use by prisoners, parolees, and probationers. However, our assessment of the effectiveness

of SAS's substance abuse treatment services disclosed two material conditions*:

- The Department had not established a complete continuous quality improvement process to objectively monitor and improve the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment services. Our comparison of the rearrest, conviction, and recidivism rates* of prisoners who received substance abuse treatment services (treatment group*), and those prisoners who did not receive treatment (comparison group*), showed the program to be marginally effective in improving the rehabilitation of prisoners with substance abuse problems. However, without performance measures*, it is difficult to determine if the level of performance met management expectations for success (Finding 1).
- The Department had not established an integrated process for providing substance abuse treatment services to its prisoners. Although the Department was generally effective in providing a continuum of care for those prisoners referred to a substance abuse treatment program, not all the prisoners requiring treatment were referred for substance abuse treatment services (Finding 2).

Our assessment also disclosed reportable conditions* related to investigating high drug testing rates, monitoring independent contractors, and complying with drug testing control procedures (Findings 3 through 5).

Noteworthy Accomplishments: The Department, in conjunction with SAP, developed a substance abuse program plan based on national standards. The plan provides for substance abuse education and self-help groups. Also, the plan provides for a continuum of care* for those prisoners whom the Department refers to an independent contractor. Further, to help deter drug use, the Department schedules all prisoners for drug testing on a random basis in addition to those prisoners suspected of drug use.

Audit Objective: To evaluate the efficiency of SAS by reviewing the contracting process used in delivering and monitoring the substance abuse programs for prisoners, parolees, and probationers.

Conclusion: SAP was generally efficient in obtaining substance abuse services for the Department.

**AUDIT SCOPE
AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records for Substance Abuse Services for the period July 1, 1992 through January 31, 1996. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

To accomplish our objectives, we researched national standards for providing substance abuse services in prisons. We identified and used the Report on the National Task

Force on Correctional Substance Abuse Strategies which documents strategies for controlling the influx of drugs into institutions, monitoring substance abuse behavior, and intervening with drug abuse therapy and education. Agency compliance with these substance abuse treatment framework strategies is voluntary. Also, we performed a preliminary survey of SAS operations, governing statutes, rules, policies, and procedures. Based on this information, we analyzed the effectiveness of SAS in achieving its stated mission and goals.

In addition, we examined the process used by SAP to award contracts to independent contractors and the methods the Department used to assess prisoners' substance abuse problems and refer prisoners for substance abuse education and/or treatment.

**AGENCY
RESPONSES
AND PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP**

Our report contains 5 findings and 9 recommendations. The agency's preliminary response indicates that it agrees with all 9 recommendations, but disagrees with the results of our analysis presented in Finding 1. The agency indicated that it will take or has taken the necessary action to implement the recommendations.

The Department complied with 9 of 14 prior audit recommendations. We combined the remaining 5 recommendations into 2 recommendations.