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## SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

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November 21, 2012

Legislator Betty Jean Grant, Chair  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

Legislator Grant:

I have been informed that questions concerning the inmate programs that are currently offered came up at the recent Budget Hearings. I apologize for not being in attendance, as I could have immediately addressed your concerns, and clear up any misconceptions that you may have. As you will see, there are many programs offered within the Jail Management Division. While it is true that the majority of them are conducted out of the Correctional Facility, there is a reason. While reviewing the list of programs, please bear in mind the following information concerning the average length of stay of inmates housed in both of our facilities, as it directly correlates to the efficacy of any inmate program:

#### Length of Stay

Male (EHC)	=	10 days	Male (ECCF)	=	39 days
Female (EHC)	=	3 days	Female (ECCF)	=	34 days

A list of inmate programs being run at the Correctional Facility is as follows:

**Service Action Corp.** – 2 crews of 4 inmates and One Corrections Officer each provide services to government agencies and non-profit organizations where manpower is needed for work projects.

**Sheriff's Garage** – 4 inmates are assigned to the Sheriff's Garage under the supervision of a correction officer and civilian mechanic, maintaining and repairing the fleet of cars and trucks of the Sheriff's Office. Inmates learn basic auto mechanics and maintenance.

**Kitchen** - Provide food services to the inmates in the Correctional Facility under the supervision of a Correction Officer and civilian employees. Inmates involved in the program are tasked with the preparation, service and clean-up of all food service within the facility. Inmates are taught modern methods of food service preparation for large scale meal delivery service. Both male and female crews are assigned. 40 inmates total participate in this program (30 males & 10 females)

**Floor Crew** – A crew of 4 male inmates supervised by a civilian employee maintain all the corridors within the facility. Inmates are given instruction on how to operate floor maintenance equipment as well as proper procedure to strip, seal, and re-wax floors. In addition they receive training in the methods to maintain the floors to keep them looking their best.

**Front Runners** – a crew of three inmates supervised by a Corrections Officer who task it is to move inter-office mail around the facility. In addition they assist the officer in moving different items and perform general messenger tasks throughout the facility.

**Lobby Cleaners** – Clean and maintain the facility lobby and public areas. A crew of 4 inmates, under the direction of a Corrections Officer cleans the public areas of the facility daily.

**Garbage Detail** – One inmate is assigned to collect and dispose of the trash throughout the facility three times per day.

**Hazardous Material Crew** – A crew of 4 inmates under the supervision of a civilian employee are specially trained to deal with any kind of hazardous or biological spill within the facility.

**Library** – a crew of 4 males and 3 female inmates supervised by a Corrections Officer assist the Librarian with maintaining the library. They restock books and perform general cleaning in the area.

**Law Clerks** - The inmates are assigned as law clerks to assist other inmates in doing legal research for their court cases, if they have knowledge and skills in that area.

**Office Cleaner** – An Inmate under the direction of a Corrections Officer is assigned to clean all office spaces daily

**Commissary** – a crew of 9 inmates supervised by a Corrections Officer perform all tasks associated with the inmate commissary and division warehouse. They pack inmate commissary orders, and deliver supplies to various parts of the facility.

**Intake** - a crew of 3 inmates under the supervision of a Corrections Officer store and retrieve inmate clothing, prepare jail issued clothing for new arrivals, and perform some laundry functions.

**Unit Porters** - under the direction of the Housing Area Officer, a crew of three inmates maintains the housing area in a clean and orderly condition.

**Unit Food Porters** – Under the direction of the Housing Area Officer, a crew of two inmates serves all meals to the inmates housed in that area and is responsible for the clean-up of the delivery of food service to the inmates in the housing area.

**Chaplains Assist** – Inmates provide assistance to the facility Chaplains in preparation for services.

**Barber Shop/Beauty Salon** - Inmates who have experience cutting or doing hair are assigned to these areas to provide services to other inmates in the facility.

**Narcotics Anonymous** - Program provided by volunteers in the community giving counseling service to assist inmates in breaking drug habits

**Alcoholics Anonymous** - Program provided by volunteers in the community giving counseling service to assist inmates in overcoming alcohol dependency

**Bible Study** – Provided by four community churches. Volunteers come into the facility and provide instruction and discussion of the Bible.

**Muslim Studies** – Inmates gather to discuss the Koran etc. weekly.

**Hay Program** – Civilian employee cuts hay for various county departments. Service action Corp. assists with the loading and unloading of wagons and trucks.

**GED Program for youth** – Conducted by the Alden Central School System, they provide educational service to the youth of our Facility.

**GED Program for Adults** – Conducted by the Alden Central School System, they provide educational service to the adults of our Facility.

**Transitions Program** - Conducted by the Alden Central School System, they provide inmates with information on addiction, anger management, career counseling, Making a plan for the future upon release. Program is taught by a member of the education staff who is a certified Alcohol/Substance abuse counselor.

**Group Ministries** - Volunteers from the community come to the facility to provide transitional assistance to inmates re-entering the community. Assistance is provided in finding work, housing and other assistance available in the community.

**Covenant House** - Volunteers from the community come to the facility to provide transitional assistance to inmates re-entering the community. Assistance is provided in finding work, housing and other assistance available in the community.

**Makin' It Seminar** - Conducted once per year, a seminar is given by Sister Ruby Graves to assist inmates with the transition from incarceration to living in the community.

As you can see from the above list, the Erie County Sheriff's Office facilitates a wide array of inmate programs. While the Holding Center is not nearly as extensive, inmate trustees are utilized in a variety of ways, whenever possible, including the facility kitchen and library. The Buffalo Public Schools also conduct educational services for both minors and adults.

As I have said on numerous occasions in front of the Public Safety Committee and Community Corrections Advisory Board, the ECSO is committed to increasing inmate programs at both of our facilities. We are actively pursuing the implementation of a commercial laundry facility, where inmates will learn a valuable, skill that could potentially translate to outside employment upon their release. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of expanding our Garage/Mechanic program to possibly link inmates with potential employment. Finally, while the process has taken longer than all of us would like, we are hoping to reinstitute the highly successful Flower Program, which last operated in 2004.

The enthusiasm for additional inmate programs, however, must be tempered by a need to maintain fiscal responsibility. The Public Safety Committee has recently reiterated its concerns regarding the amount of overtime in the Jail Management Division, which has historically gone over-budget. All inmate programs must be vetted through the Commission of Correction, and many times, they will require that a sworn officer oversee same. This equates to additional manpower needs, which results in an increase in overtime. Be assured that this important factor will be given appropriate consideration prior to implementing any new inmate programs, as we are also committed to reducing overtime costs.

As always, anytime you or any other member of the Legislature would like to come out to the Correctional Facility to see any of these programs in action, feel free to call, as I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Thomas Diina  
Superintendent

Cc: Sheriff Timothy B. Howard  
Undersheriff Mark Wipperman  
Hon. Timothy R. Hogue  
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