



Corrections

New Mexico operates eight state-owned prisons with a total capacity of 5,769 beds. It also contracts with private prison operators to run two facilities with a capacity of 1,900 beds. Additionally, around 10 thousand to 15 thousand offenders are in the state’s probation and parole system. Prison populations have been falling since September 2018 and by mid 2023 were about 25 percent lower than the population high in FY16. The budget for the Corrections Department makes up about 4 percent of state general fund appropriations.

Inside

Over the past five years, over 80 percent of total corrections spending, about \$280 million, has been spent on incarceration, which pays for housing inmates and prison-related expenses, such as recidivism-reduction programming, inmate education, inmate healthcare, and maintenance. During this time, appropriations for incarceration grew almost 10 percent even while inmate populations fell almost 20 percent.

New Mexico spending on inmate healthcare, which has increased over 50 percent over the last decade, typically puts the state significantly above the national average. The department now spend about 20 percent of its annual budget on the inmate healthcare, including dental care, hepatitis-C treatment, pharmaceuticals, behavioral healthcare, and chronic care. The three major drivers of this spending are the distance of prisons from hospitals and other providers; the prevalence of infectious and chronic diseases, mental illness, and substance use disorders; and an aging inmate population. The most promising areas to contain corrections healthcare costs are through tele-health services, Medicaid financing, and medical or geriatric parole.

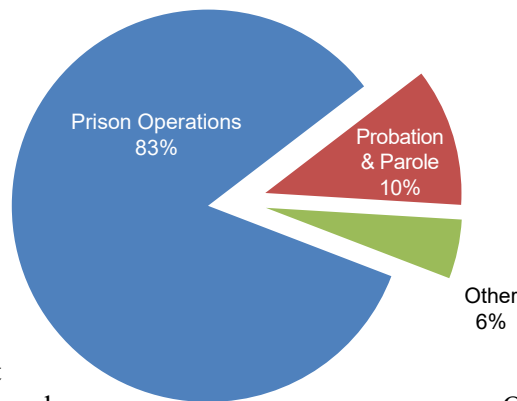
With the average age of state-owned facilities at almost 40 years, and with a substantial level of deferred maintenance, the department has over one-quarter of a billion dollars in capital outlay needs. Adding to this, many of New Mexico’s prisons were designed to fulfill functions that have changed over the years. Planned in the wake of the prison riot, for which a contributing cause was overcrowded dormitories, the state’s public prisons are inefficiently designed with small 48-cell housing units with each cell designed to hold only one inmate – leading to increased operational expenses.

Outside

Outside of managing prison facilities, the Corrections Department provides community supervision, intensive supervision, behavioral health services, drug courts, half-way house placement, and offender assistance programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, accounting for 10 percent of NMCD’s total expenditures. Behavioral health services for offenders in the community are administered by various contracted providers. The state also funds several halfway houses, although the capacity in “outside” services and programs in New Mexico does not match need.

On average, at any time, about 45 inmates eligible for release are serving parole in a much more expensive prison setting because of this lack of capacity. While a prisoner serving time inside costs about \$136 a day, a parolee costs about \$11, with even residential treatment programs costing about half as much as incarceration. Decreasing the number of inmates serving parole inside a prison by improving the availability of community services could save the state more than \$2 million a year. In addition, parolees who receive outside services are more likely to stay out of prison; inmates who finish parole inside are not eligible for services.

Corrections Department Spending



For More Information:

- General information on Corrections Department programs is available at the Corrections Department website: <http://corrections.state.nm.us/>.
- More in-depth research and data on the New Mexico corrections system is available at the New Mexico Sentencing Commission website, nmsc.unm.edu.
- The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics maintains a clearinghouse on corrections information on its website: www.bjs.gov.
- State statutes governing correctional institutions are in Chapter 33.