



ISSUES FACING NEW YORK CITY’S AGENCIES: NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Overview

The Department of Correction (DOC) is responsible for the security and safety of individuals 18 years or older in the DOC’s custody, including: persons who are awaiting trial; persons who have been convicted and sentenced to less than one year of incarceration; and persons held on State parole warrants. The DOC operates nine facilities housing people in custody, the court holding facilities in each of the five boroughs, and two hospital prison wards. DOC also provides supportive services, including vocational training, to prepare individuals in custody to successfully return to their communities. The Department has a Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget totaling \$1.2 billion, and a June 30, 2022 targeted headcount of 7,460 uniformed and 1,962 civilian employees.

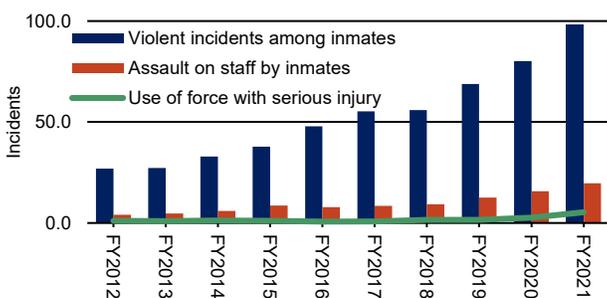
Pandemic Impact on Agency Operations

To alleviate population density during the pandemic, the City accelerated the release of some inmates utilizing reintegration hotels with support services run by non-profit organizations. However, more than 1,200 correction officers had been reportedly infected with COVID-19 through March 2021. The agency has faced a highly publicized staffing crisis, in which some officers were asked to work triple shifts to cover posts. Court closures also led to longer stays for inmates awaiting trial, averaging 87 days in 2021 versus 75 days in 2019. Violent incidents among individuals in custody, assaults on staff, and departmental use of force all increased in this period (see Figure 1), and the Governor declared a [disaster emergency](#) due to conditions at the Rikers Correctional Center in September 2021.

ISSUES FACING THE AGENCY

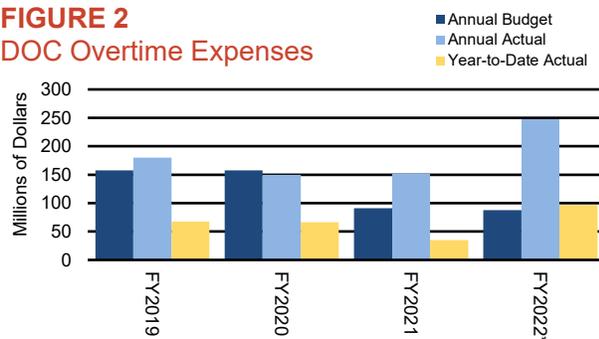
- Closing Rikers:** Even before the pandemic, the City had announced its plan to close Rikers by 2026, and to build “smaller,” “safer” and “fairer” borough-based jails instead. This plan includes substantially reducing the number of people in jail through a combination of crime reduction, bail reform, greater use of “alternatives to incarceration” programs, and decriminalization of low-level offenses. These plans were delayed by one year during the pandemic, and are dependent upon a sustained reduction in the jail population. The plan also assumes that uniformed staffing will continue its decline, by 4.9 percent (382 officers) from October 2021 levels.
- Overtime:** Overtime costs at the Department have grown rapidly since the beginning of FY 2021 largely due to staff unavailability (see Figure 2). While the City planned for a significant reduction in uniformed overtime due to declining jail population, higher rates of employees out on sick leave and absent without leave have forced available staff to work double and triple shifts. The City has not modified the FY 2022 overtime budget since November 2020, although costs through the first five months have totaled \$97 million, already exceeding the entire fiscal year budget of \$88 million for DOC overtime and nearly tripling last year’s costs through the same period.

FIGURE 1
Incidents Per 1,000 Average Daily Population



Sources: NYC Mayor’s Management Report; OSC analysis

FIGURE 2
DOC Overtime Expenses



Sources: Office of Management and Budget; OSC Analysis
*Actual based on OSC’s forecasts