

CJ550 Module Nine

Organizational Assessment and Recommendations Report
Florida Department of Corrections, Office of Community Corrections

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Introduction

Selected Organization

The Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) is Florida's largest state agency and is the third largest state prison system in the nation. Just under 24,000 individuals are employed by the FDC, the majority (82%) of them being Correctional Officers (COs) and Correctional Probation Officers (CPOs) (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p. 3). They collectively provide services to approximately 80,000 inmates and supervise just over 45,000 offenders in Florida's communities (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). The public, victims, and inmates/offenders are the primary stakeholders for which they provide "effective and efficient" services that promote "emphasis on the premium of life" (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p. 3).

Florida hosts a variance of ecosystems, climates, and cultures; the FDC must be able to meet the needs of justice-involved individuals throughout. FDC Correctional Institutions (CIs) are not evenly dispersed. The majority are located "across the state's northern tier" and hold "approximately 65% of the system's capacity". A map provided in the FDC Annual Report for 2020-2021 shows condensed facilities in the northern two regions, with the most southern region appearing nearly empty by comparison (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p. 9). It should also be mentioned that the southernmost/coastal areas are subjected to brutal tropical storms each year; more will be said about this factor within the report.

FDC Mission Statement

The FDC mission statement states that purpose of the FDC is to:

"Provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of those entrusted to our care, creating a safe and professional environment with the outcome of reduced victimization,

safer communities and an emphasis on the premium of life” (*Vision, Mission, Value, and Goals -- Florida Department of Corrections*, 2019).

The FDC Strategic Plan and Annual Report for 2021-2024 (2021) describes a set of clear goals – referred to as “Lines of Effort” (LOEs) – that remain current at the time of this report – this section provides a summary of each (pp. 4-5):

- Line 1: World-Class Corrections Professionals - broken down into sub-LOEs and initiatives that focus on recruitment and retainment (pay raises, incentives, etc.), effective training (leadership and professional development, open-enrollment recruit academy), and work-life balance (12 hour shifts reduced to 8.5 hour shifts).
- Line 2: Security, Safety, Health and Welfare of Inmates - the sub-LOEs and initiatives include intelligence and law enforcement (investigation and criminal network interception), security operations (enhanced technology and contraband interception, innovative population management that provides positive choices), health and wellness (mental health and outpatient orthopedic services, elderly inmate care, and substance use disorder treatment) and programming (including the Inmate Welfare Trust Fund, Inmate Teaching Assistant Program, and many more).
- Line 3: Protecting Communities and Support Restoration - this line’s sub-LOEs are comprised of offender supervision (public safety and mobile applications), programming (Merit-Based Activity Program, Restorative Justice Program, among others), and community outreach (college partnerships, Roadmap to Restoration, volunteerism, etc.)
- Line 4: Mission Support and Infrastructure - sub-LOEs focus on financial stewardship (fiscal strategy, telemedicine and electronic health records, contract monitoring), information technology (IT infrastructure), and administrative support (roster management).

Organizational Structure

Departments and Subdivisions

The FDC is an enormous agency dependent on a clearly defined stratification leadership that forms their organizational structure. Though the FDC includes many offices (divisions), there are three primary subdivisions that interact directly with offenders: The Office of Institutions, The Office of Community Corrections, and The Office of Programs and Re-Entry. Personnel in each of these three offices are supervised by the Assistant Deputy Secretary of each

office: Hope Gartman (Institutions), Joseph Winkler (Community Corrections) and Patrick Mahoney (Programs and Re-Entry). All three are under the command of the Deputy Secretary, Richard Comerford. Mr. Comerford reports to secretary Ricky Dixon (*Graphic Organization Chart -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). All offices and actors must work cooperatively to uphold FDC standards of operation.

Those sentenced to time in prison enter the FDC system under The Office of Institutions where they are processed, booked, and housed within Florida's brick and mortar correctional institutions. While offenders serve out their time, they are supervised and "cared for" by the COs working under this office. This office helps fulfill the FDC mission by ensuring that inmates are housed in a "safe and professional" environment. The Office of Institutions also has its own mission (in addition to the FCD agency mission) that states its purpose is to diligently serve the incarcerated population as well as "reliably collaborate" with other criminal justice community entities. The goals of this office are to utilize "established safe, secure, and humane supervision" of confined inmates to ensure protection of the local community (Feloney, 2022).

The Office of Programs and Re-Entry works concurrently with The Office of Institutions to educate, support, and (eventually) help prepare eligible inmates for release. This office creates and implements programs available to all inmates, including those that are sentenced to life. The Office of Programs and Re-Entry helps fulfill the FDC mission by "meeting the needs" by providing a "continuum of care" while working with the members of the institutional and community offices. This department must provide adequate, ongoing programming to help offenders make ready for successful transition back into the community (Feloney, 2022).

The Office of Community Corrections – comprising 130 probation offices – is responsible for the assessment and supervision of offenders sentenced to community probation

(no prison time) as well as those sentenced to serve time. Inmates that have successfully served most of their sentence are assessed for future risk of criminality to determine eligibility for release. This office collaborates with the other two offices to provide a “continuum of services” for those on probation as well as for those granted parole¹/conditional release. It also relies heavily on their operations to effectively “reduce victimization” and form “safer communities” – as per the FDC mission statement. Without the intentional efforts of The Office of Institutions and The Office of Programs and Re-Entry to rehabilitate the incarcerated, probation officers would flounder in working with unprepared offenders far from ready for re-entry. Lastly, probation/parole is assigned for a specified amount of time under specific conditions. CPOs must ensure that these conditions are met throughout the sanctioned time assigned to each individual. The OCC further overlaps with The Office of Institutions if/when conditions are broken, as the offender may then be required to serve (more) time (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

As accurately summarized by Morenoff & Harding (2014), these subdivisions rely on interwoven missions to account for all facets of the dynamic cycle of detention, re-entry, and life in the surrounding community (p.14). Together, these three offices operate symbiotically to fulfill the values and promises of the overall FDC mission.

Subdivision: The Office of Community Corrections

The remainder of this organizational assessment report will focus primarily on the OCC. This section of the report discusses how this subdivision’s goals and responsibilities align with the overall FDC mission statement. The OCC has a specific subdivision mission: “to protect the community by supervising offenders and reporting non-compliance to the sentencing or releasing

¹ Parole has been abolished in the state of Florida for years, though inmates that committed crimes prior to 1983 remain eligible for parole.

authority” (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

The OCC works with offenders entrusted to the FDC’s care that have both never been incarcerated and those that have been serving time inside for decades. Therefore, this office bookends the duties of the other offices. Offenders charged with crimes that do not result in a prison sentence are often required to participate in probation, as are those eligible for early/conditional release. Regardless of whether a community correction opportunity is ordered by the court or determined by the Florida Commission on Offender Review (FCOR), CPOs are responsible for managing all forms of community corrections (*Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

The OCC’s individual mission aligns with the overall FDC mission. The OCC is actioned by the provision of continued correctional services and support for offenders on probation. Community supervision provides a consistent, continuous structure and oversight within the public sphere. Furthermore, the OCC and its CPOs work collaboratively to maintain safe communities by way of deterrence and prevent future criminal behavior. A paramount responsibility of the OCC is the duty to ensure that probation conditions are respected and upheld. This duty aligns with the FDC mission statement as it functions to “reduce victimization” in the community. If the probationer is unable to adhere to conditions set upon their release, CPOs must diligently and accurately report their non-compliance (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). After legally substantiating a violation, the offender is subject to further correctional action – including being recommitted to the FDC via The Office of Institutions (US Legal, Inc., n.d.).

Key Subdivision Policies

The FDC operates under legal statutes set by the Florida Senate contained within Title XLVII: Criminal Procedure and Corrections. Thus, the OCC operates under Title XLVII – with

particular regard for Chapter 940 (Executive Clemency), Chapter 947 (FCOR; Conditional Release; Control Release; Parole), Chapter 948 (Probation and Community Control) and Chapter 949 (Parole and Probation: General Provisions) (*2022 Florida Statutes*, 2022). These specific chapters provide the governance that translates law into actionable procedures aligned with the OCC's mission.

To summarize how these statutes affect OCC operations, the Office of Program Policy and Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) created a program summary outlining the key policies of the OCC. According to this document, the OCC functions to “enforce standard conditions of supervision stipulated by statute, as well as special conditions imposed by the court or sentencing authority, including victim restitution, substance abuse and/or mental health treatment programs, and other sanctions or restrictions” to hold offenders accountable *and* provide appropriate community services (*Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

Types of supervision provided by the OCC include: contractual agreement (pretrial intervention for non-violent first offenders), court imposed (probation – including drug offender and sexual offender probation – and “community control”, i.e. house arrest), and post-prison release (parole, conditional release, addiction recovery) (Cizmadia, 2016). CPOs fulfill their obligation to “protect the community” by monitoring offenders in real time through “field contacts” at their places of residence, employment, education, and other appropriate locations. They are responsible for making referrals to local resources that assist offenders with community reintegration and in completing “their term of supervision successfully”. Additionally, CPOs must conduct timely noncompliance investigations and submit violation reports correctly by forwarding them to the “sentencing authority” for corrective action commensurate with the seriousness of the violation (*Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

To reduce victimization and recidivism, CPOs provide hands-on support to help offenders navigate OCC rules and regulations. CPOs work alongside them to determine what they need to comply with their supervision conditions, as well as promote lasting behavior change. This includes helping them to identify, secure, and maintain employment, stable housing, educational/vocational programs, reliable transportation, mental and behavioral health services, and community connection. Offender accountability is encouraged by way of positive reinforcement for (even their smallest) successes, as well as offering motivating incentives and rewarding “good behavior”. Noncompliance (or the potential for it) is best handled through timely corrective action that firmly, and fairly addresses any sign of “declining behavior”. Finally, CPOs fulfill the OCC (and FDC) mission by collaborating with community partners that are sensitive to the needs of supervised offenders and (ideally) willing to continue to support them once their supervision term has concluded (*Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

Assessment Plan

Organizational Assessment Strategy

While there is no perfect organizational assessment strategy, there *are* many to choose from; each with differing strengths and weaknesses. Classics include the “goal model” (measured by goal attainment), “systems model” (measured by ability to attain resources), “processes model” (measured by quality of internal processes), “paradox model” (measured by simultaneous opposites), and the “abundance model” (measured by flourishing production) (Jack, 2021). Yet, the aforementioned models seemed inadequate for measuring the effectiveness and mission fulfillment of the OCC.

The “strategic constituencies model” is different – it defines organizations as “intersections of multiple influence loops” (Ashraf & Bte Abd Kadir, 2012, p.81). Constituencies

(used interchangeably with “stakeholders”) are groups connected to, and affected by, the focal organization (Jack, 2021). It accounts for bias by acknowledging that different stakeholders, each with their own expectations, are affected differently by the central organization’s performance. It measures *effectiveness* in terms of how the intertwining interests of constituencies - *not* individual participants - are satisfied (Connolly et al., 1980, p. 215). This model evaluates effectiveness internally *and* environmentally – i.e. inside of *and* outside of the CI (Ashraf & Bte Abd Kadir, 2012, p. 81). This allows for equal assessment of all of OCC’s identified constituencies: the offenders (direct users of OCC services), the CPOs (primary resource providers/reporters), and the community (indirect - but highly affected - dependents of promised safety). Perhaps most significantly, this model is considerate of the concept of “social responsibility” in capacities that classic assessment models are not (Ashraf & Bte Abd Kadir, 2012, p. 81). In many ways, social responsibility is the driver behind the efforts of community corrections. CPOs enforce offender social responsibility by monitoring progress and behaviors outside of the carceral setting, and then must fulfill their own social responsibility to community protection by reporting infractions that may warrant reduction of freedom for those committing them (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

Furthermore, a sense of social responsibility is of *especially influential* importance for organizations dependent on government funding, i.e. money “garnished” from tax-paying community members. Afterall, most taxpayers are individuals with the right to vote on delegates and legislation that influence how government funding is applied to specific entities. Relative to community constituencies affecting funding allocations, Ashraf and Bte Abd Kadir (2012) recommend the use of the strategic constituency approach in circumstances where the “cost-benefit analysis” is not, or is unable to be, clearly defined (p. 81). Stakeholders’ subjective

interpretation of the cost/value of OCC services could present evaluative complications in simpler models, but is instead conveniently accounted for from this perspective. Considering the identified benefits, this model provides the strategy needed to assess the degree to which the performance of the OCC is effective in fulfilling (at least the minimal) satisfaction of its stakeholders.

Strategy Justification

Clearly defining categories of data makes it possible to determine where and how it will be collected. The first step in collecting valid and reliable data is to define the organization's functional purpose and understand the purpose of the assessment; the second is to define the organizational dimensions of effectiveness that will be measured (Lusthaus et al., 2002, p. 110). Data "validity" is based on its relevance to the assessment's purpose in terms of "the directness and strength of its association" to the dimensions of effectiveness under scrutiny. Data "reliability", based on its consistency, means that the data is applicable to the purpose of the assessment and that it is sufficiently complete and accurate (Pierce, 2008, p.83).

The OCC's functional purpose is to protect the community by supervising those on probation and reporting all infractions/violations of their sanctioned terms (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). The OCC's measurable dimensions and constituencies correlate: offender supervision (dimension) of offenders (stakeholders), officer reporting (dimension) by officers (stakeholders), and community safety (dimension) for community members (stakeholders). For the sake of scholarly purpose and capacity, dimensions were narrowed to three to promote data consistency. However, more-detailed categories do exist, as is especially common with all government institutions (Lusthaus et al., 2002, p. 110). Overall, the strategic constituency model measures how performance creates satisfaction or dissatisfaction

amongst stakeholders. It is particularly appropriate in this case, as it accounts for internal and external forces and effects. The duality of OCC operations requires that both be considered – this unique model allows for that *and* for measures of social responsibility (Ashraf & Bte Abd Kadir, 2012, p. 81).

Sources of Data and Information

Organizational assessments measure “big-picture performance” across a well-defined range of criteria (Jack, 2021). Absent a comprehensive report specific to OCC performance, data must be gleaned from multiple sources. This can be advantageous, as researchers are often limited to only “best available” information, leading to questionable validity. Overlapping sources increase validity and provide a more complete picture of the overall situation (Pierce, 2008). In this case, relevant legislation and official FDC reports are the backbone of the organizational assessment as they are the “best available” data sources.

The following sources will be consulted:

- *Florida Department of Corrections Office of Inspector General Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1017-2018* (most current version identified)
- *Florida Department of Corrections Comprehensive Correctional Master Plan, 2018* (most current version identified)
- *Florida Prison Recidivism Report: Releases from 2008 to 2020* (published July 2022)
- *Florida Department of Corrections Annual Report, 2021-2022*
- *Florida Department of Corrections Strategic Plan and Annual Report, 2021*
- *Florida Department of Corrections 2022-2023 Regulatory Plan*
- *Florida Department of Corrections Quarterly Recidivism Report, July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022* (most current version identified)
- *State of Florida Auditor General Operational Audit, 2019*
- *Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission: Accreditation Standards for Pretrial and Probation Agencies, June 2022*
- *Florida Legislature Statutes & Constitution: 944.09 – Rules of the department; offenders, probationers, and parolees*
- *Florida Legislature Statutes & Constitution: 944.023 – Comprehensive correctional master plan*

These publications may provide leads to additional information that might be more

specific to the OCC; sources identified in this way will be included when found. Other sources of data will include official FDC press-releases and statements, news articles, and special investigative reports. FDC media correspondence for official announcements is subjective in that it is calculated by “insiders” and community-appeal focused, while news articles and investigative reports are most often written by more objective “outsiders”. Journalism’s “first obligation” is to tell the truth – often reflecting community reactions, as well as community attitude and level of satisfaction (Dean, 2022). Relevant websites such as the FDC’s *Index to Statistics and Publications* page will also be used; this and similar websites are hubs of valuable, verifiable information.

Performance Assessment

This section describes the comprehensive findings of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis completed for the FDC OCC. Internal factors promoting the accomplishment of the OCC’s mission are identified as strengths, while those that prevent mission priorities are identified as weaknesses. External factors include environmental opportunities that support the OCC’s mission, and environmental threats that may put the OCC’s efforts towards mission achievement in jeopardy (US Census Bureau, 2013).

Major Internal Factors

The OCC has a relative level of control over internal factors. To keep identified factors organized, this analysis focused on the strengths and weaknesses of human resources, physical resources, financial resources, OCC programs/operations, and historical trends (data) (US Census Bureau, 2013)².

The SWOT analysis revealed substantially more positive, promising major internal

² Please note that the following comprehensive summarization is substantiated by the cited research in the following sections that describe maximizing and minimizing factors.

factors than negative factors. The quality of human resource practices has improved dramatically in recent years, a crucial factor in keeping subdivisions of the FDC running. Increased compensation, recruitment, CPO training, and oversight are positive factors. The OCC has begun to innovate physical resources and safety practices: updated technology for staff and offenders, mobile probation check-in and supervision services, and formal partnerships in secure housing efforts beget outcome improvement. Specific information on OCC finances is difficult to find, but the subdivision surely benefits from recent increases in FDC funding in some manner. More community-release centers, combined with peer-involved and community-led programs, have renewed a vested interest in early re-entry planning, further promoting mission accomplishment. Most importantly, the OCC is keeping up with modernization and evolving from a surveillance-approach (control centered) to a more insightful, evidence-based approach (care-centered) that recognizes offenders as whole beings facing great risks and significant needs. The OCC demonstrates the ability to continuously work towards service enhancement aimed to increase successful outcomes, maintain (if not improve) community safety, and reduce re-victimization and recidivism.

There were also negative internal factors revealed by the SWOT analysis. Financial resources have long-been inadequate, making recruitment and retention a primary weakness and increasing turnover. There remain to be thousands of unfilled CO and CPO positions. This acutely reduces both officer and offender safety, ultimately resulting in weakened community safety. Shortcuts in CPO requirements and training have been made to account for the personnel problem and the implications could be drastic. Keeping up with records of both offenders and employees, and proper file documentation has also suffered from understaffing – exacerbated the outdated infrastructure and data recording practices. All of these factors demonstrate a level of

financial and operational strain that negatively affects the OCC.

Major External Factors

The OCC *does not* have control over major external factors that may affect the subdivision's mission fulfillment in either direction. To keep identified factors organized, this analysis focused on: future endeavors, economic and funding resources, demographics/physical environment, and finally, legislation and litigation (US Census Bureau, 2013)³.

The SWOT analysis also revealed more positive, promising *external* factors than negative factors. Eventually, struggle gives way to opportunity - as is the case with the future of the OCC. The loudest example being that OCC has prioritized supervision-requirements reform, reduction of legal obstacles, and a lessened affinity for complete incapacitation. The OCC's future focus is aimed at the ability to provide community corrections to low-level offenders without them ever stepping foot in a CI. This endeavor demonstrates open-mindedness and a belief that the community can be safe *and* allow justice-involved individuals to remain in it and connected to their personal resources. Positive connections and collaborative endeavors have made way for a brighter future when it comes to OCC supervision operations and offenders' post-release quality of life. Obstacles previously causing major challenges to community corrections success rates are being remedied as communities come back together in a post-COVID world. New resources from funding provided by OCC-supportive organizations has brought the OCC and communities closer. Mentors and peer-to-peer services are more readily available to offenders released to supervision, and technological advancements have decreased the risk of violating their conditions and recidivating. Legislators, forced to reconsider correction statutes for the sake of survival during the pandemic, seem to have become more sensitive to the needs of offenders and

³ Please note that the following comprehensive summarization is substantiated by the cited research in the following sections that describe maximizing and minimizing factors.

communities – opening the door a bit wider for community corrections reform.

Negative external factors revealed by the SWOT analysis include recognition of the uptick in narcotics-addicted offenders released to community and their heightened risk of losing their (partial) freedom; addiction greatly increases risk of recidivism. The FDC staffing situation has been in crisis in recent years, resulting in members of other organizations – such as National Guardsmen – having been called upon to fill in for officers. Borrowing from one resource to fill gaps in another only works short-term. Liability is increased by asking outsiders to perform duties for which they have not been trained, as is the potential for natural disaster mismanagement in a state subjected to brutal storms for months on end each year. These correlated negative factors create fear in the community and notably higher risk for all stakeholders involved.

Maximizing Strengths, Minimizing Weaknesses

The OCC has made explicit efforts to maximize its strengths over the last half decade, especially at this current point in time. Operational strengths are promoted by the geographical structure of the FDC, by dividing the state of Florida into four manageable service regions: Region 1 being the most north/western area, Region 2 and Region 3 being mid-state, and Region 4 being the southernmost area. This divides responsibilities and staffing in accordance to need and population size (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 11). Demand-based distribution of operational resources reduces inconsistencies in service provision and minimizes weaknesses in leadership. OCC leadership personnel from all four regions report to the FDC central office, promoting “cohesive” operations and consistent oversight across all Florida’s jurisdictions (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018, p. 3). Additionally, each region employs a Community Transition Specialist to direct OCC initiatives that support offenders ready for

release, reducing weaknesses inherent with lack of clear leadership and direction (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018, p. 10).

Florida Legislature and Governor DeSantis supported increasing base salary rates for COs and CPOs to \$41,600 in 2022. Though the precise distribution of new COs/CPOs between subdivisions is not clear, the FDC hired and provided orientation to over 5,500 employees after the salary increase. Within the OCC specifically, minimum hiring requirements for inspector series and leadership positions were increased across all jurisdictions (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 13). Increased acquisition, training, and compensation of entry-level recruits demonstrates great resilience in “recovering” from the last (quite troublesome) half decade (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022b).

CPO training and education efforts have evolved significantly post-pandemic. With more flexible, virtual options than ever before; the OCC is maximizing its strengths by providing virtual/tablet based hybrid training for new recruits. The OCC minimized its financial weaknesses by formulating a “Crossover Academy” that greatly reduces typical academy time (and costs to the department) for recruits that have already earned their Correctional Officer Certification prior to OCC employment. Furthermore the CCO has been piloting and implementing many new programs that are often presented to new CPOS via staff-lead training. This approach also maximizes strengths by encouraging employee connections and providing group learning environments. Using internal resources is cost effective in providing ongoing education for the CPOs running the training, as well as those attending them (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 16).

CPOs also help to reduce financial weaknesses by making efforts to secure financial resources owed to the OCC. The recovered revenue offsets costs of providing supervision

services to offenders. As of October 2022, CPOs have brought in a total of more than \$49 million by collecting unpaid fees and fines from offenders. Within the same month, data was tabulated to demonstrate that supervised offenders performed more than 546,966 hours of community service work, amounting to a whopping \$8.2 million worth of work performed outside of prison walls. Work release programs have been shown to lead to lowered risk of recidivism, while also improving community infrastructure and furthering regional development (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p.15). There are additional community release centers available to supervised offenders (compared to years ago) –thirty-three as of FY 2021-22, to be precise (Seck & Office of the Inspector General, 2021, pg 17). The OCC began to bring services *to* offenders, instead of expecting them to have reliable transportation at all times – a historical expectation that has *always* been unrealistic (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p.15).

Maximizing Opportunities, Minimizing Threats

First and foremost, some external opportunities are maximized by ethical and consistent internal operations. In 2020, ACA performed a reaccreditation compliance audit and found that the FDC community corrections subdivision was 100% compliant in mandatory standards *and* just under 100% compliant with additional, non-mandatory standards (Office of Strategic Initiatives, 2021, p.19). Receiving accreditation demonstrates that an organization is doing what needs to be done, and that needs are being satisfied in the most appropriate, effective manner possible based on sets of standards determined by outside stakeholders. Improving the reputation of the OCC with accreditation is a behind-the-scenes way of maximizing opportunities and minimizing threats. The OCC has recently received significant funding for increased, ongoing training from outside organizations, including The Florida Corrections Academy receiving \$1,470,640.00 from the Criminal Justice Training Trust Fund resulting in a value of \$1,466,863

in training for CPOs, and other related officers (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p.19). Sufficient, thorough training also functions to maximize opportunity and minimize threats to all stakeholders, especially CPOs and offenders working together outside of prison walls.

Federal grants have been used to create numerous “portals of re-entry” established by local officials or by the FDC in recent years (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018, p. 10). To reduce the threats of increasing rates of addiction, OCC supervised offenders may now readily participate in substance use disorder treatment programs in one of the following forms: outpatient, non-secure, and secure - depending on their risk/need determinations (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 30). The OCC also promotes use of the Interactive Offender Tracking System - a program that allows for simplified reporting requirements and check-in schedules appropriate for certain low-level offenders. This system increased opportunity for reintegration success, while still holding the offender fully accountable for compliance with supervision conditions despite more minimal oversight. Approximately 13,000 offenders were participating in the program as of 2022. The OCC is now using a “mobile probation” unit in various locations to allow offenders to report more easily without the stress of traveling to probation offices, minimizing the risk of unnecessary sanctions for missing check-ins due to lack of reliable transportation or other economic resources (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 15-16).

Finally, one of the most devastating threats to OCC operations is competition with other LEAs in regard to salaries and benefits. The last two years have seen unprecedented turnover rates in CO and CPO positions. Some of this trend is associated with the exhausting, demanding schedules of FDC shiftwork, and “increased demand for overtime in dangerous environments” but, the major threat to retention is the competing salaries offered by “other state law

enforcement agencies" (Fillmore, 2022). Though there has been some elevation in the last couple of years, the OCC struggles to remain competitive when it comes to salary ranges. To minimize risk of exterior competition, the FDC has successfully converted the expectation of 12-hour shifts to shorter 8.5-hour shifts and implemented “contingent” hiring processes that better prevent the loss of highly qualified candidates (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p.13).

Performance Report

Areas of Compliance

This report recognizes the OCC’s specific mission as the clause by which all analysis results must be measured. The mission states that the ultimate goal of the OCC is to “protect the community by supervising offenders and reporting noncompliance to the sentencing or releasing authority” (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). FDC subdivisions must abide by the Florida statutes contained within Title XLVII: Criminal Procedure and Corrections (2022 *Florida Statutes*, 2022). Careful review of the statutes compared to the data amassed by the research informing this report finds OCC operations to be legally sound – the OCC is *far more* compliant than presumed. Their innovative approach lends to mission fulfillment in ways it had not just half a decade ago (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018). SWOT analysis revealed positive, promising improvement that this investigator found both surprising and inspiring.

Data shows that the OCC is effectively protecting the communities of Florida; a state divided into four community correction regions containing over 130 probation offices (*Probation Services -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). Regional division promotes proper allocation of resources based on level of need and population size (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p. 11). Stratification is intentional as it helps prevent service and resource

gaps across individual communities to ensure adequate supervision. Recent programming (discussed in prior sections) demonstrates a drive to properly support offenders as whole persons to reduce community risk (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p.16). Meeting offenders' basic needs is difficult; without them post-release criminal behavior dramatically increases. Regional staff are actively developing local employment resources, working directly with transitional housing providers, and partnering with government offices to assist community-supervised offenders in getting their vital records and IDs to mitigate this risk (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a). The OCC also employs a Community Transition Specialist in each region to connect offenders to resources that correspond with additional, individual needs (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018, p. 10). Finally, offenders are encouraged to invest in their communities to promote a growing sense of belonging and citizen responsibility.

The OCC has consistently strengthened their CPOs' capacity for supervision as well. Several portals of re-entry have been established with federal grants and resources provided by local officials in recent years (Florida Department of Corrections, 2018, p. 10). The narcotics war rages on and rates of addiction are rising. Almost 30% of all community supervision offenders in Florida have prior drug offenses, putting them at greater risk for relapse and recidivism. The OCC addresses this chronic concern by providing greater access to substance abuse treatment and greater flexibility in offender participation (outpatient, non-secure, or secure) than ever before (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p.30). Probation Busses (mobile court service units) reduce gaps in supervision, promote consistency of contact, and increase access in Florida's most rural areas. Recent OCC outcomes support probation as an effective, safe alternative to incarceration – with about 60% of offenders successfully completing supervision,

of which 90% will *not* recidivate (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a,).

According to OCC policy, violation reports are readily forwarded to the sentencing authority (Cizmadia, 2016). The OCC has welcomed innovation in their reporting system. CPOs continue to use the Interactive Offender Tracking System implemented a couple of years ago with great success; approximately 13,000 offenders were participating in 2022. It recognizes offenders' individuality – replacing traditional “one-size fits all” probation – humanizing the approach and expanding service flexibility. Offenders appropriate for a reduced-level of reporting still require structure, which is accomplished as this system holds offenders accountable without requiring as much physical oversight. Of the *many* benefits to using programs like these – increasing the capacity to supervise high-risk offenders and more readily report noncompliance is an important one (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022, p. 16). When it comes to consistency and determination, FDC CPOs seem to be full of it. They continue to lead the nation in “Natural Disaster Response and Recovery”, and have been publicly recognized for continuity of probation operations and offender accountability during evacuations (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022b). Most impressively, research⁴ shows that Florida’s overall recidivism rates are going down: 25% of those released in 2014 returned to a carceral setting within three years, while just 21.2% of those released in 2018 recidivated (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p.23)

Areas of Noncompliance

There were no glaring compliance issues identified when analysis began, nor were any identified as it concluded; there was, however, plenty of available information to the contrary. This was unexpected. The most current compliance audit report published by Florida’s Office of

⁴ Research on recidivism is always about three years behind, as recidivism typically refers to the rate of offenders that are reincarnated within the first three years of their return to the community.

Strategic Initiatives is from 2021⁵, but it speaks to the promise of OCC innovation. Official ACA auditors conducted the audit of the OCC for re-accreditation and determined that it was 100% compliant with *all* mandatory standards, *and* in all *non*-mandatory standards (Office of Strategic Initiatives, 2021, p. 19). The annual report published by the Florida Office of the Inspector General for fiscal year 2020-2021 found that all cash proceeds were collected and deposited as required, and that all bank reconciliations were handled correctly. These auditors also found that internal controls “adequately prevent, deter, and detect internal fraud” (Seck & Office of the Inspector General, 2021, p. 7). Finally – somehow, in spite of the pandemic wreaking havoc on justice operations everywhere – there were zero serious “incidents” across all thirty-three of the OCC Community Release Centers in the twelve months reviewed (Seck & Office of the Inspector General, 2021, pg 17). Opportunities for improvement are discussed below.

Performance Improvement Recommendations

1. Evidence-Based Strategies (EBS) are part of a renewed drive toward reintroducing rehabilitation in community supervision and criminal justice practices as a whole (iresearch.net, 2015). The OCC should continue to adopt EBS and move away from the “surveillance-based” paradigm of traditional community supervision. Additional time and effort should be dedicated to the implementation of EBS and creating policies that support them. While absolute certainty cannot be claimed (within the scope of this report), EBS implemented by the OCC within recent years appear to have improved outcomes. Though, perhaps, there is more certainty in claiming that EBS at least did not have a *negative* effect on outcomes between 2018 and 2022 (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022b).

⁵Many attempts were made to find a more recent report. None were successful. This report is the second-best option.

2. Administrators often neglect the fact that a CPO's individual approach to supervision and the strength of their "relationships with probationers" has greater influence on outcomes than any generalized programming ever will (iresearch.net, 2015). Thus, the OCC should further pursue specialists to work within each of the four regions of service.

Specialization is an EBS that streamlines case management by putting offenders with specific needs under the supervision of officers well-prepared to address them (iresearch.net, 2015).

3. The weakest component of this subdivision is funding. The OCC should seek to diversify funding pools by openly communicating (and celebrating) the vast improvements to the subdivision since 2020. The changes are quite impressive. Their recent public acknowledgement should be built upon and used with intentionality. The FDC annual budget is stretched paper thin and community corrections are rarely prioritized within it. Community corrections expenditure in fiscal year 2021-2022 amounted to \$236,498,709 just 8.8% of the FDC total annual budget of \$2,679,411,586 (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022a, p.38).

Implementing Recommendations

Actioning these recommendations hinges on setting realistic goals, procuring additional resources, and effective internal and external collaboration. The OCC has clearly demonstrated affinity for new practices. Forming official partnerships with community agencies, creatively reducing transportation barriers, and connecting offenders with peer mentors are all evidence-based practices (iresearch.net, 2015). The OCC has had great success with previous implementations thus far.

In order to truly appreciate the value of EBS, OCC Managers and POs must understand what makes something “evidence-based” and why it is imperative to reducing recidivism. The short-term approach to increasing use of EBS must focus on enriching the subdivision’s culture through further CPO education and training. The long-term approach would include identifying interventions backed up by credible research and realigning departmental structure to accommodate them (National Institute of Corrections, 2004). Consulting with experts in this field along the way is advised.

The research behind this analysis did not reveal any indication of the OCC having specialized caseloads (though there are specialized programs). The OCC should prioritize how to identify and procure funding for specialized positions as a short-term goal for the upcoming fiscal year. The OCC should then create new positions and hire CPOs equipped with specialized training and/or credentials to manage specialized caseloads (i.e. offenders with serious mental illness, sex offenders, etc.). Addressing such particular issues requires long-term systematic collaboration and dedication to organizational development (National Institute of Corrections, 2004). New OCC policies must be formed to implement this recommendation.

Creating community buy-in is difficult. Public awareness of recent organizational improvement is something to capitalize on while it is current. Formulating a committee of diverse representatives focused solely on this effort is part of the short-term strategy. They will be able to continue promoting improved community safety, a drop in recidivism rates, and an increase in positive offender outcomes to secure grants, promote donations, and increase volunteerism. For long-term results the OCC should identify campaigns that promote meaningful changes within the community correctional system, as well as campaigns that reduce community bias, fear, and neglect of previous offenders. Environmental and cultural factors have significant

effects on program efficacy (National Institute of Corrections, 2004). Staying relevant promotes continued interest *and investment* in the OCC's cause.

V. Recommended Communication Strategies

Information Management

Communicate change from the top down with careful consideration of the audience(s) that will receive it. Information that flows from the top of the organization down to its employees is a form of centralized-communication (Limeade, 2023). Large organizations (like the FDC) and the subdivisions within them (like the OCC) require such a standardized process for communicating change to ensure that all relevant parties are included. Communication gaps are a detriment to organizational performance. Conversely, oversharing information with non-relevant parties may lead to undue complications and confusion. Thus, critical information should always travel down the chain of command (Peterson, 2022). The Assistant Deputy Secretary of Community Corrections, Joseph Winkler, is the most direct, senior leader of the OCC and should receive the key information related to this report (*Graphic Organization Chart -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.).

Mr. Winkler should confer key information to the OCC Director, Shawn Satterfield, so that he may ensure that the Regional Directors below him understand what needs to be presented to the unit managers they oversee (*Graphic Organization Chart -- Florida Department of Corrections*, n.d.). OCC Regional Directors should encourage their unit managers to reflect upon the uniqueness of their team (aka, their intended audience) before further communication is passed down. Mid-level managers generally understand their teams better than administrators do; their insight is vital to identifying a variety of suitable methods that will effectively reach their members - all-staff meetings, memos, flyers, etc. are all good examples. Members closest to the

change should be consulted individually as they will be the most affected and need the most support. Using a “targeted” approach prevents “overwhelming the entire organization” with information that is only relevant to a specific branch or unit within it (Peterson, 2022).

Targeted Communication

Communicate report results and the associated changes with transparency and intentionality. Transparency is imperative for smooth implementation and adoption. It promotes trust between administrators, managers, and team members (CPOs). Using simple, straightforward language – free of nuance and euphemisms – makes certain that members of all experience and education levels will comprehend the messaging. Using a variety of mediums improves delivery as individuals best receive and absorb new information in different ways. This approach is most likely to come across as honest and direct – signatures of mutual respect to those lower in the chain of command. Focus on “the what and the why” to provide clarity on the reasoning behind the change. Once the information is disseminated, check-in with team members and give them a chance to be heard (Peterson, 2022).

Communicate what members must *do* and what they stand to *gain*. Taking action is less overwhelming if there are clear steps to the process. OCC directors should collaboratively determine priority actions and an appropriate action timeline so that goals align in a realistic capacity. Collaboration is more likely to result in collective agreement; this helps to keep messaging consistent and sets clear expectations. Share as much insight into the intended outcomes and benefits they stand to gain as (appropriately) possible (for each specific audience). If the change promises to save them time, effort, irritation, etc., early adopters may be more encouraging to resistant peers. Decentralized communication – the flow of information from employee to employee – can be just as (if not more) powerful as its aforementioned counterpart

(Limeade, 2023). Without awareness of the benefits, a new method's "usefulness" is left to individual interpretation (and likely based on uninformed assumptions). Accordingly, if benefits are limited but change is required, it is best to be honest and acknowledge it to prevent disappointment and resentment (Peterson, 2022).

Gathering Feedback

Communicate openly with members and welcome their feedback along the way. Show members their value by encouraging feedback and taking the time to truly listen to their concerns. Promote a sense of cohesion and belonging by encouraging their questions – then be ready to answer them and willing to clarify justifications. Be sure to *thank* them for their participation, offer ongoing support, and let them know they are just as valuable as they were prior to the change. Using feedback for continued improvement shows members that what they feel, think, and say matters in the implementation process *and* in the long-term use of the improved method (Peterson, 2022). A recent report by Limeade (2023) revealed that when members feel adequate information was provided to them in earnest, they are nearly twice as likely to be engaged in their work, five times more likely to feel that their organization cares about them as an individual, and three times less likely to feel burned out by their responsibilities.

An article by Peterson (2021) suggests the following proven methods to elicit honest feedback from members in times of change:

- Surveys: These days organizations are using "pulse" (as in "take their pulse") surveys to capture real-time feedback. It is important to create these surveys with a plan for how insight will be acted upon as commitment to completing them will suffer if no action or response results. Surveys are cheap and easy to share with any size audience; email, anonymous forms, and even apps are all great mediums for surveys.
- Virtual Q&As: Today's video-conferencing options are perfect platforms to host live, interactive conversations with higher attendance rates due to their convenience and accessibility. Creating a concise agenda that prioritizes the most pertinent topics will

increase member engagement. Proactively asking for input and leaving time for questions increases feedback.

- Intranet: An organizational intranet/network is a fantastic two-way communications tool. Adapting the network to be accessible via mobile app makes participation easy and seamless, while also promoting its use via notifications, text alerts, and so on.
- Calls to Action: Leaders have great influence over how information is received by members. They establish the tone of the delivery and norms of acceptance that either elicit participation or inhibit it. Leaders can increase the likelihood that members will give feedback by promising that individual input will be respected and that there will be no negative consequences for their honesty.

Conclusion

At the very end of the past year, in a press release dated December 30th, 2022, FDC Secretary Ricky Dixon joyously remarked:

“This year marked an unprecedented year of success, and we are in a prime position to create further growth and opportunities for advancing Florida’s correctional system. I appreciate our staff for their commitment to our mission and their perseverance during our recovery, which has allowed these incredible accomplishments to occur,” (Florida Department of Corrections, 2022b).

Twenty years ago, research on strategies proven to lead to successful community reintegration was all but nonexistent. Conventional supervision prioritized individual accountability, but so often failed to provide skills and resources required for success (i.e. reduction of risk and recidivism). Instead of focusing on what should be done, and how it should be practiced based on evidence, offenders and CPOs were typically only given guidance on what *not* to do (National Institute of Corrections, 2004). The world has come a long way in terms of implementing EBPs in the last twenty years, and thankfully, the research has followed along with the progress. The FDC has begun to embrace these data-driven initiatives with great success. This organizational analysis, performance assessment, and final report make it clear that EBP strategies have continued to improve the operations and outcomes of the OCC, and FDC as a whole.

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