Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016

Georgia Department of Corrections
Message from the Commissioner

Incarcerating nearly 60,000 inmates in state prison facilities and supervising approximately 200,000 probationers in Georgia communities is an extremely challenging task under the best of circumstances. In recent years, the challenge has become increasingly difficult due to poor economic conditions that have resulted in reduced and stagnant budgets, reductions in staff and prison closures. However, the Georgia Department of Corrections continues to remain focused on its commitment to protecting public safety through the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan.

The Department’s strategic plan sets forth six strategic goals that are designed to protect and promote public safety and to ensure the effective and efficient use of state resources.

Those goals include:

- Maintaining safe and secure facilities
- Promoting safe communities
- Enhancing treatment options to support alternative sentencing
- Enhancing offender re-entry through increased evidence based programming
- Building, developing and maintaining a quality workforce
- Implementing sound fiscal responsibility and effective resource management

I believe that the Department’s strategic goals set forth a framework that will enhance public safety for all of those that reside in, visit, or do business in the great State of Georgia. We are committed to achieving our strategic goals and will continually monitor our progress toward that end. If and when adjustments need to be made to our strategic plan you can be assured that the Department will react with deliberate speed to implement those changes and will remain focused on protecting your safety.

[Signature]
Commissioner
MISSION STATEMENT
The Georgia Department of Corrections creates a safer Georgia by effectively managing offenders and providing opportunities for positive change.

VISION STATEMENT
To be recognized as the best corrections organization in the nation.

ACHIEVING THE VISION
The Department believes that it can achieve its vision by:

- Adhering to exceptional standards in all that we do
- Utilizing evidence based practices
- Ensuring restitution and restoration for victims of crime
- Operating safe and secure facilities
- Providing effective community supervision of offenders
- Partnering with public, private, and faith-based organizations
- Being good stewards of the public trust
- Sustaining core values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage
- Ensuring the well-being of employees and their families

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The strategic planning process for the State of Georgia was established pursuant to the Budget and Accountability and Planning Act of 1993 and the Budget Act. These legislative enactments set forth a three step process for strategic planning purposes.

The first step in the process is for the Governor of the State of Georgia, through the Office of Planning and Budget, to have in continuous process and revision a strategic plan for the state as a whole. The State Strategic Plan must cover a minimum period of five years and must have as its primary goal the improved fiscal responsibility and responsiveness of state government and the effective and efficient delivery of services throughout the state with an emphasis on decentralizing government. In short, the State Strategic Plan will set forth the Governor’s vision, direction and priorities for the State of Georgia.

The second step in the strategic planning process is for all of the various departments, boards, bureaus, commissions, institutions, authorities, and other agencies of state government to develop their own strategic plans. The strategic plans of the various agencies of state government must reflect and align with the goals and strategies contained in the State Strategic Plan. The agency strategic plan is a valuable tool for agency leadership in charting the course of the agency and communicating its priorities to its employees, its customers, and its stakeholders. The plan also provides the context for new investments, redirection of funds, organizational change, and process improvements and is therefore also an important component in the budgetary process.

The third step in the process is the submission of an agency’s performance report to the Office of Planning and Budget. The agency performance report must be submitted twice a year to track progress on the agency’s strategic plan and to manage agency performance. These reports assist the agency in tracking progress on the strategic plan, mission-critical projects and key performance indicators. The reports also provide state leadership important information for legislative and budgetary decision making.
Vision: A lean and responsive state government that allows communities, individuals and businesses to prosper

Governor’s Strategic Goals for Georgia

Educated: Developing life-, college-, and work-ready students
- Increase number of students reading at grade level by the completion of 3rd Grade – a strategic benchmark for lifelong learning
- Increase the percentage of students who complete a college education
- Improve and expand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education
- Identify and implement innovative strategies that increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement
- Increase the percentage of high school graduates that are college and career ready
- Empower citizens with public school options and local flexibility for the purpose of improving student achievement

Mobile: Transporting people and products in a 21st century Georgia
- Improve the movement of people and goods across and within the state
- Expand Georgia’s role as a major logistics hub for global commerce
- Leverage public-private partnerships and improve intergovernmental cooperation for successful infrastructure development

Growing: Creating jobs and growing businesses
- Implement strategic tax and regulatory reforms that make Georgia more competitive
- Promote small business growth and entrepreneurship
- Maximize access to capital for startups and growing businesses
- Conserve and enhance natural resources, with an emphasis on increasing state water supplies and security

Healthy: Accessible care and active lifestyles
- Reduce childhood obesity in Georgia
- Increase access to health services throughout the state
- Increase consumer choice and personal responsibility in health care
- Improve access to treatment and community options for those with disabilities

Safe: Protecting the public’s safety and security
- Implement alternative sentencing options to improve offender rehabilitation
- Promote successful offender re-entry and compliance
- Reduce injury and loss of life on Georgia’s roads
- Promote safe communities and stable families where children thrive

Responsible and Efficient Government: Fiscally sound, principled, conservative
- Maintain Georgia’s AAA bond rating
- Increase availability of state services through innovative technology solutions
- Build and maintain a quality state government workforce
- Focus state resources on essential services and employ enterprise solutions
- Enlist community support and public-private partnerships to leverage available resources
Traditionally, maintaining safe and secure prison facilities was a fairly straightforward task for prison administrators. The physical structure of a prison, coupled with a professional prison staff, was typically the primary means of maintaining separation of the criminal element from the society it had preyed upon and maintaining order among the inmate population itself. While the physical structure of a prison still remains a central component of prison safety and security, exploding prison populations, increased gang affiliations and activity, and rapid advances in modern technology have forced prison administrators to take a much more sophisticated approach to maintaining safe and secure prisons. The Georgia Department of Corrections understands this trend and has developed a number of strategies to ensure that its prison facilities are safe for staff, visitors, and inmates and continue to protect society from those it has sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

The Department has recently expanded its prison bed capacity by expanding its partnership with private prison providers in order to avoid the significant safety and security problems that are associated with prison overcrowding. Prison overcrowding often causes prison staff to become overworked, distracted, stressed and vulnerable to work related injuries. Overcrowding also creates an environment that increases inmate anxiety and agitation due to cramped living quarters, lack of adequate resources, and lack of adequate space for programming and recreational activity. Currently, the Department houses approximately 8,000 inmates in private prison facilities and is strategically positioned to add additional beds to those facilities if and when the need arises.

A booming inmate population has brought with it a significant increase in the number of inmates that have serious substance abuse and mental health problems. Such inmates, if left untreated in the general population, often engage in unpredictable and disruptive behavior and are often difficult to manage if prison staff is not adequately trained to manage and address the special medical and psychological needs associated with that portion of the inmate population. The Department has therefore developed and will continue to develop specialized units within its facilities that are staffed with specially trained officers and other professionals to deal with the unique behavioral and emotional problems that are associated with inmates suffering from substance abuse and mental health issues. The benefits of this strategy cannot
be overstated. Addressing the substance abuse and mental health needs of inmates will improve the quality of life for the treated prisoners and the prison population as a whole. The strategy will also benefit prison staff by making the work environment less stressful and volatile. Finally, the strategy will benefit the community at large by decreasing incidents of relapse and reoffending, reducing the number of people that return to prison, and helping to divert people with substance abuse and mental health disorders into less costly treatment and rehabilitative programs.

The Department is also focused on technological advances in maintaining safe and secure prisons. Perimeter security is becoming increasingly reliant on technology to prevent inmate escapes and the introduction of contraband into its prisons. Currently, the Department is expanding its use of technologically advanced fencing systems, in conjunction with high resolution video surveillance and human patrols, to secure the perimeters of its prison facilities. Additionally, the Department is expanding its use of sophisticated technology to screen inmates, staff, and visitors in order to prevent the introduction of contraband into its prisons. The Department is also looking to technological advances to assist in the tracking and counting of inmates and the real-time verification of the location of inmate transport vehicles through the use of GPS systems. While the Department is quickly adopting technology as a tool in maintaining safe and secure prisons, an ever increasing number of inmates are also utilizing technological advances to further their criminal and disruptive behaviors and enterprises.

Inmate access to and use of cell phone technology poses the latest and most significant threat to institutional safety and security. Inmates use these devices for a variety of nefarious purposes including intimidating victims of and witnesses to crime, orchestrating criminal activity both within and outside of prisons, coordinating escapes and institutional disturbances, intimidation of prison staff, ordering retaliation against inmates and staff, and gaining access to the internet. Due to the serious threat that these devices pose to institutional security, the Department has adopted a strategy that is highly focused on cell phone interdiction and preventing the introduction of all forms of contraband into its prison facilities.

The Department recognizes that prisons will always be dangerous places to work. However, the Department also recognizes that there are a multitude of means by which such danger can be minimized. The Department believes that the objectives it has selected in its strategic plan present the best means by which it can maintain safe and secure facilities during the course of the next four years.
The Department’s responsibility for providing probation supervision to the state’s felony probation population places the Department in a unique position to promote safe communities within Georgia. Probation supervision plays a vital role in protecting the public from the convicted felons that remain in Georgia communities while serving terms of probation as part of their criminal sentences. In recent years, the Department implemented an innovative Probation Options Management (POM) program that has greatly enhanced the Department’s ability to quickly and effectively hold probationers accountable for their actions during their probationary status. The Department is now seeking to further enhance the promotion of safe communities by providing probationers with a wide array of services and programs that will positively influence and shape their behavior to increase probationers’ chances of becoming productive and crime-free members of Georgia communities.

The first step in strengthening probation supervision in communities and to positively influence and shape the behavior of probationers is to accurately determine the needs of and risks posed by each probationer that is under the Department’s supervision. The Department has recently implemented an automated needs/risk assessment tool that helps probation staff in assigning the right probationers to the right programs at the right time based on the individual risks and needs of each probationer. The tool allows the Department to allocate its increasingly scarce resources more effectively by providing more evidence-based programming to the higher risk-to-reoffend probationers while providing less resource-intensive programs to low-risk-to-reoffend probationers. The Department believes that the tool is proving very useful in placing all probationers in the programs best suited to aid each probationer in their successful reintegration into society.

The Department has implemented several additional strategies to promote safe communities as a direct result of the increased use of the automated needs/risk assessment tool. Those strategies include the expanded use of the Probation Reporting Contact Center (PRCC), increased referrals of probationers to Day Reporting Centers (DRCs), and the use of Probation Mental Health Officers. Through the automated risk/needs assessment tool the Department realized that there were a large number of low-risk probationers that needed little direct supervision in the community. Offenders at this standard level of supervision require minimum probation officer monitoring, intervention, and supervision when compared to probationers assessed at higher risk/need levels. The PRCC is designed to be an efficient, alternative method for selected lowest risk, stable probationers to report their current residence, current employment, self-improvement program participation, and continuing compliance with Court ordered conditions of probation, by telephone—in lieu of
contact their assigned probation officer.

The automated risk/needs assessment tool also identified a number of probationers with higher risk/need scores. For these individuals the Department seeks to increase the number of probationer referrals to its DRCs. DRCs provide intensive substance abuse treatment to those probationers that have not responded to more traditional supervision and treatment efforts. Although the cost of supervising a probationer through a DRC is more than traditional field probation, a DRC is only a fraction of the cost of providing a residential alternative. The program includes components such as substance abuse counseling, cognitive restructuring, adult basic education, employment enhancement, intensive supervision, and community service. An after-care component follows the on-site programming. Offenders assigned to the program are required to be employed as soon as they have completed the initial orientation, assessment, diagnostics, and programming.

The Department, through the automated risk/needs assessment tool, has also recognized that many probationers have mental health issues that often adversely affect their ability to successfully reintegrate back into society. The Department has developed a strategy to begin training and deploying Probation Mental Health Officers in all of its probation offices in the State of Georgia. These officers will work closely with mentally ill probationers to ensure they are obtaining needed treatment and medications, receiving appropriate mental health programming and counseling, and assisting in the diffusion of volatile situations that may be caused by the probationer’s underlying mental illness.

The Department will also be implementing a strategy to increase its partnerships with other state and federal law enforcement agencies across the State of Georgia to perform joint task force operations. During these operations, Department staff and other law enforcement officials work together to ensure that probationers and parolees are complying with their terms of probation and parole, perform unannounced checks on registered sex offenders, serve warrants, and apprehend fugitives in targeted communities. Increasing these partnerships is specifically designed to increase public safety in the Georgia communities.
On May 2, 2012, Governor Deal signed into law a criminal justice reform bill that fundamentally alters how the State of Georgia punishes persons that commit non-violent offenses. The legislation, which took effect July 1, 2012, established alternatives to incarceration for low-level, non-violent drug and property offenders reserving costly prison bed space for the state’s most dangerous offenders. The Department’s role in this reform approach is significant.

Under the legislation, drug dependent and mentally ill offenders that are convicted of non-violent offenses may avoid costly terms of imprisonment if their risk/needs assessment establishes they are suitable for residential or non-residential treatment and supervision while serving terms of probation. To prepare for the anticipated increase in probationers needing such treatment the Department will be doubling the number of DRCs it operates from 13 to 26 and increasing the number of residential substance abuse treatment beds from 1,800 to 3,000 by end of FY-2017. The Department will also implement a DRC Lite program that will bring limited DRC services to the more rural areas within the state that currently lack such services.

The Department will also continue to research and explore new and creative community based treatment opportunities by continuing to meet with other stakeholders that are interested in improving Georgia’s public safety initiatives. The Department also intends to search for potential reentry partnerships and outsourcing opportunities for DRC services in hard to reach areas within the state.

STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 3
Enhance Treatment Options to Support Alternative Sentencing

Department of Corrections Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016
Another important aspect of Governor Deal’s criminal justice reform legislation is the requirement that the Board of Corrections adopt rules and regulations governing the management and treatment of inmates and probationers to ensure that evidence based practices, including the use of a risk and needs assessment and any other method the board deems appropriate, guide decisions related to preparing inmates for release into the community and managing probationers in the community. The Department has adopted several strategies to achieve this goal.

The Department is currently in the process of creating two types of facilities that will be devoted to providing inmates and probationers with evidence based programming. The first facility will be a programs prison where the inmate population will spend most of their days in evidence based programs that are specifically designed to prepare inmates for successful reintegration into the community. Educational and vocational training will likely be provided in addition to life skills programming and drug and alcohol treatment programs. The second facility will be an integrated treatment facility that will provide evidence based treatment for inmates and/or probationers that have substance abuse histories and mental health issues. With the introduction of these facilities, it is the Department’s goal to increase its current completion rate for evidence based programs from 40% to 75% by the end of FY-2016. The success of any programming provided to inmates and probationers is heavily dependent on the skills of the staff that are assigned to provide the programming. The Department has therefore adopted a strategy to provide for the continued professional development of the staff that will be responsible for providing the evidence based programming to the inmate and probationer populations. In an effort to successfully treat as many inmates and probationers as possible, the Department will also seek to expand its RSAT program and the programs provided in its soon to be established program prison. The program prison will provide a wide variety of programs that are designed to prepare inmates for successful re-entry into society. The desired end state of these strategies is to establish a 15% lower rate of 3-year felony reconviction rate for offenders that complete evidence based programming as compared to offenders that do not receive such services by the end of FY-2017.

Work, vocational and educational opportunities for inmates and probationers are accepted means of assisting offenders in their successful reintegration into society. The Department views the use of technology and community based partnerships as an integral component of expanding such opportunities for its inmate and probationer populations. To this end, the Department has developed a strategy to increase work opportunities through specialized education based partnerships with private and public education providers and to increase vocational training programs through the creation of the programs based prison. The Department will remain focused on increasing these opportunities through FY-2017.
As with any organization the Department’s success in achieving its mission and strategic vision is heavily dependent on the employees it hires to perform the numerous and diverse job responsibilities that exist within the Department. The Department is committed to attracting, developing and retaining highly educated, highly trained, and highly capable staff in all aspects of its operations and has developed several strategies to insure that its staff is well prepared to meet the current and future challenges that confront the agency.

The Department recognizes that it is a natural consequence of business that employees will leave the organization for a variety of reasons including retirement, family obligations, injury and professional opportunities. The Department seeks to lessen the adverse impact of such departures by developing a succession plan that will enable the Department to fill vacancies quickly with people who already have the knowledge and skills necessary for successful job performance. The development and implementation of a comprehensive succession plan has the added benefit of attracting and retaining a highly educated and highly trained staff because it promises the opportunity for career advancement within the agency when such opportunities present themselves.

It is an unfortunate consequence of the Department’s business that firearms are a necessary tool of the trade. Given that staff often put their lives on the line in carrying out the Department’s mission training staff on the finer points of firearm use and handling in a variety of volatile situations is critical in developing a quality workforce. The Department is now beginning to focus on how technology can enhance its firearm training program and is now in the process of seeking a firearms simulation system that will enable it to train a large number of staff that uses firearms as part of their job duties. Simulation training will allow the Department to adequately prepare its staff to handle a variety of volatile situations that they may confront in performing their job responsibilities.

The Department has a fairly high turnover rate among corrections officers and this adversely impacts the Department’s ability to maintain safe and secure prisons and requires costly training of new officers to fill the vacancies. The Department is therefore committed to managing its turnover rate and is seeking out viable methods that will help reduce its turnover rate by 2.5% by FY-2017.
Due to serious budget reductions and changes to the state’s retirement program employees are now more responsible than ever for providing for their own retirement. The Department is taking a very active role in insuring that its employees are prepared for the retirement that they deserve at the end of their careers.

The Department is engaged in a long term effort to significantly increase the number of employees that contribute 5% or more of their salary into the 401k portion of the Georgia State Employees’ Pension and Savings Plan. The Department seeks to have at least 400 employees contributing at the 5% level by FY-2017. With the state matching half of each dollar contributed by the employee it will provide the employee with the maximum amount of savings possible under the plan.

Maintaining a quality workforce also requires that employees remain free from injury during the course of their employment. Currently, approximately 1,060 worker’s compensation claims are filed by Department employees for preventable injuries. The Department is seeking to drastically reduce the number of preventable injury claims by 235 claims per year by FY-2017. The Department has developed many standard operating procedures that employees are expected to follow in carrying out their respective job responsibilities. The Department is engaged in a long term effort to continually remind employees that they are expected to perform their jobs in accordance with those standards. The standards were developed, in part, to minimize the risk of unnecessary injury and the Department is doing everything necessary to ensure that its employees are performing according to standard.
Implementing sound fiscal responsibility and effective resource management begins with establishing an agency wide culture that is devoted to those concepts. The Department seeks to create that culture through the expanded use of COMPSTAT reporting. The Department has been utilizing COMPSTAT reporting in several functional areas over the past several years and it has proven to be very beneficial in tracking the use of agency resources in those functional areas. COMPSTAT reporting helps the Department identify where resources are being used most effectively and where they are not being used very effectively making those responsible for the resources accountable for their decisions and actions. This has helped agency staff become more aware of the impact, both positive and negative, that they have on overall agency efficiency and effectiveness. The Department believes that the expanded use of COMPSTAT reporting will create an agency wide culture that is committed to sound fiscal responsibility and effective resource management.

As noted throughout this narrative, the Department is very interested in leveraging technology in its achieving its strategic goals. Implementing sound fiscal responsibility and effective resource management is no different. In this instance, the Department has been leveraging technology to develop an electronic time keeping system during the course of the past year. It is expected that the system will become functional by October 1, 2012. This electronic system will replace a paper-based time keeping system that is fraught with time consuming administrative tasks associated with miscalculations and significant delays in the reporting of work hours, leave balances and overtime payments. Once fully operational all time keeping calculations will be performed automatically by the electronic system with very little need for human intervention and administration. It is expected to save hundreds of hours a year in administrative staff time.

Technology is also playing a role in the Department’s continuous efforts to reduce the number of days convicted felons are housed in county jails after being sentenced for their crimes. Currently, it takes an average of 56 days to transfer an inmate from county custody to state custody after an offender is sentenced as a felon. The Department is working with the Administrative Office of the Courts and Superior Court judges and court
clerks to develop an electronic sentencing system that will quickly alert the Department when a convicted felon is ready to be transferred to the state prison system.

Currently, all sentencing information is provided to the Department in paper form through the U.S. Postal Service. This results in significant delays in inmate transfers when the sentencing documents contain erroneous information. With an electronic system, the necessary information can be sent and received on the same day resulting in more efficient transfers of convicted felons to the Department’s custody. The Department anticipates that it will only take an average of 15 days to make such transfers once the electronic system becomes functional. The recent expansion of private prison beds is also helpful in ensuring efficient inmate transfers from county to state custody. With the expansion of private prison beds the Department is in a position to transfer more inmates to state custody than would have been possible if such beds did not exist.

The Department is also exploring and implementing innovative approaches to increasing efficiencies and lowering environmental impacts associated with its operations. The Department has begun sub-metering its utility usage at many of its facilities across the state helping the agency identify where energy and natural resources are being efficiently used and where wasteful usage is occurring. The Department is also exploring the use of performance based contracting in an effort to make necessary capital improvements without the necessity of expending taxpayer dollars to fund the projects. Under such contracts the contractors are paid with funds that are saved from the installation and use of more energy and resource efficient assets such as HVAC systems, electrical appliances, and energy efficient lighting. The Department has also begun alternative fuel in some of its motor vehicle fleet which includes cars, buses, and farm machinery. Currently, the Department has begun using propane powered buses to transfer inmates around the state and expects to expand the use of such vehicles over the next several years.
Looking Beyond the Present

The mandated strategic planning period is a useful tool for the Department’s current leadership to focus on the agency’s short term goals and objectives, measuring the Department’s progress in achieving those goals and objectives and for budgetary planning purposes. However, the Department also realizes that its future leaders will likely confront issues and challenges that currently do not exist or are not significant enough to warrant immediate attention. The Department has therefore attempted to identify some of the issues that may confront its leadership in the future in order to better prepare them to address these challenges in future strategic plans. Two of the major challenges facing the department as it continues into the future are an Aging Infrastructure and Technological Advances.

Aging facilities and infrastructure will need to be addressed by the Department’s future leaders. The Department is therefore planning for an Infrastructure Master Plan review to be conducted within 5 to 10 years in an effort to determine which facilities need to be refurbished or closed, whether new facilities need to be constructed and when those needs should be addressed.

Advances in technology will continue to influence how the Department conducts its business in terms of recruitment, retention and training of staff, inmate control and programming, and institutional security.

The Department anticipates that in order to attract and retain a qualified workforce it will soon need to discard its outdated paper based systems of inmate counts, disciplinary reports, and grievance systems with technologically advanced systems that many modern workers have come to expect and depend on. The Department also expects that its current training programs, which require significant travel and the consumption of a variety of “hard” resources, will be replaced with computer and internet based distance learning capabilities and virtual reality training tools.

The Department also expects that technology will play an increasing and significant role in containing inmate assaults and disturbances and the programming that is offered to inmates. There are numerous electronic control devices that are starting to be deployed around the country that will enable staff to deescalate such events without risk of staff injury. For example, Michigan has recently deployed tasers to its security staff to use in gaining control of inmates that are engaged in assaultive behavior which has resulted in a drastic decline in staff injuries and workers compensation claims. Technology will also likely be used to enable inmates to obtain needed programming and educational opportunities from their cells via secure intranet and internet based systems thereby reducing opportunities for inmates to engage in assaultive behavior and circulating contraband throughout a prison facility.

Technology will also likely play an increasing role in maintaining institutional security.
Robotics is already being tested in certain prison facilities around the world for purposes of conducting security checks on cell blocks. Additionally, technology will continue to play a significant role in preventing the introduction of contraband into prison facilities.

To aid in the visualization of the above issues and challenges, the Department has developed a **20-Year Strategic Vision**. Although somewhat simplistic, this Strategic Vision graphic which follows, is a living document, and depicts the Department’s short and long term strategic goals and initiatives as seen from a needs and emerging technology vantage point. This tool assists the Commissioner, senior leadership and staff in identifying the course on which the Georgia Department of Corrections should head as it moves further into the 22nd Century.
The Georgia Department of Corrections' Strategic Plan is published by the Georgia Department of Corrections Office of Public Affairs.

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