

# **53 Voices on Corrections in Vermont**

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[www.friendsofjason.org/53voices.pdf](http://www.friendsofjason.org/53voices.pdf)

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## SUMMARY

From August to December 2005, I listened to 53 Vermonters give their opinions of the state of our Corrections system. I am grateful to all the people who shared with me their candid thoughts during these interviews. They represented a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including correctional officers, probation officers, parole officers, victims' advocates, inmates, Department of Corrections (DOC) managers, and a variety of other people. While many more voices must still be heard, these interviews will add to the discussion of how to improve Corrections in Vermont, and form the basis of this report.

One of the most significant issues raised was prison overcrowding. Overcrowding has overwhelmed corrections staff. Turnover rates have become unmanageable, exceeding 40%. Uncertain work schedules and poor working conditions are a result of and contributing factors to the high turnover. Despite their strong commitment to serving the DOC and its mission, correctional workers and probation officers feel set up to fail. In interview after interview, they spoke of how overcrowding makes it impossible to perform many of the "correctional" aspect of corrections.

Staff and inmates agree that offenders serving their time suffer from instability brought about by being shuttled from facility to facility (often in Kentucky), the lack of sufficient attention from officers, and the failure to attend to significant mental health needs.

Just as the interviewers identify overcrowding as a clear cause of many of these problems, they also agree on its own causes. The number of people incarcerated in Vermont has skyrocketed, doubling in less than ten years. The women's prison population alone is now six times what it was ten years ago. At the same time, the number of people on probation has ballooned, putting even more stress on DOC.

All of this is happening amid dropping crime rates. While one might think that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between high incarceration rates and low crime rates, DOC higher-ups note that the preponderance of Vermont and national data argues otherwise.

Prisons and jails have become an alternative to community care, according to repeated testimony by inmates, correctional officers, probation officers, community advocates, and DOC staff. Our correctional facilities are populated by a disproportionate number people with mental health, drug, and alcohol problems, and victims of trauma and abuse. Not receiving the treatment they needed when they lived in our Vermont towns, they wind up in jail, an environment that interviewees saw as exacerbating their problems.

Interviewees took care to note that prisons are needed for violent, repeat offenders; incarcerating them helps their rehabilitation, their victims, and society. But some interviewees also argue that spending millions of taxpayer dollars to imprison non-violent, non-repeat offenders often doesn't benefit society or make it safer; rather, it causes harm.

The interviews also revealed many bright spots. A core of staff members has endured at the DOC and remains passionately dedicated to their work. Vermont's sex-offender treatment program continues to be one of the best in the nation, and a source of pride for many DOC workers. Certain job-training programs have graduated reformed inmates who leave prison earning jobs in automotive repair and other fields. A network of community advocates works tirelessly to improve DOC. In recent years, the number of escaped convicts has rarely exceeded more than a handful annually. And interviewees credit reforms and new leadership at DOC for a better trained staff in many areas and the beginnings of a new culture of openness.

Those interviewed see cause for hope that the problems in Corrections can be addressed. Here are just a few of the recommendation actions that they suggested...

...within DOC

- “Get bolder in reaction to the Overcrowding Report. Follow its recommendations.” [page 8]
- “[Create] a strategic plan for staff hiring, recruitment, and retention of staff.” [page 16]
- “Address sexual misconduct [in the correctional facilities] by staff.” [page 20]
- “Make a commitment to [providing] services to victims.” [page 23]
- “Set ratios – like one probation officer per 25 on probation.” [page 27]
- “The prison system was set up with men in mind. We need to reform our women’s correctional facilities to address women’s needs.” [page 34]

...in Vermont Communities

- “[Create] more alternatives to jail, like programs in the community.” [page 8]
- “Secure enough transitional housing for inmates who are ready to return to society.” [page 28]
- “Invest in more community-based programs to treat victims of trauma and abuse, and drug addicts.” [page 39]

...in the Legislature

- “[The Legislature has] to study and address the ballooning prison population to find ways to address it while keeping society safe.” [page 10]
- “Create a statewide Task Force to address the multi-faceted needs of transition age youth.” [page 31]
- “Raise the age of foster care in Vermont to 23.” [page 31]
- “Force kids to stay in school...[until] age 18, not age 16.” [page 31]
- “Have the Legislature follow up and ensure that rules are being complied with to protect mentally disabled inmates.” [page 37]

The challenges we face are complex and cannot be fixed overnight. The first step is to acknowledge and understand them.

## HOW THE INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED

I explained the full nature of the research to all the respondents, except in the case of interviews conducted informally with inmates and correctional officers during a five-hour visit to the Northwest State Correctional Facility. Most of the respondents were eager to share their viewpoints and have their voices heard. I assured them that none of their comments would be attributed directly to them, in order to encourage their candor. All but one of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Most interviews were about an hour long, and were based on four questions designed to open up a broad discussion.

Not included in this report is information I learned elsewhere, such as via dozens of other conversations with individuals one-on-one, during testimony before the House Institutions & Corrections committee, at visits to correctional facilities, at statewide conferences, through reading reports and article. Instead, this report focuses on the 53 Vermonters interviewed specifically for this report, focused on the high-level questions, listed below:

- Problems: Which issues/trends concern you most about Corrections in Vermont?
- Causes: What do you see as the underlying causes of the most pressing challenges we face in Corrections in Vermont?
- Short-Term Solutions: What changes to Vermont's Corrections System would you like to see over the next 12-to-18 months, legislative or otherwise?
- Long-Term Solutions: What changes to Vermont's Corrections System would you like to see over the next 10 years, legislative or otherwise?

This report includes assertions and opinions that sometimes contradict one another, but usually echo each other. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of any of the facts noted in this report, except that they were spoken by those interviewed.

This is only the beginning of a very long discussion that needs to take place.

# WHO WAS INTERVIEWED

## **CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS [CO]**

- 7 Correctional Officers, with a range of 11-to-27 years work experience, interviewed at the Vermont State Employees Association headquarters: Dave Bellini, Dominic Damato, Tim Simoneau, Tom Terenzini, Dave Turner, Bob Ziccardi, Daryll Graham. Oct. 19, 2005.
- 9 Correctional Officers interviewed informally at Northwest State Correctional Facility, while they were on lunch break or at their posts throughout the facility. Sept. 20, 2005.
- Miles, Diana: DOC Case Worker. Sept. 22, 2005.

## **PROBATION OFFICERS [PO]**

- 4 Probation and/or Parole Officers in Chittenden County: Terri Cameron, Dave Jaques, Al Monniere, Brenda Murphy. Dec. 8, 2005.

## **INMATES**

- 11 Inmates Incarcerated interviewed informally in different wards at Northwest State Correctional Facility. Sept. 20, 2005.
- Inmate of the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor. Sept. 22, 2005.

## **ADVOCATES**

- DeLeonardis, Kara: Executive Director of SafeSpace. Aug. 24, 2005.
- Kenney, Sarah: Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence. Oct. 19, 2005.
- Libertoff, Ken: Vermont Association of Mental Health. Dec. 8, 2005.
- McGrath, Ginny: Staff Attorney at Vermont Protection & Advocacy. Dec. 8, 2005.
- Paquin, Ed: Executive Director of Vermont Protection & Advocacy. Dec. 8, 2005.
- Pulliam, Rose: Executive Director of Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence. Oct. 19, 2005.
- Redmond, Mark: Executive Director of Spectrum Youth & Family Services, Nov. 28, 2005.
- Rubin, A.J.: Supervising Attorney at Vermont Protection & Advocacy. Dec. 8, 2005.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS [DOC]**

- Blair, Sue, Superintendent Northwest State Correctional Facility. Sept. 20, 2005.
- Evans, Jill: DOC Director of Women's Services. Sept. 22, 2005.
- Gorczyk, John: former DOC Commissioner. Sept. 1, 2005.
- Hofmann, Robert: DOC Commissioner. Sept. 1, 2005.
- Hogan, Con: former DOC Commissioner. Aug. 4, 2005.
- Holloway, Amy: DOC, victim services. Aug. 23, 2005.
- Perry, John: DOC, planning. Nov. 29, 2005.

## **COURTS**

- Gennette, Karen: Vermont State Drug Court Coordinator, Dec. 1, 2005.
- Maguire, Cindy: Attorney General's office, Criminal Division Chief. Sept. 1, 2005.
- Murnane, Janet: Attorney General's office, Deputy. Sept. 1, 2005.
- Sorrell, Bill: Attorney General. Sept. 1, 2005.
- Treadwell, John: Attorney General's office, Criminal Division. Sept. 1, 2005.

What they said about...  
**...Overcrowding**

**Situation**

“Overcrowding makes it so ridiculously impossible to do anything well.” [DOC]

“If your motivation is to improve peoples’ lives, then you spend all your time just managing people and worrying about your own safety, how are you going to address the ‘correctional’ aspect of corrections?” [DOC]

“Seven-to-ten years ago, it was reasonable to work with cases and do the work. Now, it’s so reactive. It’s a lot of pushing around paper and we can’t put things in place. There’s a true loss of the ability to do what our job is all about.” [DOC]

“Overcrowding drives all the problems. Records get lost. Case planning becomes token.” [DOC]

“It’s no accident that we have had a run of suicides [in the correctional facilities]. Correctional officers miss bed checks. It all has to do with overcrowding. The Department is regularly sued for sentence computations. They’re holding people longer than they should sometimes.” [DOC]

“Northwest [State Correctional Facility] had over 400 transfers last year. We don’t have them long enough to know their names.” [CO]

“They’re so strapped for beds and staff that they can’t be consistent.” [Inmate]

“A woman was taken out of her bed and put into segregation because of a disciplinary action, and she was told that she was going to be sent back to her bed. But she didn’t because of overcrowding.” [Inmate]

**Causes**

“The expansion of resources hasn’t kept pace with the growth of the number of offenders. Plus, we’ve added new programs like DNA testing.” [DOC]

“When I started, there were 22 people on furlough and now there are 200. The number of staff hasn’t increased by the same percentage.” [PO]

“I think that capacity builds the problem. If you’ve got the beds, they’ll stay longer.” [DOC]

“It’s the [sending inmates to] out-of-state [correctional facilities] that drives problems. With out-of-state, you can’t do case planning effectively. Families suffer. The culture that people bring back burdens the prisoners in VT. There are tremendous costs and complications.” [DOC]

“We have overcrowding now because the overall climate has toughened. The parole board, prosecutors, and everyone else have gotten more conservative. More people in the system wound up in jail...the number of people on detention was the biggest culprit.” [DOC]

“The radical growth of prison inmates doesn’t correlate to crime, but rather to tougher sentencing and increased police efficiency.” [DOC]

“Vermont’s system is a graduated sanction system by default. If we had swift justice and treatment on the front-end, we’d have less jail time and less prison overcrowding.” [Court]

“The number of detainees is too high.” [Court]

## **Recommendations**

“Overcrowding is the kind of problem that can’t be dealt with in increments.” [DOC]

“GPS [electronic bracelets] can move 400 non-dangerous offenders out of the prisons. It’s a breakthrough concept. It is a critical step to preventing more crime and reducing overcrowding that will allow DOC to create a workable system. The GPS test study [passed into law in 2005] was a timid and weak response.” [DOC]

“Get bolder in reaction to the Overcrowding Report. Follow its recommendations.” [DOC]

“Have interactive TV for arraignments.” [CO]

“The work camp solution is a good one. It’s a 4-to-5 year process from thought to completion.” [DOC]

“We need more alternatives to jail, like programs in the community.” [DOC]

“We need more prevention programs, more teachers, more community mentoring, more Big Brother & Big Sister programs, and more probation services.” [DOC]

What they said about...  
**...Sentencing**

**Situation**

“The exploding numbers in Corrections is the biggest issue.” [Advocate]

“We see some harsh sentencing for crimes. But then crime rates don’t go down because of it. So what’s the point?” [CO]

“If you can’t find a correlation between sentences and community safety, there’s huge price you’re paying, without a big reason.” [DOC]

“Before my accident – a DUI fatality – I was a productive member of society. Four days after my accident I checked into an alcohol treatment program voluntarily. I got therapy. I sought healing services. I went to church. I volunteered in the schools. I got a four-year flat sentence. Since then, a doctor had a DUI fatality and got 72 hours of community service. Where’s the message in that?” [Inmate]

“If you get someone in jail during arraignment, your chances of settling the case go up dramatically.” [Court]

“Very few judges take into account overcrowding in their decision-making.” [DOC]

“Prison should be reserved for serious violent repeat offenders. That’s not happening.” [DOC]

“We’re not investing in people anymore.” [DOC]

“If crime isn’t going up and incarceration is, then communities are unloading their problems to the state.” [DOC]

**Causes**

“Vermont is criminalizing accidents. One woman got nine months for a fatal traffic accident that was written up as a no-fault crime. Apparently nothing’s an accident anymore.” [Inmate]

“Usually a highly charged emotional event raises sentencing levels. For instance, in 1982, two juveniles in Burlington sexually assaulted and murdered a young girl. Laws get passed named after a particular victim, like Megan’s Law, or the Amber alert.” [DOC]

“Guidelines for sentencing are a legislative process. They may start out great, but they always end up tough on crime, and you get ‘sentencing creep.’ It’s always a successful formula for political re-election to make sentences harsher.” [DOC]

“Offenders are hard-wired differently than we are. Some are clinically psychopaths or sociopaths. We’re making laws for people based on how we might respond. Will putting someone in jail for two years make a greater impact than 30 days? Maybe not.” [Court]

“We’re catching more offenders but the amount of crime has gone down. And it’s not because we’re catching more criminals. Crime went down before put more people in jail. Cause must precede effect.” [DOC]

“Nobody knows why crime went up or why crime went down. There’s no science that explains it at all. Look at Finland vs. Vermont. In the 1970s they had the same incarceration rate as Vermont did. They went from 100 inmates per 100,000 to 50. We went from 100 to 300. Our crime rates have stayed the same. The relationship between crime rates and incarceration is minimal. There’s little or no evidence or data in sentencing that people learn anything from punishment. Most people see their incarceration as the system stacked against them. I’m not aware of any deterrent effect. You do not achieve public safety.” [DOC]

“DOC isn’t the bad guy. They have to shift resources from one problem to the next. So prosecutors ask for longer sentences. We think in terms of Corrections math.” [Court]

## **Recommendations**

“Prisons should not be used, and the data supports that, for anything except for people who are violent and recalcitrant. Putting people in jail who shouldn’t be there makes them worse. Prison makes low-risk offenders worse. The Legislature has to stop it. I don’t know how you get the [guts] to do it. You have to study and address the ballooning prison population to find ways to address it while keeping society safe. You have to decriminalize misdemeanors that aren’t violent. You have to give the community something to do that’s an alternative. The problem is that the state is attempting to control the misbehavior in the community. That should be the community’s job. State intervention makes low-level problems worse. That’s because the state only has mechanisms to deal with high-level problems.” [DOC]

“You might put someone in jail for 2 months to shock them. If you put them in for 4 years, the sentence is more to keep them off the streets. A sentence length in between could be rehabilitative.” [Court]

“The volume that’s come through our prison system has made everything anonymous. Change that. Send the people back to the communities that they came from, and make people know who came from their community. Give people the ability to form communities and take control of their communities. Don’t rely on the government.” [DOC]

What they said about...

## ...Parole/Probation Violations

### Situation

“Parole and probation violators fill correctional facilities.” [DOC]

“Lots of young men are on probation for being 20 and drinking a beer. Then they violate their probation, so they’re back in jail.” [CO]

“It seems that not too many offenders are coming back on new crimes, but on parole violations.” [CO]

“We’re getting tougher on people who are on probation. Are the people on probation getting worse? No. But we’re getting tougher. We have more resources, which is good for the communities. But when we watch people who aren’t dangerous, and we catch them doing stupid things which we all do, then we end up with more non-violent people in prison.” [DOC]

“When they’re out of jail, it’s really difficult to get them back in. We’re not putting people back for silly violations. But when you have people that are doing violation after violation and they’re putting themselves at risk and other people’s lives are risk, then we have to send them back.” [PO]

“Most of the people in jail deserve to be in jail. They’re mostly repeat offenders. I know how difficult it is to put someone in jail. The problem is not people who are in jail who shouldn’t be.” [Court]

“We’ve had some really strange, stupid cases of people coming back to jail. One guy made it. He left prison and was working on the outside, and then one day his wife had an aneurysm and died. The man got drunk in his own house and got pulled back into jail for violating his parole.” [CO]

### Recommendations

“One of the biggest issues is putting someone in jail for a violation of probation. Has everything else been looked at? Is there something else than can be done while they’re on probation to keep them out of jail? Conduct an analysis of violation of probation to find out how this number can be reduced.” [Court]

What they said about...  
**...DOC Staffing & Worker Conditions**

**Situation**

“We have humongous turnover.” [CO]

“Our #1 problem is the turnover, followed by mental health problems and the physical plant conditions. But really, turnover is by far the biggest problem.” [DOC]

“We don’t have enough permanent CO positions.” [DOC]

“We’re *always* recruiting, we’re always scrambling to fill the vacancies.” [DOC]

“We’re consistently being asked to do a lot more with a lot less. We were told recently that we’re doing a great job, but then our resources are being yanked away from us that enable us to do a great job.” [PO]

“We never get patted on the back.” [CO]

“We’re so overworked here.” [CO]

“We’ve had fewer lawsuits against staff because we’ve had better training.” [CO]

“Forced overtime is a big issue. People call in sick if they have their kids’ little league game that night.” [DOC]

“The main problem we have here is retaining staff. The shifts are constantly changing. That means that if I have kids and my shift changes, either my wife has to quit her job to fit my schedule, or I have to quit mine. Otherwise, who’s going to watch the kids?” [CO]

“I know of a CO who had to miss his son’s graduation. He’s no longer working here. You shouldn’t have to choose between your family and your job.” [CO]

“Correctional officers are called at home after a 12-hour shift. They tell us, ‘We want you here in the morning.’ And if you say that you’re tired from your 12-hour shift, they tell you, ‘Too bad, you’re ordered in.’ So people don’t answer their phones now.” [CO]

“We’re caught with a dilemma – do I refuse to work overtime for free, or do I get a bad job evaluation.” [PO]

“A good day [for DOC front-line workers] is when nothing happens. Who gets motivated by that?” [DOC]

“We have 40% turnover of COs. What kind of chaos does that breed? The compensation is modest, around \$13/hour to start. And the working conditions aren’t great. The physical plants are old. And we have a tough clientele. Having a whole bunch of people in sweaty miserable conditions adds to the pressure cooker mentality. We’re hiring one out of every two people who apply. We’ve lowered our standards.” [DOC]

“Correctional officers are so stressed. It’s a lot easier to work at McDonald’s. And it pays about the same.” [CO]

“To be a CO in New York, you’re on a waiting list. Here, you can’t get people into [a training] academy. Why? The pay. The conditions. You don’t get health insurance benefits until you’ve worked here for 3-to-4 months. The retirement. The hours are 8, 12, or 16 hours. You have no idea what shift you’ll be working. You can’t have a life. You have the anxiety because you can’t make any plans. Vermont wants to do it on the cheap.” [CO]

“There’s an inconsistency of behavior of COs.” [Advocate]

“The problems are when correctional officers aren’t consistent with how they treat inmates.” [CO]

“We’re completely understaffed. We’re cutting corners all the time. We operate a skeletal crew. And there’s no way that you can monitor all of the inmates.” [CO]

“Understaffing means that there’s less security of the facility, more assaults, and it allows [inmates] to increase their criminal behavior.” [CO]

“People are working hard at DOC. They’re compassionate and caring. But there are unrealistic expectations of what DOC can do.” [DOC]

## **Causes**

“Often we run the facility dangerously low [on the number of staff positions] in order to meet budget.” [DOC]

“We’re losing some of our COs who are being shipped to Iraq.” [DOC]

“Television shows always portray COs as evil and corrupt knuckle-draggers. We’re always the bad guys.” [CO]

“Turnover and low pay doesn’t draw true human services professionals.” [DOC]

“There’s rampant paranoia that Big Brother is watching and that you have to please the inmates. There’s a culture of fear among the employees.” [CO]

“We have small, inefficient prisons. With 9 prisons, that means 9 chiefs of security, nine superintendents. Other states have 2,000 person prisons.” [DOC]

## **Recommendations**

“If you do one thing, eliminate temps. Some have worked here more than a year. They don’t get health care or retirement or sick leave.” [CO]

“Give a decent retirement plan. It’s not a 30-year job. It’s a 20-year job.” [CO]

What they said about...  
**...Central Office**

**Situation**

“There’s a huge disconnect between Central Office and the Field Offices. There seems to be really good intention in the Central Office, and sometimes that gets translated to the Field Offices. And Central Office certainly acknowledges that.” [Advocate]

“There’s a shocking lack of information from the Central Office.” [CO]

“Supervisors are politicians because they can be hired or fired by the Governor. This has been only six-to-eight months after the suicide in the prisons. The Supers won’t make a decision. You can’t blame them, they’re fearful.” [CO]

“Supers don’t run the offices – it’s all run from Central Office.” [CO]

“We as a department, especially in Central Office, are fading. The visionary and grand ideas that we had to provide ‘correctional’ services are now disconnected to what goes on in the streets. We’re too swamped with trying to meet day-to-day needs that the correctional aspect of our work is sidelined.” [DOC]

“Our management in Waterbury doesn’t have much clue about what we do here. They don’t understand that. It’s frustrating for us.” [PO]

**Causes**

“We lack the technology, computer system, and links between agencies. We could collaborate more. DCF [Department of Children & Families] is very difficult to work with. They have access to our information, but we don’t have access to theirs. We just got Windows 2000, and we just don’t all have access to the information. The IT people work when we work, not when we have down-time.” [PO]

**Recommendations**

“We need a strategic plan for hiring, recruitment, and retention of staff. Where’s the leadership? Where’s the plan?” [CO]

“Government is too careful and too conservative in how it does its work. DOC needs dramatic change.” [DOC]

What they said about...  
**...DOC's Focus**

**Situation**

“Corrections is doing a lot of the work of the other agencies, like Human Services.” [PO]

“The Department of Corrections has gone way beyond what they’re really good at. They’re doing pre-charge stuff and community-based stuff, and have programs based in the community, and there are people doing that. If they want to fund that, great. But right now they’re becoming all things to all programs. For instance creating the Community Justice Centers. They end up owning these community centers. Re-entry is within their purview, but they need to be contracting with communities to do that. Family group conferencing is another example.” [Court]

**Causes**

“There are a great many needs with Corrections that are unmet, including mental health, physical needs, and legal presentation – but I don’t think that it is DOC’s responsibility to meet all of those challenges itself.” [DOC]

“There’s the misperception that Corrections is the end-all, cure-all, fix-all. People expect us to pay for bus vouchers, housing, etc. There needs to be education about what we do and what we don’t do. Once folks end up with us [probation], people think they’re taken care of. They say, ‘Phew, that’s another one we [the community] don’t have to deal with’.” [PO]

**Recommendations**

“Let us execute on list of 25 things that the Legislature gave us this year, rather than deal with lots of new programs. We have a lot on our plates.” [DOC]

“Leave DOC alone for a while. There have been so many changes and upheaval. It’s like a Western where people shoot guns and everyone has to dance. We are all very busy. We have to comply with new Good Time provisions, there’s the domestic violence service reports, the merged probation and parole offices, a new commissioner, a reorganization, and we still have to deal with a stretched system with overcrowding. Now there’s talk of Civil Commitment. Let DOC find its legs, then [have the Legislature] come back with suggestions.” [DOC]

What they said about...

## **...Conditions of the Buildings**

### **Situation**

“Deplorable. The state of our buildings is deplorable. And we have to go through such a fight to get anything fixed.” [DOC]

“We have fences that are coming out of the grounds, the heating system is often lacking, and we need an air conditioner. On hot summer days our workers leave the building literally soaking wet.” [DOC]

“We have no storage space and no staff room.” [DOC]

“Prisons are horrible places.” [DOC]

What they said about...

## ...**Transparency & Accountability**

### **Situation**

“DOC is unwilling to be transparent and be willing to take responsibility for errors. For instance, they haven’t admitted that they don’t have an ADA [American with Disabilities Act] screening tool, and/or that they don’t use one. DOC is required to have an ADA screen. We’ve never seen a screening instrument, and we’ve been asking for it regularly. Another example: the prison health services provider – three of their top people resigned three weeks ago. We believe that what happened was that people high-up in the company were being asked to do things that were unethical and were forced to resign. The government seems willing to take the company’s word.” [Advocate]

### **Causes**

“The Marks-McLaughlin report noted that there’s a culture against taking responsibility and providing transparency. The people there are good people, but there’s a culture that avoids responsibilities and accountability.” [Advocate]

What they said about...

## **...Sexual Misconduct Policies**

### **Situation**

“Rape goes on. On average, we get one complaint/month. It usually happens between older and younger inmates. Or with a mentally unhealthy inmate. The overwhelming number of rapes is between inmates, and not involving COs.” [CO]

“Sexual misconduct between inmates should be dealt with.” [DOC]

### **Recommendation**

“We need to address sexual misconduct [in the correctional facilities] by staff. And for staff who worry, there’s already a law against false reporting.” [DOC]

What they said about...

## ...Restorative Justice

### Situation

“Restorative justice was a great idea. But we haven’t resourced or sustained our work, after the initial grants ran out. It might have produced a great result, but it looks like we don’t have enough resources to even find out.” [DOC]

“You send people to jail as a last resort.” [Court]

“Corrections should be the last resort. We’re putting people in jail as a first resort.” [DOC]

“We’ve changed programs quite a bit, which is good. New programs are good, proactive, state-of-the-art that’s good. But we need to do things with community involvement.” [PO]

“Restorative justice principles are much more in keeping with democracy and the possibility of forgiveness and the ability to change. It was the model for justice in indigenous populations. It’s used in Canada, Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, New Zealand, and Australia.” [DOC]

### Recommendations

“We need pre-adjudication panels. Timmy threw a rock through a window. Rather than send them to [juvenile] court, send the kid to a panel to deal with it. Ask him, ‘Hey, why did you do that?’ And then make them make good for it, by scrubbing their floors, etc. Nip the problem in the bud. Don’t send him to jail. The community sees that and senses that, and then they feel a part of the problem, a part of the solution. The victim has immediate response. That’s closure. The offender is facing the victim face-to-face and they have to deal with the issues. And it’s run by volunteers.” [PO]

“We need to empower communities to take more of a role with conflict and dispute to give them the power that the Burlington Community Justice Center has, and put it in law. Communities must handle misdemeanors, and they must be given the resources to do this. It should be a statutory authority to towns.” [DOC]

“We shouldn’t put drunken college students in jail, even if they barfed on your lawn. They should have to come back tomorrow and clean it up. We need to have mechanisms in place for them to do that. It should be the norm for people to take responsibility for their own actions, rather than having the government taking responsibility for them.” [DOC]

“Give people dorns for minor offenses like DUI [driving under the influence]. Have them keep their jobs, and pay back society. And give them treatment.”  
[Court]

“Have all these [inmates] work while they’re in prison. Pay them minimum wage, and make them put away money for savings, to give to their family, and to fund a victims’ restitutions fund. Give them responsibility.” [CO]

What they said about...

## ...Victims

### Situation

“What has the victim lost? How do we support victims? When we begin to spend as much money on victims as we do on offenders, then we’ll have justice.” [DOC]

“There are 4 positions [within DOC] that are making inroads to getting victims wraparound services to help them be protected.” [Advocate]

“Corrections is under-resourced. Community caseloads are unmanageable. They’re constantly shuffling around how they do things, changing terms, who supervises whom. It’s not that we can’t keep up with their changes. They can’t keep up with their changes. That has implications for survivors.” [Advocate]

“DOC had been difficult to work with. They hadn’t been collaborative. That has been changing over the last 6-to-12 months. There’s been a commitment to including outside voices ever since Steve Gold and Rob Hoffman.” [Advocate]

“Healing shouldn’t be dependent on the offender being in prison. Justice isn’t just about having the offender in jail.” [DOC]

“We need to focus more on the victims.” [CO]

### Recommendations

“Increase the filing fees for marriage certificates and civil unions and put the funds into more domestic violence prevention and services. Thirty-seven states already have such funding.” [Advocate]

“I’d like to see the state make a commitment to [providing] services to victims. Provide counseling for trauma work – although not within DOC.” [DOC]

“[DOC] could do better by contracting outsiders to do some trainings for inmates, such as IDAP and CSC programs [treatment programs].” [Advocate]

“Create a special investigation team for better prosecution and better victim services.” [Advocate]

“We need to focus on intervention programs [related to sexual and domestic violence] much younger. The earlier the better.” [Advocate]

What they said about...  
**...Rehabilitation**

**Situation**

“I’ve been in and out for 25 years.” [Inmate]

“I want to go home. I was in Virginia and Kentucky. I’ve got a kid. I’m sick of jail. I changed because of my daughter. I should be protecting her. I want to raise my two kids. I don’t want to be in here. I haven’t seen my kids in 18 months – my son was three and my daughter was two. I’ve been in and out since I was 16, and I’m 28 now.” [Inmate]

“It was cool to go to jail and tell people I was in jail. I used to live on North Street in the Old North End of Burlington. I’m not going to go back to North Street because all of my friends are shooting up there. I’ve got a girl I want to marry.” [Inmate]

“One guy was out for ten years, and he was scared that he wouldn’t make his rent, so he did a B&E [breaking and entering] and was caught.” [CO]

“Once you see where they’re coming from, you can understand the choices they’re making.” [CO]

“Offenders can and do change. The tree can bear fruit if the conditions are right. But the conditions aren’t always right.” [CO]

“There’s definitely hope of rehabilitation for some offenders.” [Advocate]

“You have to help people change. They often don’t know how. We give them a laundry list of things to do. And they come from a long history of generations of poverty, and they don’t know how to do things. It’s like telling them to have an appointment, and they say, ‘Wait, I live in Shelburne, how am I going to get to Burlington?’ They won’t tell you, ‘I’m afraid,’ or ‘I don’t know how to get there.’ You have to help them get to the next step.” [PO]

“About 140 offenders who [graduated from the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification program] now have jobs in the community. Almost all of them are getting jobs in the trade. The ASE programs are always full – there’s a lot of competition to get into the class.” [CO]

“We had a garden here at NW that produced 14 tons of vegetables three years ago and that food went to the community. But we’re not allowed to make a profit because it’ll compete with society.” [CO]

“I could do so many things to better society. But instead, I’m here in jail doing dead-time.” [Inmate]

“I’ve tried to do work crew so that I could help pay restitution to society. But I was denied it.” [Inmate]

“I need vocational training.” [Inmate]

## Causes

“Punishment doesn’t have the good consequences that we want and it has bad unintended consequences that we don’t want to them have. And we’ve known this for 50 years.” [DOC]

“Hurting somebody never helped them. If I say, ‘I’m doing this for your own good,’ what do you want to do to me in return? If I do something for you, you’re going to owe me. And you’re going to want to repay that debt.” [DOC]

“Corrections in a post-9/11 world is a scary place. I haven’t heard new thinking outside of Washington about justice. It’s been old thinking. It’s not about salvation or redemption. It’s very biblical what we do. Frightening so.” [DOC]

“You see re-offending occur, and you’re giving people a mountain to climb. [Released offenders say], ‘DCF is on my back, I can’t get my meds, I’ve got to see my PO once a week, I want to stay clean, I have to work, I want to do good, I have to see my case manager at Howard, PATH, or DCF.’ I’ve seen failure, not malicious failure – but failure because there’s not the support services that you need. These are services that would benefit the community, like job resources, education, etc.” [PO]

“There aren’t enough incentives for people to get programming. They need to get something beyond just not getting [written up].” [Inmate]

“We’re going overboard with care and concern. It’s become enabling. Inmate hotlines or grievance procedures are used as leverage over staff.” [CO]

“You have to really want to change. We give them every opportunity to change.” [CO]

“For those with low-level offenses, incarceration makes it worse, not better. If you’re put in prison, you have to toughen up. If you put someone with a low-level offense in prison, they’re more likely to commit another crime.” [DOC]

“They [offenders] come here [to prison] and get nothing. Give them something – training, a job, etc. Then they have something to look forward to.” [CO]

“The focus is always on being punitive. Vermont is not a ‘correctional’ facility. In prison, those who are out of line get the most attention. We never get positive feedback, or rarely.” [Inmate]

“Dead time is why riots start. There’s nothing to do but cause problems. No programs. No work.” [CO]

## **Recommendations**

“Vermont needs a 1,000-bed prison. Not a correctional facility. Some inmates don’t want programming and don’t want to change. We should just get long-term housing for them.” [CO]

“Having people doing dead time in jail doesn’t benefit anyone. More work-camp types of programs are needed. They should give back to the community, and there should be programs to allow them to do that.” [Court]

What they said about...  
**...Re-Entry**

**Situation**

“One kid got a zero-to-fifty [sentence]. He got out but wasn’t allowed to drive for 2½ years. So he had to ride his bike 20 or 30 miles to work. Eventually he gave up and came back to jail. Now we’ve got a lifer. He was set up to fail.” [CO]

“I’ve seen guys who are out, get \$60 and spend it on a watch, some clothes, and then end up at their housing realizing that they have no food, no pots and pans. I don’t believe in hand outs. But how can they make it?” [CO]

“We have to believe that people can change. And I’ve seen it happen. We as a department are looking at re-entry throughout the department and all of that is huge.” [DOC]

**Causes**

“They don’t have enough resources to succeed on terms of probation. We don’t have long-term residential treatment. Health insurance is always a factor.” [PO]

**Recommendations**

“What if you pay them to work [while they’re in prison], but then require forced savings to go to their reintegration?” [CO]

“Set ratios – like one probation officer per 25 on probation. Otherwise you have a revolving door.” [DOC]

“We need more of an interface between the community probation officers and the case worker. We would work together to make sure that the offenders don’t come back. We had case plans done in jail. We’re doing some of that, but we don’t have time to do that. I’m told that this used to happen all the time. There are time and financial resource problems.” [PO]

“We need to hook up with businesses and set up programs.” [CO]

“When we work with the communities, that’s wonderful.” [DOC]

“There’s an expectation that we can reintegrate offenders back into society. It takes longer than people think. Victims and others in society don’t feel that way. We need to focus less on retribution and more on repair.” [DOC]

What they said about...

## **...Housing**

### **Situation**

“I want to get out. I’ve been in for 15 months for burglary, and I was supposed to get out [eight months ago], but I have no place to go. I just turned 19.” [Inmate]

“When dealing with 16-to-20 year offenders [re-entering society], lack of housing is a big problem. Some landlords don’t want them. Housing is particularly a problem for this age group. It’s too risky for them to go back to their old homes because their mom or dad or sister or brother has a drug habit, or some other risky behavior.” [PO]

### **Causes**

“There’s not enough suitable housing for prisoners once they want to re-enter society.” [CO]

“Case management is nice, but if you don’t have a roof over your head what is the case management really worth? We need some form of supportive housing. You need a place to live with the supports. Create supportive housing.” [Advocate]

### **Recommendations**

“Vermont needs a true half-way house.” [PO]

“Fund the half-way houses.” [CO]

“We need more money for half-way houses.” [DOC]

“Vermont has no meaning for their jails. You’re not addressing true criminal activity properly. Don’t make people stay in jail because they can’t get out. Half-way houses would be good.” [Inmate]

“Secure enough transitional housing for inmates who are ready to return to society. That would save a ton of money.” [CO]

What they said about...

## ...Changing Inmate Population

### Situation

“If you look at today’s population, you get a distorted view of who flows through the system. On Jan. 1 we had 1,864 people. But we’ve had 5,000 come in and 5,000 go out every year. There are 20,505 unique people in DOC, or 3% of Vermonters.” [DOC]

“Women’s incarceration rates are up 600% over the last 8-to-10 years, and that includes 540% for non-violent crimes. That’s out-of-whack with their arrest rates. There hasn’t been a 600% increase in crimes by women.” [DOC]

“13% of Blacks living in Vermont are under DOC, compared to 2% of Whites living in Vermont. The numbers used to be a lot closer. And [the change] is not because Blacks have gotten more criminal.” [DOC]

“We have a lot more younger inmates.” [CO]

“We have higher rates of special needs inmates than before.” [DOC]

“We have seven lifers in our prisons now. We will have 150 lifers in 10 or 15 years. Lifers are usually easier to manage, but they don’t mix well. We don’t have a lifer facility.” [DOC]

“Over time, [our inmates have become] less dangerous and more devious. More petty stuff will get people in prison. Long-time inmates are in Kentucky. So we’re stuck with the younger men and deal with the guys who don’t know what it means to do time. They know they’re coming out and they can always get out. The lifers know that this is their home and they are good residents.” [CO]

“The majority of people we see have substance problems. And there’s a lot of mental illness. That’s why they’re using in the first place – to self-medicate. Compound that with special education, individual education plans.” [PO]

“About 80% of probationers are dealing with co-occurring disorders. They come from histories of chaos and trauma. The population is exploding and the resources aren’t coming up.” [PO]

“About 25% of the prison population changes every month. Every month! That’s between facilities. Within a prison, beds can change every three days. It’s chaos. That’s fundamentally why prisons are so destructive: no stability.” [DOC]

What they said about...  
**...Youth Inmates**

**Situation**

“One out of three Vermonters has had the Corrections experience since 1970. We know that one out of five 20-year-old males are under DOC this year. This tells me that we’re part of the developmental process. If you don’t go to college and don’t go to the army, and if you don’t finish high school – and even if you do – you’re mine.” [DOC]

“There’s a connection between DCF and going to jail.” [Advocate]

“High school drop-outs are a feeder system to corrections. It’s in the interest of schools for kids to drop out to raise their scores. Just look at ‘No Child Left Behind’.” [DOC]

“SRS [Social Rehabilitation Services] & DCF are basically the schools before you get into criminal court.” [Court]

**Causes**

“Do you know what DWY is? It’s driving while young. Who doesn’t have a beer from the age 16-to-21? That became a crime in 1999. It got changed in 2003 when the cops said that we they couldn’t handle it. The second offense is still a crime.” [DOC]

“DCF and Corrections have resource issues. The inability to do early interventions for 13-18 year olds impact Corrections later. If Corrections’ aim is to stop the flow of people into the system, then early intervention through DCF must be beefed up.” [Court]

“There’s a lack of mental health services for youth. Look at kids in transition. They’re often vulnerable. They lose their benefits when they turn 18. Many kids are graduating from state services as youth into the corrections system. These kids get lost. And then they end up in Corrections.” [Advocate]

“DCF hears about a 5<sup>th</sup> grader who comes to school stoned, and they yank the kid out. They’re very militant about the way to go about business. They set up case plans for people to fail.” [PO]

## Recommendations

“Link education funding dollars to educate youth who’ve dropped out.”  
[Advocate]

“Create a statewide Task Force to address the multi-faceted needs of transition age youth.” [Advocate]

“We need early identification – I’m talking grade school. The problems that the kids present in schools need to be addressed quickly and effectively. To me it’s a helium balloon without a string. These kids are floating around waiting for help. The schools are doing a good job, but it needs improvement. It doesn’t mean that the kid has to be removed from the home. I hate that. I have huge aggravations with DCF.” [PO]

“The school system should not be in Corrections. Education should be done before they get into prison. If those alternatives and options were in the community, think of the savings you’d create.” [DOC]

“Force kids to stay in school – allow them to drop out after age 18, not age 16 as they can now.” [DOC]

“For kids in foster care, the rug is being pulled out from them at age 18. But once they turn 18, or shortly thereafter – like when they’re getting their high school diploma – they’re ending up homeless or in the Corrections system. If you hold onto kids for more years, you have better outcomes. We’re the only New England state that ends Foster Care at age 18. The others range from 19 to 23. Raise the age of foster care in Vermont to 23.” [Advocate]

What they said about...  
**...Aging Inmates**

**Situation**

“A lot of inmates should be in a nursing home. COs aren’t trained to deal with hospice cases.” [CO]

“One of the huge costs that aren’t even anticipated is that as the population ages, the costs will be astronomical. At age 55, the costs per inmate will be around \$70,000 because of healthcare costs. And remember, offenders typically are not a healthy population to begin with.” [DOC]

“We don’t have training for medical services for seniors.” [CO]

What they said about...

## ...Women Inmates

### Situation

“We put men in jail because they’re a danger to others. We put women in jail because they’re a danger to themselves or their children. Most men are in jail for violence, most women aren’t.” [DOC]

“Women have many parity issues that need to be addressed.” [DOC]

“About 80% of incarcerated women have been victims of sexual abuse.” [CO]

### Causes

“Women may be copping a plea earlier than men do. The longer you hold out, the better deal you get. But women get scared and plea quickly.” [DOC]

“Women will take a plea agreement to get it over with. They don’t understand the contracts that they’re signing, and they’re often misinformed, to put it nicely, as to what they’re agreeing to. They say, ‘I deserve to go to jail.’ The men sweat it out.” [CO]

“Abused women often take the blame for their batterers. Women take the rap for husbands/boyfriend all the time because they believe that the men would’ve gone away for longer than the women would have. I also know of one woman who took the rap for her abusive husband’s crime, and she has to come out and return home to him. As far as she’s concerned, he’s the best she’ll ever have.” [CO]

“Drugs drive so much of the incarceration rate, and certainly for women. What’s driving the drugs? Often it’s trauma. Abuse. Neglect. Many of these women are beaten.” [Advocate]

“In some ways, it’s easier to build housing, but it’s harder to deal with trauma. Many women are self-medicating through drugs or alcohol.” [Advocate]

### Recommendations

“Windsor has called for a 20% reduction of women at their facility. That’s about 25 women. That’s not a serious challenge. Set higher goals.” [DOC]

“We need more drug-treatment capacity in the community, particularly for the women, so that they don’t go into Corrections system?” [DOC]

“Women need one facility, even though we’re not supposed to build new prisons. And the facility should be near Chittenden County – we have too many women serving in Windsor who are from Chittenden County. They need a new building big enough for programming, re-entry services, segregations needs, and mental health needs.” [DOC]

“Build one complex for women. One space, closer to their children and resources. Women’s prisons can be cheaper than men’s prisons, because of lower security needs. Make them campus-like.” [DOC]

“What if we gave [the women offenders] \$1,000 so that they can write good checks to pay for their kids’ diapers, AND pay for their drug addiction. Of course, I’m not advocating this, but if you gave them free heroin, it’d be cheaper than putting them in jail. And God forbid we should give them drug rehabilitation.” [DOC]

“Women have different needs than men do. The prison system was set up with men in mind. We need to reform our women’s correctional facilities to address women’s needs.” [CO]

What they said about...  
**...Mental Health**

**Situation**

“About 1 in 4 inmates are on the mental health roster. There are more people with mental health problems in jail than in community-based settings. DOC is the largest mental health provider of mental health services.” [Advocate]

“Many parolees don’t belong in DOC. They should be in mental health care. I have a woman who thinks she’s married to George Bush, and we have many patients who pee in public. There’s a guy who pees on buildings, and then he had his hands in his pockets, and the cops surrounded him and told him to take his hands out of his pockets. When he didn’t respond, they shot him with bean-bags. He was arrested, and he’s been in and out of prison. We re-victimize people by having them come back in here. We could spend all day telling you stories like this.” [PO]

“People who are released don’t get their benefits lined up for them upon release. People with developmental disabilities often don’t have access to other programs.” [Advocate]

“Mental Health is the biggest change here at NW [Correctional Facility]. I’ve worked here ten years, and they’ve done something about it. It’s a more open environment.” [CO]

“There’s no specialized training for COs in dealing with inmates with mental health problems.” [CO]

“Mental health inmates are abused bad in jail. They’re taken advantage of by other inmates who will make them cut themselves just for entertainment. Or they’re used for sex.” [CO]

“We contract out for medical services for mental health. But they’re not here 15 hours a day. Probably they’re here 6 hours a day. Medical services have gone down after we contracted out.” [CO]

“Some inmates are turned down from the State Hospital because they’re not stable enough.” [CO]

“They’re not doing quality assurance that gets down to the client level.” [Advocate]

“If someone’s mentally ill and self-harming, it’s important to not strip them, shackle them, and isolate them for 23-hours a day.” [Advocate]

“People [with mental health conditions] are being let out from prison right now and they’re often getting nothing. There’s a restorative justice program, but it’s for a limited number of people. There are at least three pilots that DOC and DHS have started. It looks good on paper.” [Advocate]

“This [mental health problems in Corrections] is not an easy discussion. It could take a decade to fix the problems we have.” [Advocate]

“People with chronic and persistent mental illness get worse in jail.” [Court]

“If you offer them their meds, that doesn’t mean anything for them. They need containment and structure. The hospital offered them containment. Now it’s the prisons.” [DOC]

## **Causes**

“Deinstitutionalization of mental health has meant that they end up in prison.” [CO]

“Mental health is grossly underserved and is often cause for lawsuits. The commissioners in the 1980’s wanted to get sued so that they could finally fix the system. There’s very little political will on this issue.” [DOC]

“Many children suffer from severe and persistent mental illness, and will need life-long care. But when they turn 18, to get adequate care as adults, they must have really severe mental health problems. The bar is raised for them, and the kids are left literally without any resources. We see these kids getting sicker and sicker. They’ll sometimes end up committing an illegal act, and they’ll end up in the Corrections system. The last therapeutic place to treat mental health is in a prison. It flies in the face of what we know.” [Advocate]

“The community is not all that welcoming to released inmates with serious and persistent mental illness.” [PO]

## **Recommendations**

“The way that we treat people with mental health needs to be therapeutic and not punitive.” [Advocate]

“Mentally disabled inmates in jail have got to be the most vulnerable citizens. But for the grace of God, this could be any of us. Those in the State Hospital have at least a lot of support, compared to the disabled inmates in jail, because nobody cares about them, except for some of their family members.” [Advocate]

“There needs to be a suicide-safe cell anywhere.” [Advocate]

“You need training for correctional officers on mental health issues.” [Advocate]

“DOC should see us as a partner. We want to see better treatment of inmates. Mental health and DOC don’t have to be adversarial. We want to work together with them.” [Advocate]

“DOC has spent at least a couple million dollars of taxpayer dollars on legal fees related to mental health conditions because of errors that DOC has made. We’re just asking them to do what they’ve said on paper that they’re doing. The cost of settling one lawsuit is the cost of fixing most of these problems [regarding mental health and incarceration].” [Advocate]

“Set a day or two aside for hearings of mental health in the House Corrections Committee.” [Advocate]

“Have the Legislature follow up and ensure that rules are being complied with to protect mentally disabled inmates. The Legislature is allowing the executive branch to monitor itself. Without Legislative oversight, these programs will melt like butter in July. Let’s build it into a system that works. Not a 6-month project that ends. For \$100,000, you can have an outside person monitor facilities for mental health compliance. That would solve 80% of the problems.” [Advocate]

What they said about...  
**...Drugs & Alcohol**

**Situation**

“Drug dealers make contacts in jails. They come in off the street on purpose for the sole purpose of dealing drugs. Drugs are blatantly thrown over the fence.” [CO]

“Why stick someone in jail for being an alcoholic?” [Inmate]

“Drugs have always been a big problem in prison.” [CO]

“I’m in jail because my wife’s boyfriend stole my cocaine and I stuck a gun in his mouth.” [Inmate]

“I’m not violent if I’m not high. But I’m addicted to heroin, and am in jail for domestic assault. I tried to get into a drug program, but the judge sent me to jail instead.” [Inmate]

“Some women say that jail saved their lives. They often come from abusive situations. They want to get better so that they can go back to using and prostituting. They come in for the winter and the doctor’s check-ups. They get their eyes checked. They gain weight. And then they can go back on the outside and shoot up again.” [CO]

“There’s too many strings attached. It’s so stressful. I got nailed for a half-ounce of pot and three pills, and I got [sentenced to] zero-to-3½ years. I went on escape because things got too stressful. I got put in Delta Unit One for throwing a garbage can and putting up my arms to an officer. I got a bit out of control. Before I was put in jail, I was an out-patient at St. Albans for heroin.” [Inmate]

“It varies from county to county which drug rehabilitation programs are available.” [Court]

“I’d be shocked if even five people were in jail in Vermont just for marijuana possession.” [Court]

“Residential treatment is atrocious in this state. Just 14 to 21 days isn’t enough. Many of the people I work with are on opiates. They come to us with a laundry list of things to do. It’s hard to go to counseling, keep a job, and comply with restrictions when you’re addicted. We used to be able to send people to good programs out-of-state, but now we’re not allowed to do that.” [PO]

## Causes

“We’re treating addiction with jail terms.” [Inmate]

“There’s a zero tolerance for people with addictions. The state is using prison to deal with that. People get arrested, get probation, and relapse, so they’re sent to prison because in part, there’s no drug treatment programs.” [DOC]

“When we decide how long of a sentence to aim for, we talk to DOC to see how long they need so that an offender can be put into treatment.” [Court]

“There’s never been enough drug treatment dollars in Vermont.” [Court]

“[When releasing offenders back into society] we’re putting them into situations where everyone around them is using [drugs]. They’re set up to fail.” [PO]

## Recommendations

“Drug Court should evolve slowly, methodically, carefully, and appropriately. It cannot be forced on participants or judges. The state’s attorneys and the defenders have to be willing to provide the time to do this. Drug Court saves the DOC money, without question. There’s hasn’t been a lot of cost-benefit analysis done. The most recent ones have shown that it saves AHS and DOC and other service providers. Drug courts are a clear alternative to incarceration that saves money. In Vermont, Drug Courts are brand new and need to be systematized.” [Court]

“We should contract with ADAP [Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs] to provide services, rather than it being done under the Department of Corrections.” [Court]

“Make programming mandatory. You can lead a horse to water, and eventually the horse may get thirsty.” [CO]

“Introduction of anything over our fences should be made illegal.” [DOC]

“Invest in more community-based programs to treat victims of trauma and abuse, and drug addicts. Otherwise, we get ‘em.” [PO]

What they said about...  
**...Sex Offenders**

**Situation**

“Our sex offender treatment programs are among the best in the country, and they’re working quite well.” [Advocate]

“Many other states are trying to copy [the sexual offender treatment programs] in Vermont.” [CO]

“Murderers and sex offenders are the least high-maintenance prisoners.” [CO]

“In this unit here for sex offenders, we have nice things. It’s because the peer pressure in this unit is to make sure that life here is orderly. That comes from the prisoners. We have nice walls. It’s clean here. We even have a fan. If you put the same fan in another unit, it’d get torn up, just to raise hell. They have a different way of dealing with things there. There, it’s all peer pressure, too. You put a prisoner here, he’s set up to succeed. There, he’s set up to fail.” [CO]

“There used to be specialized caseloads regarding sex offenders release into society. Now there is some specialized and some geographic community supervision. I hear that DOC’s policy is different in different places.” [Advocate]

“Sexual offenders can’t get out. No one will take them. As soon as you tell a landlord that he’s a sex offender, they hang up the phone.” [CO]

What they said about...  
**...Other Issues**

“I’m not speaking to you. We’ve had people come in and speak to us before and then nothing happened. What’s the point? No one cares.” [Inmate]

“I want a speedy trial. I’ve been here 27 days waiting for a trial. I can’t afford bail.” [Inmate]

“In two years since Springfield’s been open, we had three inmates die in prison because of poor medical conditions.” [CO]

“There are many established gangs in the facilities. They’re flourishing. We’re seeing an increase in recruiting into the Aryan Brotherhood in Newport [at the Northern State Correctional Facility]. AB is the biggest one.” [CO]

“Corrections, law enforcement and prosecutors are partners. And there’s not a lot of trust there between any of them.” [Court]

“We need a new criminal code. We still have bigotry on the books as a crime. Most states have developed a model criminal code or penal code. That would provide more fairness. Judges have too much discretion. Over 90% of crimes are plea-ed and judges basically rubber-stamp them.” [DOC]

“Think of Corrections as an outcome measure for education and human services.” [DOC]

“It’s important to understand that Corrections is a lag phenomenon. Things that Legislators do don’t affect us for years to come.” [DOC]

“If you stick people in a cell long enough, they go crazy.” [CO]

“Are we spending our dollars well?” [DOC]

# DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS VISION STATEMENT

## Vision

To be valued by the citizens of Vermont  
as a partner in the prevention, research, control  
and treatment of criminal behavior

## Mission

In partnership with the community, we support safe communities by providing leadership in crime prevention, repairing the harm done, addressing the needs of crime victims, ensuring offender accountability for criminal acts and managing the risk posed by offenders.

This is accomplished through a commitment to quality services and continuous improvement while respecting diversity, legal rights, human dignity and productivity.

## Values

Responsibility, Commitment, Integrity,  
Judgment, Creativity, Enthusiasm, Compassion

## Principles

### We believe:

That people can change.  
That community participation and support are essential for the successful delivery of correctional services.  
In the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals.  
In treating people with respect and dignity.  
In teamwork and the process of continuous improvement.  
In professional self-improvement.  
In the placement of offenders in the least restrictive environment consistent with public safety and offense severity.  
In fairness throughout all decision making.  
In respect for the liberty interest, rights and entitlements of the individual.  
In individual empowerment.  
In non-violent conflict resolution.  
In maintaining a safe and secure environment.  
In the value of individual, cultural and racial diversity.  
That victims have the right to have an active role in determining how their needs can best be met.  
That offenders are responsible, to the extent possible, to repair harm done to victims and the community.