

## Timothy Johnson

Founder and President, Orlando Serve Foundation



Tim Johnson is the senior pastor of Orlando World Outreach Center, a multi-cultural, multi-generational Christian church whose goal is to reach the people in the Orlando area for Christ, connect them to God and to one another, and then equip them to serve their local community.

An ordained minister, Johnson was inspired to launch Orlando World Outreach Center while serving as senior pastor of a large multicultural, multi-congregational church, Bethel World Outreach Church in Nashville, Tenn. He, along with the elders, oversaw the business and spiritual growth of the church. They led, supervised, ministered and equipped both the church staff and the lay leaders to fulfill the vision of the church.

Tim Johnson's history has given him invaluable experience in pioneering innovative discipleship-based ministries, church planting operations, and leading a thriving congregation.

His passion for seeing communities transformed can be witnessed throughout Johnson's life. During his time in the NFL, Johnson co-sponsored and led football clinics for communities in Washington, DC and in his hometown of Sarasota, Fla. In 1993, he co-founded the Good Samaritan Foundation along with long-time friends Art Monk, Charles Mann and Ernest Byner. The Good Samaritan Foundation established the Student Training Opportunity Program.

After retiring from the NFL, Johnson served as President of the Youth Life Learning Center in Nashville, Tenn. His ties to the NFL remained, as Johnson was the chaplain for the New Orleans Saints from 2005 to 2008.

Johnson's strong desire to build better communities has been passed on and is shared by his congregants. Partnerships with local homeless shelters and homeless support organizations, adopting a local underserved school, football clinics, and city cleanup projects have made a huge impact on the City of Orlando.

Most recently, Johnson founded the Orlando Serve Foundation, which is designed to be a bridge between those in need and the resources available to assist them. On Easter 2016, Orlando Serve Foundation launched the initiative He Got Up, a celebration service and resource fair. Between 2016 and 2017, about 15,000 individuals either volunteered or participated and received much-needed help.

**Tim Johnson - Founder, President**  
**Orlando Serve Foundation**  
**Transitioning from Institutions**  
**April 20, 2020**

**Vision & Mission:**

Orlando Serve Foundation's vision and mission are Loving, Healing, Restoring, Transforming, Sharing Eternal Hope – Connecting communities and resources to provide systems of care to individuals and families in need in Central Florida.

**History:**

We began in 2016 by hosting an annual event called He Got Up! at Orlando's Camping World stadium for the homeless, veterans, working poor and any one in need in our community which brought together some 120 organizations offering their services including free showers, hygiene kits, haircuts, clothing, shoes, accessories, food, various medical screening and services, education and employment opportunities, and legal assistance with unpaid court costs, fees and fines. We served thousands of individuals from Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. Encouraged by our success and armed with lessons learned, we repeated the first in event in 2017 and boasted comparable success.

**Evolving and Narrowing:**

We identified the greatest need of our guests was within the legal services domain, assisting those with suspended driver's licenses by providing them a pathway to restoration through agreements with the Clerk's office and Chief Judge.

The logistics, cost and manpower of hosting these events surpassed the financial resources and size constraints of our foundation. After two Camping World events, we took the events to smaller, local community centers within Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, focused primarily on the legal services, and invited community partners to attend so they could offer their services as well.

In 2018 we identified an opportunity to expand the scope of our legal services by developing a partnership with the Orange County Jail. Through our pilot He Got Up ID Assistance program, we assisted qualifying, short-term inmates obtain valid identification with the goal of increasing their likelihood of success upon re-entry and transitioning into the community with less difficulty. In spite of its success, because of limited resources, we are no longer able to offer this service.

**Program Description:**

Our 'He Got Up!' brand is well known and respected within the communities we serve. We create a compelling environment for our event guests and volunteers at each of the Community Centers that hosts our events. Guests register to determine their eligibility to restore their suspended driver's licenses due to unpaid court costs, fees or fines.

If eligible, they sign up for a reduced-cost payment plan that removes them from collections. The plan considers their ability to pay and offers lower minimum payments than typical. Depending on the county, they will see the Clerk at the event or at the Courthouse the following week. Alternatively, in Orange County, guests can sign up to perform community service hours in lieu of payment. In this case, they register at the event with the Department of Corrections and then see a judge in the weeks

following to have the community service ordered. Upon sign-up for either plan, the suspension from the guest's driver's license is removed, and if they honor their payment plan or community service agreement, their license remains valid.

Lunch and snacks are provided for all guests and volunteers.

**Community Partners:**

Many agencies participate at our events to offer their services. Examples of these are the Department of Health who provides vaccines and screening for hepatitis, 4C Childcare, Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance providers, Orange County Family Services, Voter's Registration, Catholic Charities, ACLU and various local non-profits.

One of our original community partners is a 7th grade student, who has for four years, collected and distributed thousands of pairs of shoes at our events. Bounce houses and in some cases, childcare, are available at the events.

Students from FAMU and Barry Law schools and members of the Legal Aid Society offer a 'Know Your Rights & Responsibilities' seminar.

Prayer is available to those who wish to receive it.

**Program Impact:**

Our success is largely driven by a devoted base of volunteers who are passionate about our cause.

Each event has a ratio of approximately one volunteer for every five guests. We average 100 volunteers per event and had over 2,800 volunteer hours in 2019.

In 2018, we held six events in Orange County and one event in Osceola County, serving 2,267 individuals.

Each event was from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In 2019, we scaled back to four events in a more compressed timeframe (two in Orange County, one in Osceola County and one in Seminole County from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)

Even with fewer events, we served almost as many, if not more individuals, per event location than in the previous year.

The total of individuals served in 2019 was 1,691.

**Key Sponsors:**

We have a number of supporters who have remained with us from the inception of our Foundation and the first He Got Up event. The Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints who provide food and a large volunteer base for each of our events. Frito Lay and Pepsi provide snacks and beverages. The City of Orlando, Osceola County Human Services and Harvest Time International provide facilities for each of our events. FAMU and Barry Law School, Legal Aid Society provide legal counsel and education on legal issues.

**Primary Areas of Focus:**

As stated in our vision – we distinguish ourselves from others by serving in a manner that is loving and healing, with the goal of restoring and transforming our communities through believing and sharing eternal hope.

As a byproduct, through our events and our focus on compassionate restorative social justice, we are influencing change within the criminal justice system, improving the community relations with law enforcement, and helping to lift people out of poverty by facilitating the process of them getting their driver's licenses restored so they can get back to work.

**Approach:**

Maintaining and expanding relationships with all the partners mentioned are critical to our success and one our key strengths.

Because we have a large volunteer base, it's important to us to create a compelling environment that has a meaningful and personal touch and efficient process.

Leveraging these partnerships and brand reputation has led to our partners advocating for what we do in the community. Leaders of each of Orlando's community centers distribute flyers, and even walk through the neighborhoods to ensure pre-event awareness.

We have seen an increase in our influence to see change in the criminal justice system from just being perceived as punitive to become more restorative. To that end, the City of Orlando has recognized our model as one to leverage in their own community and homeless court initiatives. We stay engaged in matters of importance to the community, looking for opportunities to join forces with and support other like-minded organizations when possible.

At the end of each event year, we host a volunteer appreciation luncheon, where we honor and celebrate our volunteers share the results of our work, and rally support for the following year.

**Program Demographics:**

80% of those we serve are African American, which is driven by the community centers that have been chose for the events. Our guests range in age from 18-75 years, and 60% are male.

**Goals and Objectives:**

We want to increase our reach within and beyond the tri-county area of Central Florida. Demand for this type of assistance in other neighboring counties is high. Clerks of Court from Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties each manage their processes differently. We would like to host a summit between the clerks from these counties to discuss process variances and identify best practices. Insights we gain can be leveraged to appeal to other counties to join in our efforts. To start with, we would look at onboarding one additional county.

We will increase our events from four to eight, going into two new cities within Orange County (Apopka and Bithlo), and offer one more event each in Seminole and Osceola counties.

We would like to analyze the customer journey experience to identify issues that the average guest faces before, during and after our event. Based on our learning, this might look like following-up with individuals to ensure they remain accountable to their commitments or by offering them scholarships for reduced cost car insurance. Support to our guests beyond the event date will likely reduce recidivism.

We need to gain additional insights to show post-event follow-through to determine how many people complete the payment plan and/or community service plans for which they register. For this reason, it is important for us to invest in resources that can assist in analyzing the data we collect and maintain about our guests, who can advise on what other data might be beneficial to collect, and the best way to go about collecting it.

Finally, we would like to obtain more sophisticated tools to collect and manage data so that it can be harnessed more efficiently and effectively. This will enable us to better identify and serve the needs of our community and make data-driven decisions.

### **Recommendations:**

As it relates to the need of serving individuals as they make an often difficult transition from jail to mainstream society, Orlando Serve Foundation has both experience and recommendations to offer, and requests consideration for funding to fully expand the pilot program initiated with Orange County Jail.

The fully implemented Jail Program would exist to assist inmates, work release and probation-supervised individuals meeting the criteria to obtain the necessary documentation to get a driver's license or valid identification by providing provisions to fund the following 4-part program:

#### **Part 1 - Pre-Release Orientations:**

ID Assistance Teams who will serve at the monthly pre-release orientations for inmates soon to be released.

- Inmates will be provided flyers of the upcoming He Got Up Events in the respective Community Centers so they can attend to receive services offered by community partners.
- Inmates will be educated, screened and scheduled for Court hearings if appropriate to have their court costs, fees and fines converted into Community Service hours, to establish a new payment plan with the Clerk, or to be retrieved from a collection agency.

#### **Part 2 - ID Assistance for Trustee Population:**

ID Assistance Teams will offer to inmates individual services to obtain Social Security cards, birth certificates and other relevant documents required to obtain a valid Florida ID or driver's license.

- Inmates should be screened according to the following eligibility criteria:
  - Must be sentenced to a minimum of 60 days or have a consecutive Probation sentence
  - Must be non-real ID compliant according to DMV requirements
  - Must be missing documents such as Social Security card or birth certificate
  - Must have knowledge of their birth place, parents' names
  - Must reside in Orange County, FL upon release
  - Must express willingness and motivation of following up on referrals upon release

### **Part 3 - Court Hearings For Court Cost, Fees & Fine Conversion, New Payment Plans & Retrieval From Collection Agencies:**

- Eligible sentenced inmates must have cases from Orange County
- Eligible inmates will attend a court hearing in the BRC to be held quarterly. At the hearings the court will address the conversion of court cost, fees or fines into Alternative Community Services hours, retrieval from collection agencies and new payment plans.

### **Part 4 - Community and Work Release Program Supervised Offenders**

Offenders under supervision who have had their license suspended because of non-payment of fines, fees and court costs, or who have defaulted on collections court and been transferred to a collections agency, will be extended the opportunity to attend a community event where they will be screened and registered for a court date as appropriate.

Funding resources necessary to administer and build out the He Got Up ID Assistance program will unite Central Florida by bridging the divide in our communities through compassionate restorative justice. Inmates will transition into the community more effectively when provided the necessary documentation required to obtain housing, employment and driving privileges upon release, thereby reducing the likelihood of recidivism and dependence on government assistance.

We recommend allocating funds annually to expand both our He Got Up Event and ID Assistance programs into additional counties within the Central Florida region. Our best-practices in leveraging relationships across a broad spectrum of community, government, and faith-based entities is repeatable given the proper financial resources which include:

- An Executive Director and two full-time support staff members
- Technology hardware and software to manage information about our guests throughout the program

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony of experience with Orlando Serve Foundation and our He Got Up programs, and for considering these recommendations. We appeal to you to provide the funds necessary to expand our model of success throughout Central Florida, a community that is in much need of compassionate, restorative justice. Your investment will go a long way to rebuild broken lives as they transition from hopelessness to hopefulness.

## Jay Sanders

Assistant Commissioner, Inmate Services Georgia Department of Corrections



Jay Sanders was appointed to Assistant Commissioner of Inmate Services in November 2016. Mr. Sanders oversees academic and vocational education, chaplaincy, risk reduction, and transitional services. Prior to this position, he served as the Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Transition Support and Reentry.

Mr. Sanders began his career with the Department in 1992 as a Probation Officer. He served in several capacities to include Regional Training Coordinator, Hearing Officer, Public Safety Training Instructor, and Special Assistant to the Director of Probation Operations.

In 2013, he was appointed by Governor Deal to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and the Juvenile Justice Statewide Advisory Group in 2015 due to his knowledge of the criminal justice processes in Georgia.

Mr. Sanders is a POST certified Master Instructor with certifications in Firearms and Defensive Tactics. He has a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Pensacola Christian College and a Master's Degree in Social Administration from Georgia Southwestern State University. He lives with his wife and two sons in the Central Georgia area.

Georgia Department of Corrections  
Jay Sanders, Assistant Commissioner  
Reentry and Recidivism Reduction Hearing  
Submitted April 24, 2020

## Overview

In 2009, The PEW Center on the States released their *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections* Report which showed the national average of incarceration or community supervision was one in thirty-one individuals. Georgia had the dubious distinction of leading the nation in the report with one in thirteen under supervision. This means we have a large prison population that will ultimately return to the community under some form of supervision.

Georgia System Overview:

- 8<sup>th</sup> largest state in the nation with 10.6 million residents
- 4<sup>th</sup> in overall prison population
- Current prison population is 54,446
  - Additional 3,000+ in probation alternatives
  - 9,376 life sentences (7,788 with parole; 1,588 without parole)
  - 70% of inmates are currently incarcerated for violent/sexual offense
  - FY19 admissions 17,693
  - FY19 releases 18,030
- \$1.2 billion budget
- Over 11,000 employees with 7,000 correctional officers
- 90+ facilities

## Problem

Most inmates in state prisons will be released one day, and they are returning to our communities. We as criminal justice agencies, and as a society, must prepare them to live and work in our communities and abide by our norms. This is very difficult to accomplish and takes everyone working together to make individuals successful. “According to the National Institute of Justice, almost 44% of criminals released return before the end of their first year out of prison. In 2005, about 68% of 405,000 prisoners that were released were arrested for a new crime within three years, and 77% were arrested within five years.”<sup>1</sup>

Recidivism rates in Georgia currently hover around 27%, down from the almost 40% of the late 80s and early 90s during the “Get Tough on Crime” era. Several measures have been undertaken recently to reduce our recidivism numbers even further and to improve the chance for success for those releasing from our custody.

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown. “Recidivism Rates by State 2020”, WorldPopulationReview.com, 4 Apr. 2020, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/recidivism-rates-by-state/>



We know that there are several factors that may influence whether a person may return to prison. Those factors, to name a few, are personal issues, economics, lifestyle, and thinking patterns. Research has shown that “to reduce recidivism, communities need to consider factors such as the threat of homelessness, mental health services, substance abuse programs, adequate health care, education and employment assistance, and family support. In addition, female inmates may need programs and services that are different from male inmates.”<sup>2</sup>

The 2009 PEW report, along with a number of other factors, led the State of Georgia to take a comprehensive introspective look at our criminal justice system. The Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform was formed in 2011 and spearheaded this effort at the state level. Initially they found that between 1990 and 2011 our prison population doubled to 56,000 inmates, pushing our prisons to 107% of their capacity. We had a recidivism rate of 30% despite falling rates of violent and property crimes, while twenty-five % of our annual admissions were first-time, low-level property and drug offenders. Corrections had a burgeoning annual budget of \$1.2 billion, and it would take an additional \$264 million to fund the growing population over the next five years. We simply had to do something to better the returns on our investment and improve recidivism rates for those leaving our custody.

To focus on reducing the recidivism rates in Georgia, several different approaches were undertaken. With the help of three Bureau of Justice Assistance Grants, we tackled reentry and recidivism head on. The Department of Corrections worked closely with the newly created Department of Community Supervision to implement these grants. There were several different areas that we chose to address with grant- and state-funded dollars that are outlined below.

### **Risk and Needs Assessment<sup>3</sup>**

Every individual that enters the Georgia prison system is assessed for their risk and needs using the Next Generation Assessment (NGA). The NGA is a proprietary assessment tool that was developed and normed on the Georgia prison population, as well as those released to community supervision. The NGA uses over 300 factors about the offender: legal, personal, medical, mental health, community supervision events, current and past diagnostic classification data as well as historical institutional events, to create a score both in risks and needs. Individuals are scored on three **risk** scales for rearrest within three years of prison release: (1) the arrest for a new crime within 3-years, (2) the arrest for a felony crime within 3-years, and (3) the arrest for a violent or sexual crime within 3-years.

For **needs**, the NGA uses Andrews and Bonta’s “Central 8” criminogenic needs of substance abuse, criminal thinking, peer associates/family stability, education, employment, mental health, and trauma. The scales used are gender specific and allow us to use programming for both male and female inmates.

The NGA is used to inform all programming and case management decisions inside the institution, as well as the initial re-entry/release plan. Once an individual’s needs are identified, they are enrolled in programming based the availability in the program within the system and their estimated date of release. Focusing on the highest risk and highest needs inmates allows the Department to spend scarce treatment funds on those who are most likely to return to prison.

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<sup>2</sup> Unknown. “Recidivism Rates”, California Innocence Project.org, 23 Apr. 2020, <https://californiainnocenceproject.org/issues-we-face/recidivism-rates/>

<sup>3</sup> Applied Research Services, Inc. “Description of Georgia’s Next Generation Assessment (NGA), 2014.

### **Evidence Based Programming**

To ensure the programming delivered within our facilities is the best and most appropriate based on an individual's assessed needs, we have moved to all evidence-based programming. For the Department to use a program, it must have been researched and proven to be effective in addressing the underlying needs of our inmates.

Our Department has designated two facilities as completely evidence-based facilities and has given them the appropriate programming and tools to make these facilities successful. In addition, we are utilizing and continue to refine a gang renunciation program at one of these facilities.

The Department closely watches the treatment effect that is gained when inmates complete programming within our facilities and are ultimately released to the outside. While our recidivism rate for the general population based on FY16 released is currently 27.6 %, recidivism rates for those that participated in cognitive programs is 24.3%, GED programs is 19%, and vocational programming is 18.6%. We have focused heavily in these areas that are proven to drive down the recidivism rates, and below is more information on the results.

### **Behavioral Programming and Educational Focus**

The goal of the Department is that every inmate identified with a behavioral health or cognitive need will be enrolled in and complete programming prior to their release. Due to the number of inmates in our system, we triage who attends programming and prioritize those with the highest risk and needs, factored with their anticipated release date, to determine when programming is most effective.

GDC has focused heavily on educating those being released from our institutions. Basic adult education-- in the form of Literacy and Remedial Reading (LRR) and Adult Basic Education (ABE)--is taught with the goal of an inmate obtaining their General Equivalency Diploma (GED) prior to their release. For those inmates that are age 17-25, we have worked with a local charter school system to provide high school education and diplomas at three of our facilities. Since FY15 we have successfully graduated almost 12,000 inmates with a GED and over 300 inmates with charter school diplomas.

Knowing that individuals who leave prison with a vocational or hands-on skill are less likely to recidivate, we have partnered with the Technical College System of Georgia to provide numerous training opportunities areas such as welding, diesel mechanics, HVAC, plumbing, culinary arts, and graphic design to name a few. We also have an extensive On the Job Training (OJT) program that teaches the correct way to perform various skills within a facility, such as sanitation, food service, etc., while receiving credit and hands- on training. Since FY15 we have had over 57,000 vocational, OJT, skills training, and post-secondary completions.

### **Reentry Assessment Centers (RAC)**

Each facility has a RAC that provides tools and support needed to access, inform, and connect the inmate with a plan for reentry during their final months of incarceration. Using Chromebooks and white-listed websites, the inmates access information on housing, transportation, and employment. They also prepare resumes, practice interviewing skills, and take job interest assessments.

## Reentry Documents

We know from research that those releasing back to our communities must be able to get on their feet quickly. It is up to us to prepare them for this reentry regardless of how long they have been incarcerated. To do this, we have focused our resources heavily on the personal identification and documents that are needed to reestablish one's self in the community.

The process begins with the **birth certificate**. Over the last several years, the Department has forged a relationship with the Georgia Department of Vital Records (GDVR) where all birth records are housed. Through memorandums of understanding and shared technology, our Department can access the GDVR data base to print official birth certificates for those inmates born in-state. These birth certificates can then be given to an inmate just prior to release. In FY19 we created over 12,000 birth certificates in house for inmates in our system. Since inception we have generated over 40,000 birth certificates.

The **Social Security card** is the next piece of the puzzle. Through an MOU with the Social Security Administration, our facility counselors apply for social security cards just prior to an individual's release so they will also have this very important document in hand.

With the birth certificate and social security card in hand, we have the necessary documents to pursue a **state driver's license or state identification card**. To do this we have established a relationship with the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS). The very important distinction is that this is not a departmental ID, but a state ID, just like an individual citizen would have. Last fiscal year we obtained 3,384 drivers' licenses and 5,381 state ID cards. Since inception we have issued over 20,000 driver's licenses or IDs.

There are several other documents an inmate may leave with upon release. One is a **Program Treatment Completion Certificate (PTCC)**. This is like a college transcript that shows all programming and work details they completed during their incarceration. The PTCC is available to certain inmates based on their offense and institutional behavior. They may also leave with other certificates of completion from behavioral or educational programming completed while serving their time.

All these documents are stored in a central repository and held until 180 days prior to release. At 180 days, their folders are pulled and delivered to the facility from which they will release. Approximately 75% of inmates that are released each year leave with a folder with some or all these documents in them. The only reason an inmate may not be able to get these documents is that they were born outside of Georgia and we are unable to obtain a birth certificate to begin the process. These documents play a vital role in allowing them to reestablish themselves in the community.

## Metro Reentry Facility

In 2018, the Department repurposed a closed prison to the Metro Reentry Facility. This facility currently houses 355 individuals and has taken a heavy programming and community-based approach to reentry for those releasing to the Atlanta Metro area. You have heard about this in the testimony from Metro Reentry Facility Warden Steven Perkins and I invite you to visit this facility if you are ever in the Atlanta area.

## **Housing**

Housing can be an issue sometimes for those that have burned bridges prior to prison and while incarcerated. Our Department, in conjunction with the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Community Supervision, utilize the Reentry Partnership Housing (RPH) Program. This program will provide up to 6 months of housing for those releasing with no where to live. This program has been very beneficial to those who simply have nowhere to go and provide programming and sustenance for the participants.

## **Health**

We strive to provide the highest level of physical and mental health care possible to those in our custody. When they are released with chronic conditions that require care and medications, we work with local community health care providers to ensure continuity of care. Depending on their needs they are released with anywhere from a 14 to 30-day supply of their medication.

Approximately 20% of our inmates have some form of mental health need. To address this growing population, we also strive to provide the best mental health care possible. We work closely with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, local Community Service Boards and the Department of Community Supervision to ensure that a warm hand off is done which includes an initial appointment and, at minimum, a 30-day supply of their medication.

## **Recommendations**

1. Additional funding and staff education devoted to ensuring that no inmate is released without having completed their prescribed behavioral and educational programming.
2. Additional funding and training to ensure there is a warm hand off from facility to physical and mental health providers in the community.
3. Additional funding and cooperative agreements be developed among state and federal agencies promoting the ability to provide the necessary personal identification and documents to individuals as they release.
4. Additional funding and programming be devoted to training and educating staff in the culture that is conducive to programming such as that which is delivered at Georgia's Metro Reentry Facility.

## **Attachment**

As an attachment I have submitted the Inmate Services Impact Report. This is a report that is legislatively mandated to be created each year and is submitted to the Governors Office, the Office of Planning and Budget as well as the State Legislature. It has much more information than I could deliver during this testimony about all we are doing to help inmates successfully transition back into society.



# Georgia Department of Corrections

## INMATE SERVICES IMPACT REPORT

Fiscal Year 2019

# GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



## MISSION

*The Georgia Department of Corrections protects the public by operating safe and secure facilities through the development of professional staff and effective offender management.*

## VISION

*We set the exceptional standard for protecting the public through our people, processes and infrastructure.*

## CORE VALUES

*Courage  
Determination  
Teamwork*

[www.gdc.ga.gov](http://www.gdc.ga.gov)



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**Timothy C. Ward**  
**Commissioner**

*On behalf of the entire team at the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC),* it is with great pleasure that I present to you the Georgia Department of Corrections' Impact Services report. This report highlights our progress toward effective offender management through education and evidence-based programming, implemented by our team of Inmate Services professionals.

GDC has continued to develop educational programs, job skills training, and evidence-based programs for offenders by cultivating partnerships with multiple agencies. In FY 19, our Academic Education Unit exceeded their goal by awarding more than 3,000 high school diplomas and equivalencies. In addition, our partnerships with outside agencies have contributed to the 161% increase in the Career, Technical, and Higher Education (CTHE) program enrollments, while successful program completions almost tripled in the last two years, from 6,090 to 18,659.

A structured, statewide offender mentoring program was deployed in FY 19 to allow for better selection of offender mentors. Through the process, offenders must apply, interview, complete seven to 14 week standardized training written by Central Georgia Technical College, and be evaluated annually for mentorship consideration. Upon completion of the training, offenders are equipped with developmental, interpersonal and facilitation skills which will provide them the tools necessary to train others on how to develop the skills needed to be successful during incarceration, as well as in society once released.

GDC Chaplaincy Services was successful in providing worship programs and pastoral counseling to offenders around the state. A new branch of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary program was established at Whitworth Women's Facility for the female inmate population in conjunction with Heartbound Ministries. It is a two-year program that grants graduates a degree in Christian Ministry.

In addition to offender focused programs, a new volunteer certification process was developed, allowing for greater efficiency, security, and functionality for individuals interested in volunteering within GDC facilities. Now, volunteers can complete and submit a secure application online prior to attending the required training class. More than 1,200 volunteers were certified and trained in FY 19.

Our agency is committed to providing effective offender management through offender education, and evidence-based programming. I am proud of the achievements our Inmate Services team has made this fiscal year, and I am looking forward to seeing them accomplish even more successes as we enter 2020 with a continued commitment to assisting offenders with successful reentry into their communities upon release.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy C. Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Timothy C. Ward, Commissioner



# **BENEFITS OF CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION**

# Benefits of Correctional Programming and Education

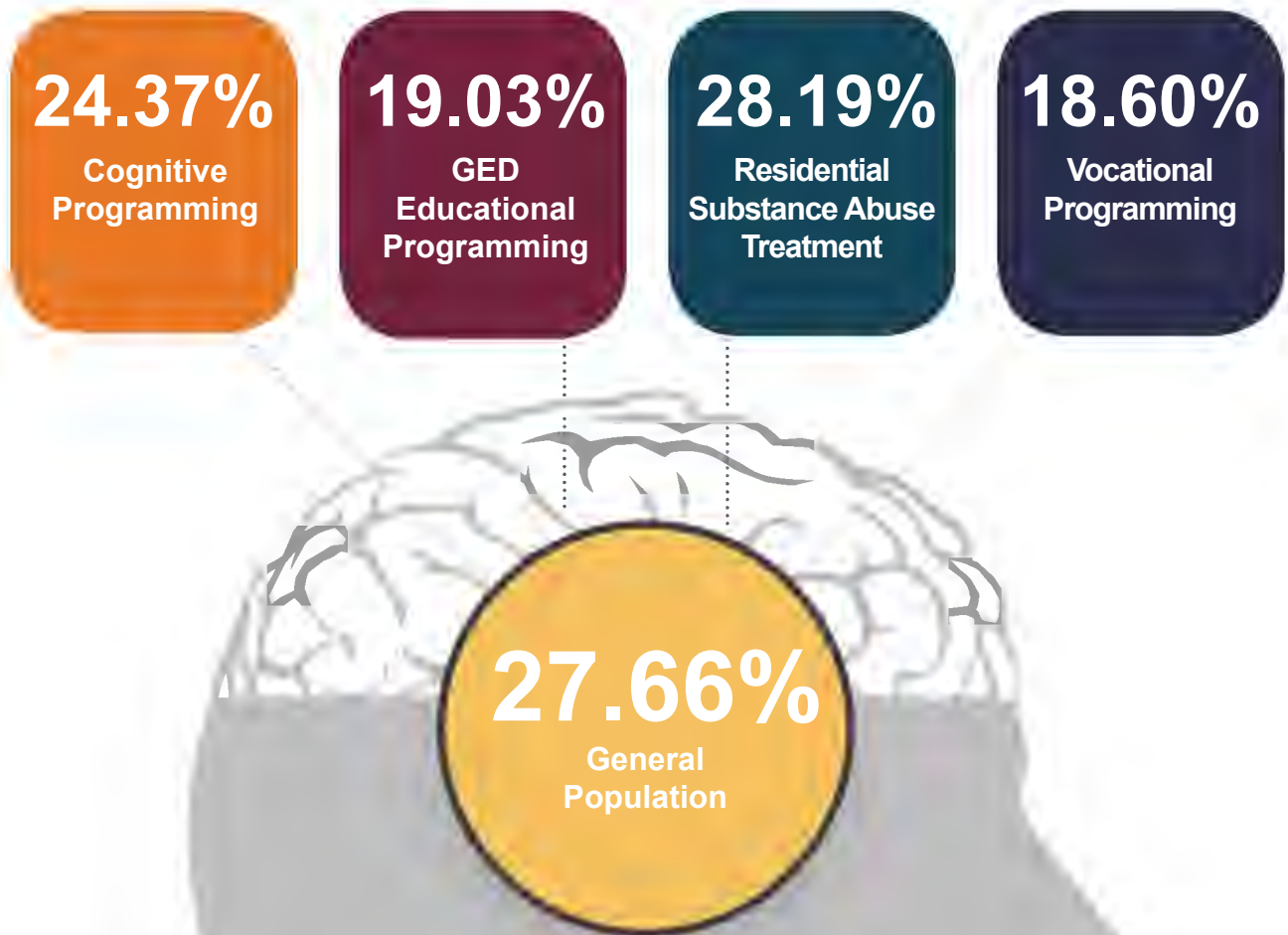
In 2014, the Rand Corporation and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) conducted a study entitled “How Effective is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here?”. Denise O’ Donnell, former BJA Director, stated “...the study shows that correctional education for incarcerated adults reduces the risk of post-release, re-incarceration by 13%, and does so cost-effectively, a savings of \$5 on re-incarceration cost for every dollar spent on correctional education.”

Overall, this study shows that the debate should no longer be about whether correctional education is effective or cost-effective, but on where the gaps in our knowledge are, and opportunities to move the field forward.

## TREATMENT EFFECTS FROM PROGRAMS

### Three-Year Felony Reconviction Rates for Program Completers vs. General Population

Based on FY 16 Releases

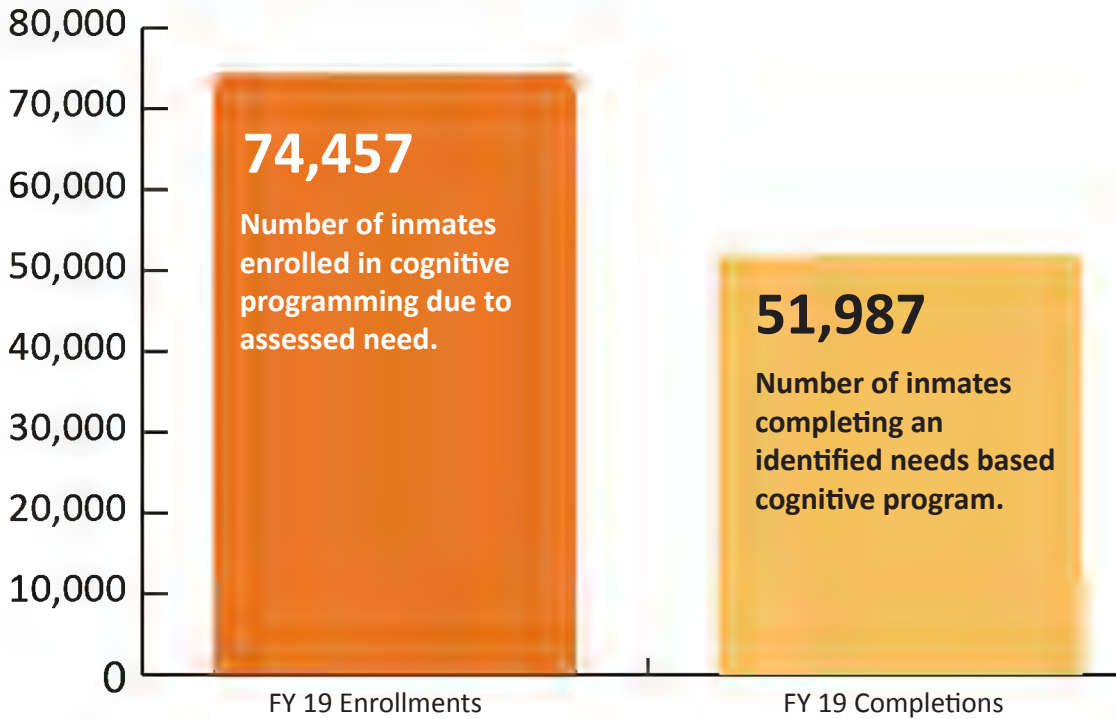


Three-year felony reconviction rates for inmates who have successfully completed GDC programming, versus the inmate population who did not participate in programs offered by GDC.

# RISK REDUCTION SERVICES

# Initial Correctional Counseling Training

Initial Correctional Counseling Training (ICCT) is a seven-day comprehensive training designed to introduce and provide entry level Counselors and Multi-Functional Officers (MFO) with basic knowledge and skills to better understand their responsibilities and the inmate population to whom they are providing services. During FY 19, 142 newly hired Counselors and MFOs completed this training, which is required, within 12 months of their hire date.



**Program Counselor Testimonial**

“ When inmates complete their case plan, they feel that they have accomplished a lot and are looking forward to more educational and program opportunities that will help them advance before their release. We are hopeful that our impact with programs will help the inmates become productive citizens in their communities when released and work towards a positive change while they are still serving their sentences. ”

**449**

Facility Site Visits  
conducted by Social Service  
Program Consultants

**38**

Audits

**40**

Regional Inspections





# Residential Substance Abuse Treatment

The Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program is mandated to reduce recidivism by providing research-based programs. GDC partners with federal, state and county agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations to provide these services. The GDC RSAT program is one of the largest in the country with almost 2,500 beds. RSAT implements evidence-based programs which target crime producing behavior and focus on changing criminal thinking and reducing actions associated with the criminal mindset.

## RSAT Program Overview

### RSAT Facilities

Bainbridge PSATC*	Lee Arrendale State Prison
Bleckley PSATC*	Northwest RSAT
Coastal State Prison	Paulding PSATC*
Coastal PSATC*	Pulaski State Prison
Johnson RSAT (A)	Turner RSAT
Johnson RSAT (B)	Valdosta State Prison

\*Probation Substance Abuse Treatment Center

- Evidenced based cognitive-behavioral curriculum
- Goal is to learn real-life ways to help live a pro-social, productive life free of alcohol, drugs, and crime
- All RSAT participants are housed separately from the general population
- Based on Modified Therapeutic Community Model

# 2,428

Capacity

# 3,313

Enrolled

# 9 months

Program Duration

# 3,409

Completions

# 92%

Completion Rate

# Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Development Unit

In support of the GDC's mission, the Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Development Unit (READ) strives to provide supportive services that enhance staff members' professional development and develop new methods to effectively manage inmates. Through a combination of support services, their roles in facility audits, regional inspections, program overrides, and the revamp of Transitional Center (TC) programming (Odyssey), the READ Unit continues to be proactive in risk reduction service delivery.

- R** - Research emerging trends and evidence-based correctional practices
- E** - Evaluate program effectiveness and support the needs of the staff in the field
- A** - Assess inmate programming for strengths and areas of improvement
- D** - Develop new inmate programs and training opportunities to enhance staff professional development

## Odyssey Program Development and Implementation

The Odyssey program was based on a Georgia Program Assessment Inventory conducted at each TC. Odyssey helps inmates focus on relevant life skills needed for successful transition back to their communities. The Odyssey program development and implementation included Process Action Team (PAT) meetings to discuss transitional center needs, staff training on the new program, as well as culture change training with staff in their use of effective communication skills. TC staff across 14 facilities were trained to facilitate the Odyssey program and have been a critical part of the program's success.

# 13

PAT  
Meetings  
Conducted

# 95

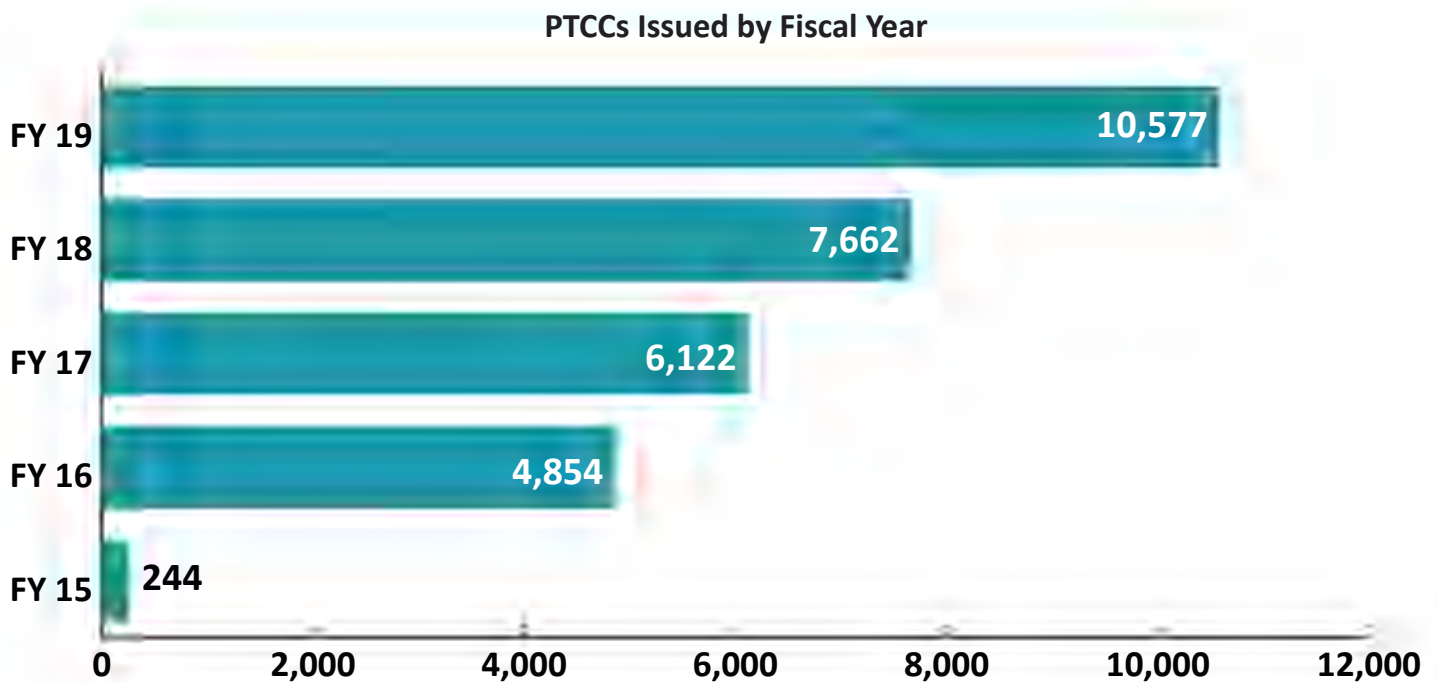
TC Staff  
Member  
Trained

# 1,547

Transitional Center  
Residents Completed

# Program Treatment Completion Certificate

The Program and Treatment Completion Certificate (PTCC) is a reentry tool issued to inmates who meet the established criteria. This certificate provides the inmates with a historical account of the accomplishments/programs they have completed while incarcerated. Upon their release, inmates are able to use the PTCC as a tool to highlight their programming accomplishments during their incarceration.



\*Per OCGA 42-2-5.2(c) – Not all inmates released are eligible to have a Program Treatment Completion Certificate awarded to them. An inmate who was convicted of a serious violent felony, as such term is defined in Code Section 17-10-6.1, is not eligible for a PTCC.



# TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

# Metro Reentry Facility

The Metro Reentry Facility (RF) opened in May 2018 and utilizes a comprehensive behavioral health and substance use curriculum to address the criminogenic needs of returning citizens. All returning citizens within the program are high-risk and high-need and receive a minimum of 20 hours of programming each week. The program is 12 months long and has four levels that prepare the returning citizens for successful reentry into the community. After returning citizens complete a level of the program, a graduation ceremony is held to congratulate them and continue to motivate the participants. The program utilizes mentors to assist with community meetings, family day events, peer-mentoring, groups, program organization, and more.



**355** Metro RF  
Returning Citizens

**Returning citizens will  
return to these five  
metropolitan counties**

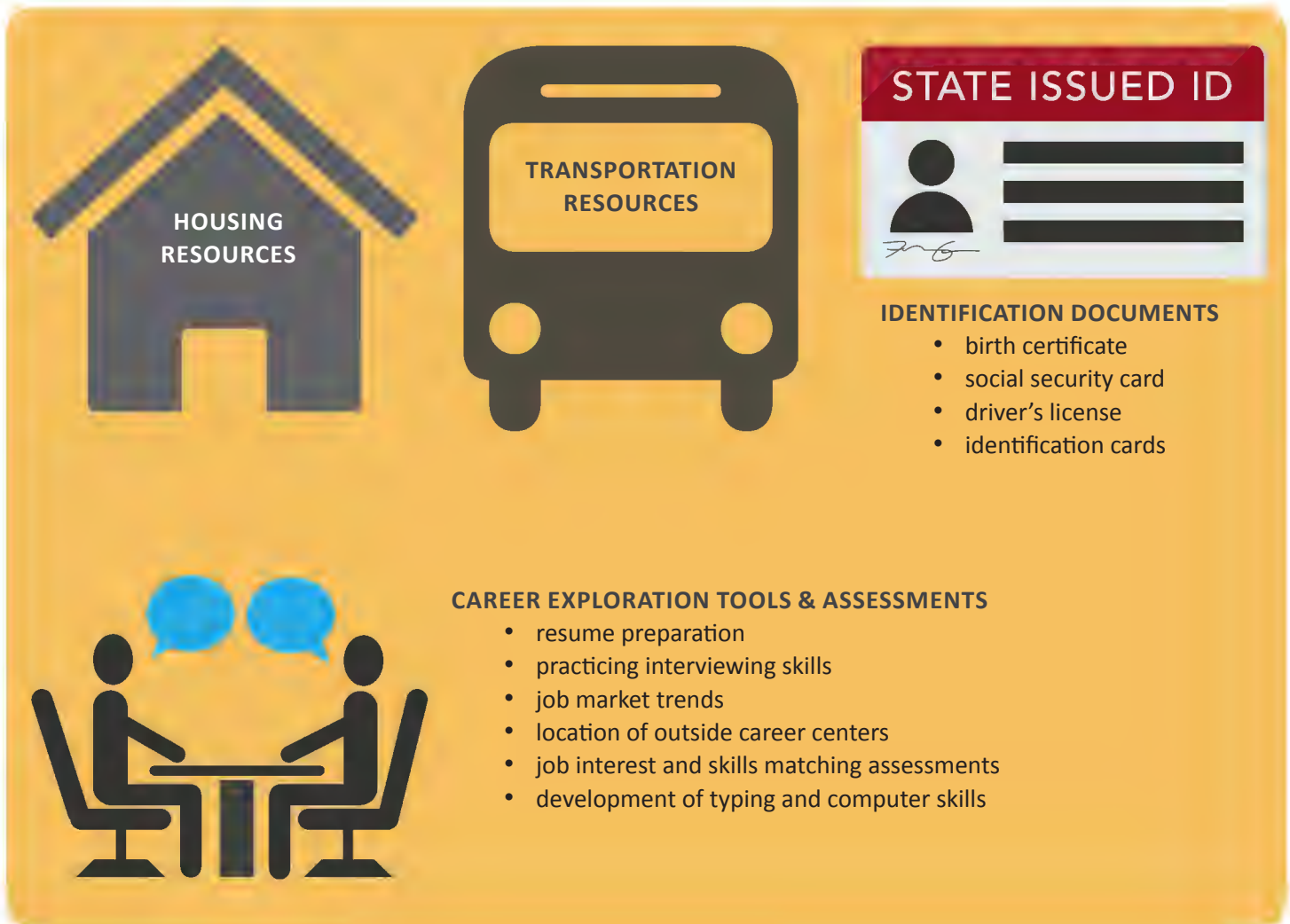


**Pictured: Returning citizen housed at MRF painting a mural of the iconic The Varsity restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia.**

# Reentry Assessment Center

Located within Georgia's prisons and Transitional Centers (TC), Reentry Assessment Centers (RAC), formerly known as Career Centers, provide tools and support needed to assess, inform, prepare, and connect the returning citizen with a solid plan of reentry during their final months of incarceration.

By providing relevant and up-to-date information and resources, peers guide and assist the returning citizen in building a solid reentry plan in the following areas:



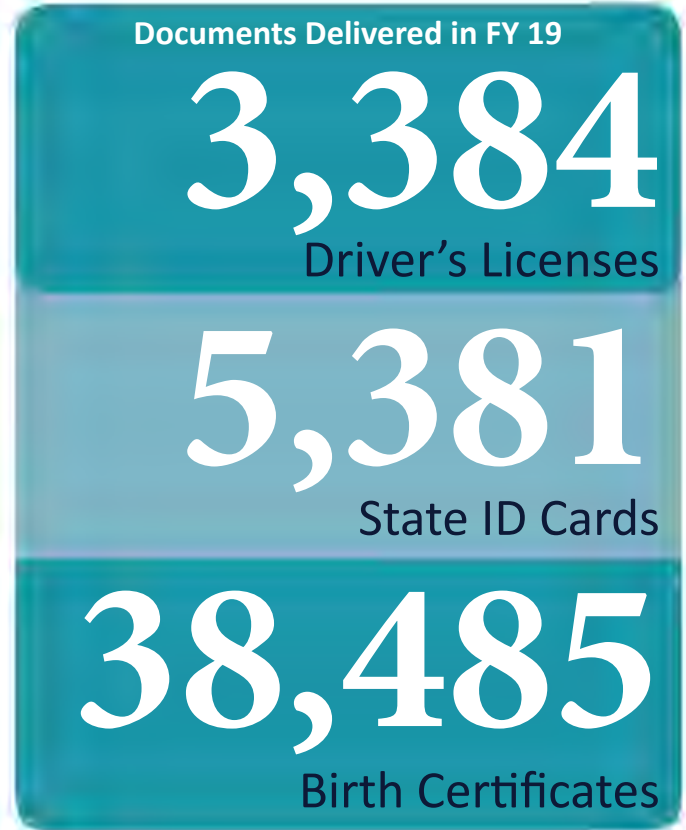
The infographic is set against a yellow background and features four distinct sections, each with an icon and a list of services:

- Housing Resources:** Represented by a house icon.
- Transportation Resources:** Represented by a bus icon.
- Identification Documents:** Represented by a 'STATE ISSUED ID' card icon. The list includes:
  - birth certificate
  - social security card
  - driver's license
  - identification cards
- Career Exploration Tools & Assessments:** Represented by an icon of two people sitting at a table with speech bubbles. The list includes:
  - resume preparation
  - practicing interviewing skills
  - job market trends
  - location of outside career centers
  - job interest and skills matching assessments
  - development of typing and computer skills

# Release Document Repository

The repository provides a secure location for GDC to collect and store reentry related documents vital to inmates at release such as Department of Driver Services (DDS) identification cards, driver’s licenses, and birth certificates. The documents are sent to the releasing facility 180 days before the inmate’s release. During FY 19, the repository staff delivered 12,822 packets containing these documents to facilities to be given to inmates.

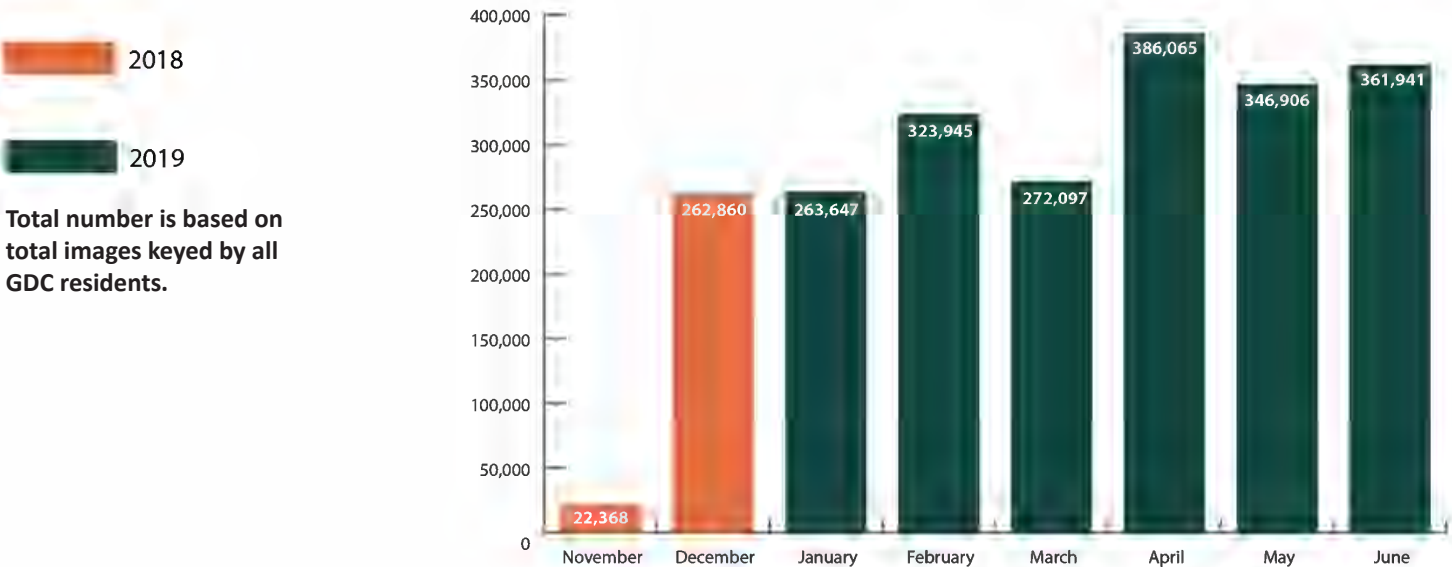
Since the process began in 2016, more than 23,200 identification cards or driver’s licenses have been issued. Annually, GDC’s TC facilitated an issuance of over 1,678 additional identification cards or driver’s licenses.



# Peach Pass Partnership

The GDC and the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) entered into an agreement to provide employment opportunities to returning citizens housed at Metro TC. The program was implemented in November 2018 and focused on image review for the Peach Pass Lanes. During FY 19, the program employed 10 returning citizens and reviewed almost 2 million images!

## Total Images Reviewed Per Month





# **VOLUNTEER AND CHAPLAINCY SERVICES**

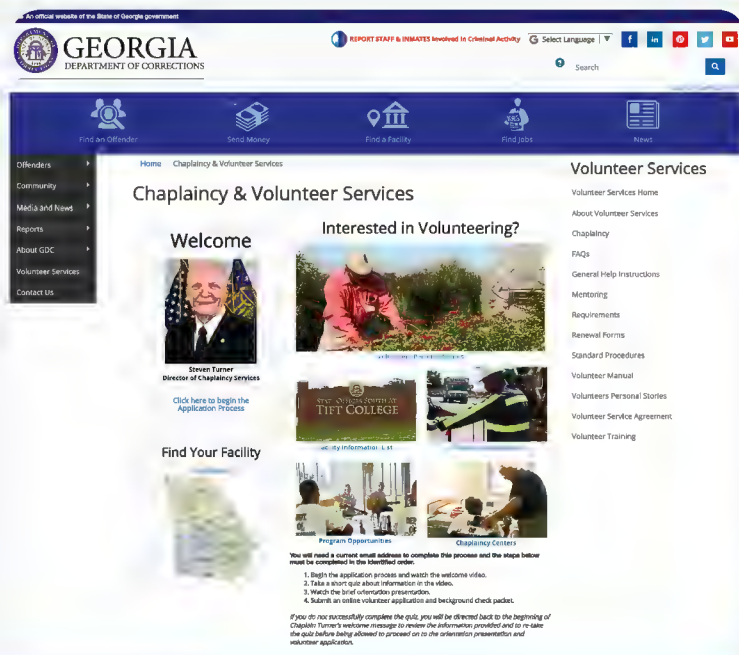
# Volunteer Services

Volunteer Services incorporates both religious and secular activities through, community stakeholders, concerned citizens, civic organizations, and business partnerships that support services presently offered and others not provided to inmates throughout all facilities by traditional agency programming. The goal for Volunteer Services is to educate the community on how to best support inmates as they transition back into their lives post-release.

Volunteer Services has over 9,200 trained volunteers to assist the inmates and returning citizens inside and outside correctional facilities statewide.

## Volunteer Services implemented changes to their Recruitment and Training Processes in FY 19.

- Website Improvements
- Standardized Training
- Developed Training Curriculum
- Updated Standard Operating Procedures
  - Data Collection
  - Documentation
  - Information Sharing
- Identifying Staffing Needs
  - Oversight and Accountability
- Developed an Implementation Plan



### GDC Volunteer Testimonial

“It was so easy to complete the application process at home, online. I am excited that I will get my ID today at training.”

# VOLUNTEER SERVICES

## AT-A-GLANCE



**1,283**

Volunteers trained  
in 21 training events  
during FY 19

Gideon  
Volunteers  
are utilized  
in Tier  
Facilities

**3,563**

monthly  
volunteers  
across the state

**8,211**

Inmates attend weekly  
volunteer services

**36,950**

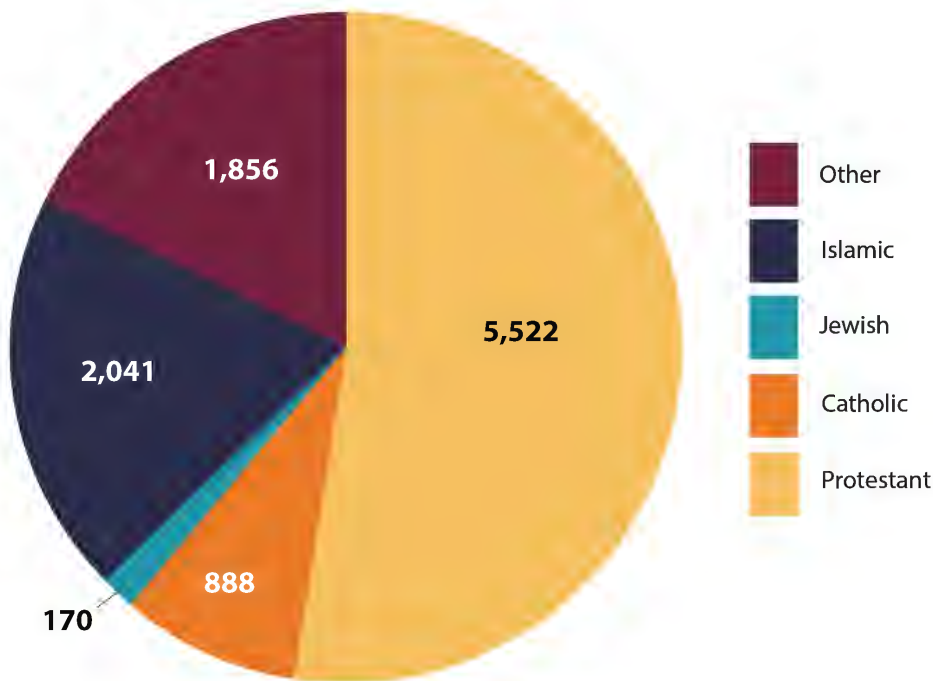
\*Inmates attend  
monthly services on  
an average basis

\*Cumulative totals - an individual may have  
attended service more than once in the same month

# Chaplaincy Services

The mission of the GDC Chaplaincy Services is to provide and facilitate access to pastoral care for inmates and staff as appropriate in order to promote and establish a community of peace, hope, safety, and mutual respect, and ensure inmates' First Amendment religious rights. Chaplaincy Services support the mission and vision of the agency through professional leadership providing pastoral care to inmates and staff on an individual and corporate basis.

## FY 19 Chaplaincy Services Offered



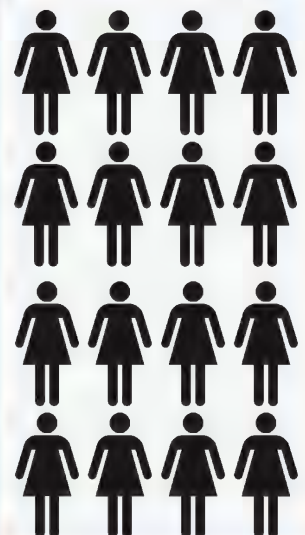
- Facilitating Worship
- Education
- Counseling
- Spiritual Direction
- Support
- Crisis Intervention



### GDC Chaplain Testimonial

“Working within the Chaplaincy Program at GDC has been an uplifting experience. Hearing about the offenders I helped that are now back at home with their loved ones and are model citizens, means I am doing something right.”

Since the inception of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) on January 15, 2019, 16 Female inmates have completed the 1st semester at Whitworth Womens Facility.





# ACADEMIC EDUCATION

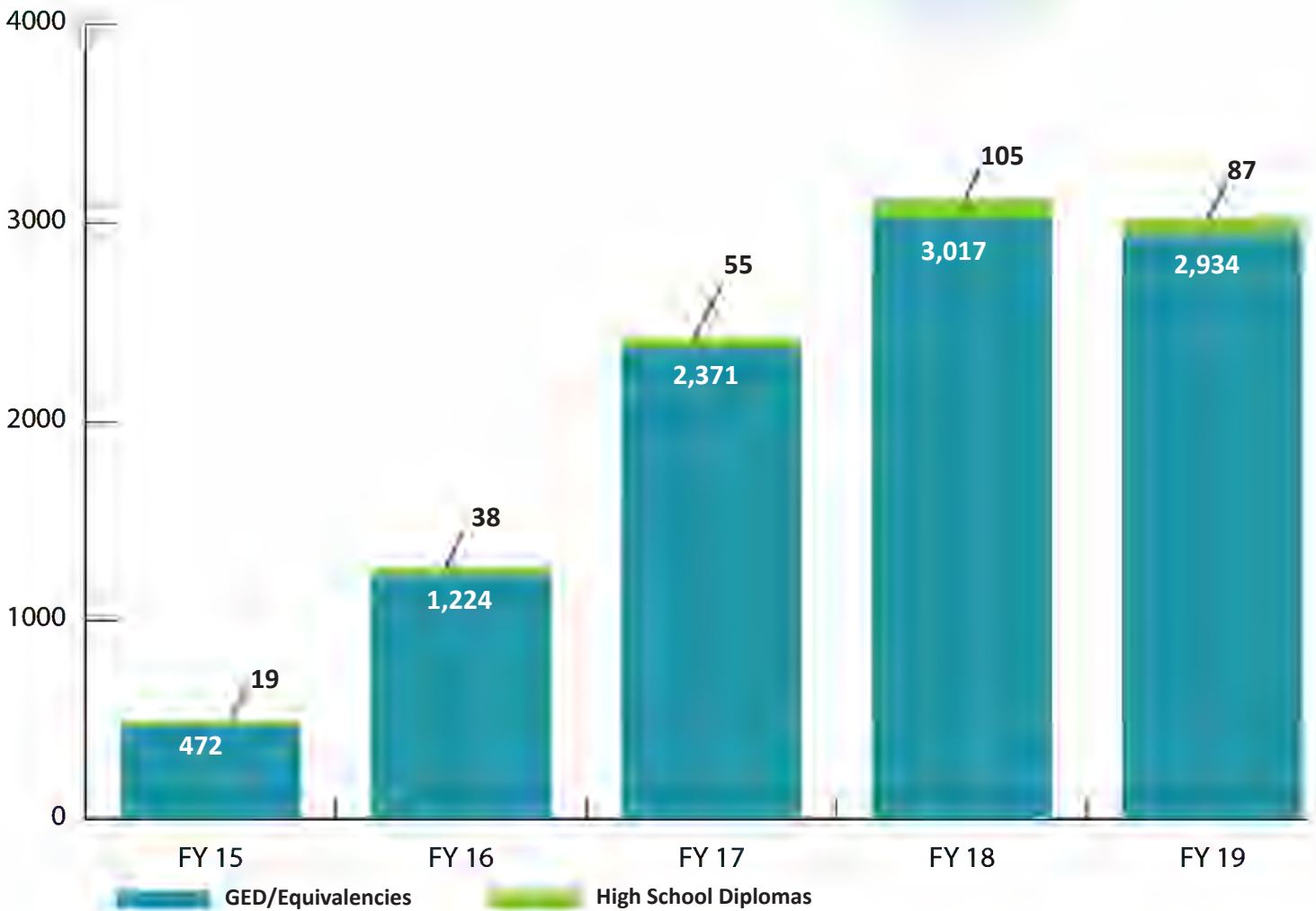
# Academic Education

# 3,021

 High School Equivalencies & Diplomas earned in FY 19

**DID YOU KNOW...**  
Since FY 15, inmates have earned 10,019 high school equivalencies and diplomas.

High School Equivalencies and Diplomas




# Special Populations Served

GDC works in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Education to ensure that students who are eligible for Special Education and/or Neglected and Delinquent Youth Services are served per federal mandate. Additionally, education staff provide education services to incarcerated individuals who are housed in the Tier Program.

## Special Populations who completed their high school equivalencies

<b>141</b>	<b>Neglected &amp; Delinquent Youth</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Special Education</b>
<b>43</b>	<b>Tier Program</b>



## Facilities earning 100+ GED completions

- Coastal State Prison
- Coffee Correctional Facility
- Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison
- Wheeler Correctional Facility
- Whitworth Women’s Facility

GDC recognizes the top academic performers each year. In FY 19, 33 facilities exceeded the education goals established. Additionally, five facilities earned over 100 General Education Diplomas (GEDs) at each site. The GDC education staff has worked diligently at achieving this benchmark.

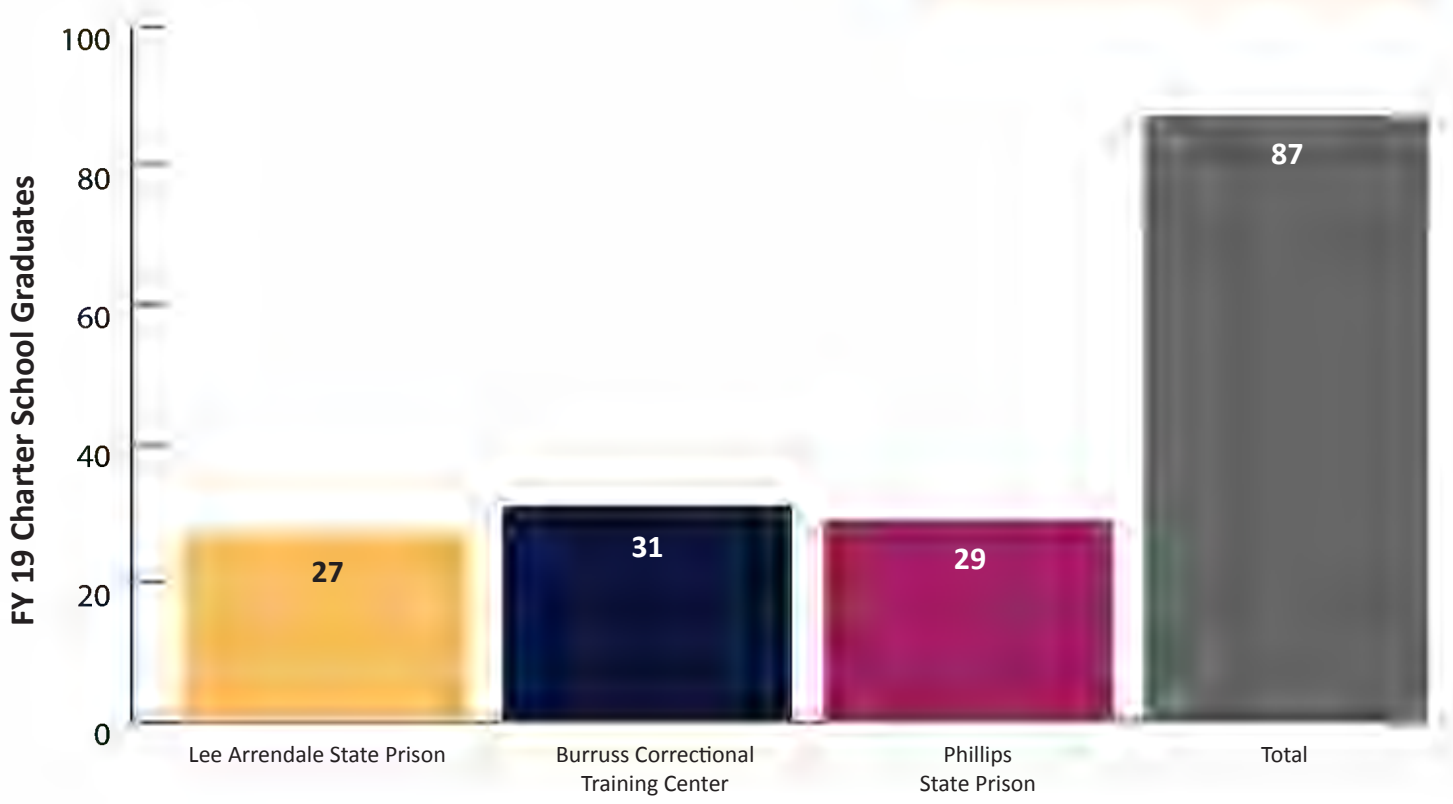
## Lifers who have successfully earned their GED or high school diploma for FY 19

	Life without Parole	Life with Parole	Total
Charter High School	0	4	4
GED	19	118	137
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>141</b>

# Foothills Charter High School

GDC began a partnership with Foothills Charter High School in July 2015. Charter schools offer high school diplomas to inmates ages 18 to 21.

**DID YOU KNOW...**  
 300 high school diplomas have been earned through our charter school partnership.



### Successful Academic Completions for FY 19

	County Correctional Institution	Private Prison	Probation Detention Center	RSAT Center	State Prison	Transitional Center	Total
Literacy/Remedial Reading	6	71	21	33	538	16	685
Adult Basic Education	69	391	112	44	1,789	78	2,483
GED Prep	213	358	155	171	2,447	138	3,482
GED Testing	239	348	210	188	1,884	65	2,934
Charter School	0	0	0	0	87	0	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>1,168</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>6,745</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>9,671</b>



# Library Services and Book Donations

GDC is engaged in a strong partnership with the Georgia Public Library System to allow inmates to check out books using the Pines System. Additionally, GDC librarians have received statewide training on Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) in order to provide accessibility to visually challenged inmates.

GDC Libraries continue to receive book donations from individuals and organizations around the state. This increase in donations has provided inmates with over 50% more library materials.



Pictured: Walker State Prison Library

# 35,000+

Books have been processed and placed in facility libraries



Pictured: Metro RF Library

# GDC Education Conference

The GDC Education Conference was held in Augusta, Georgia in August 2019. The conference was held in collaboration with Region VIII of the Correctional Education Association. Attendees represented correctional education agencies from eight states, including Georgia.



# 320

Registrants  
Attended



Pictured: GDC Education Conference



### GDC Teacher Testimonial

“The annual education conference refreshes my motivation and gives me new ideas for teaching my students every year! I appreciate the focus on all areas of teaching in corrections from security to instructional methods.”

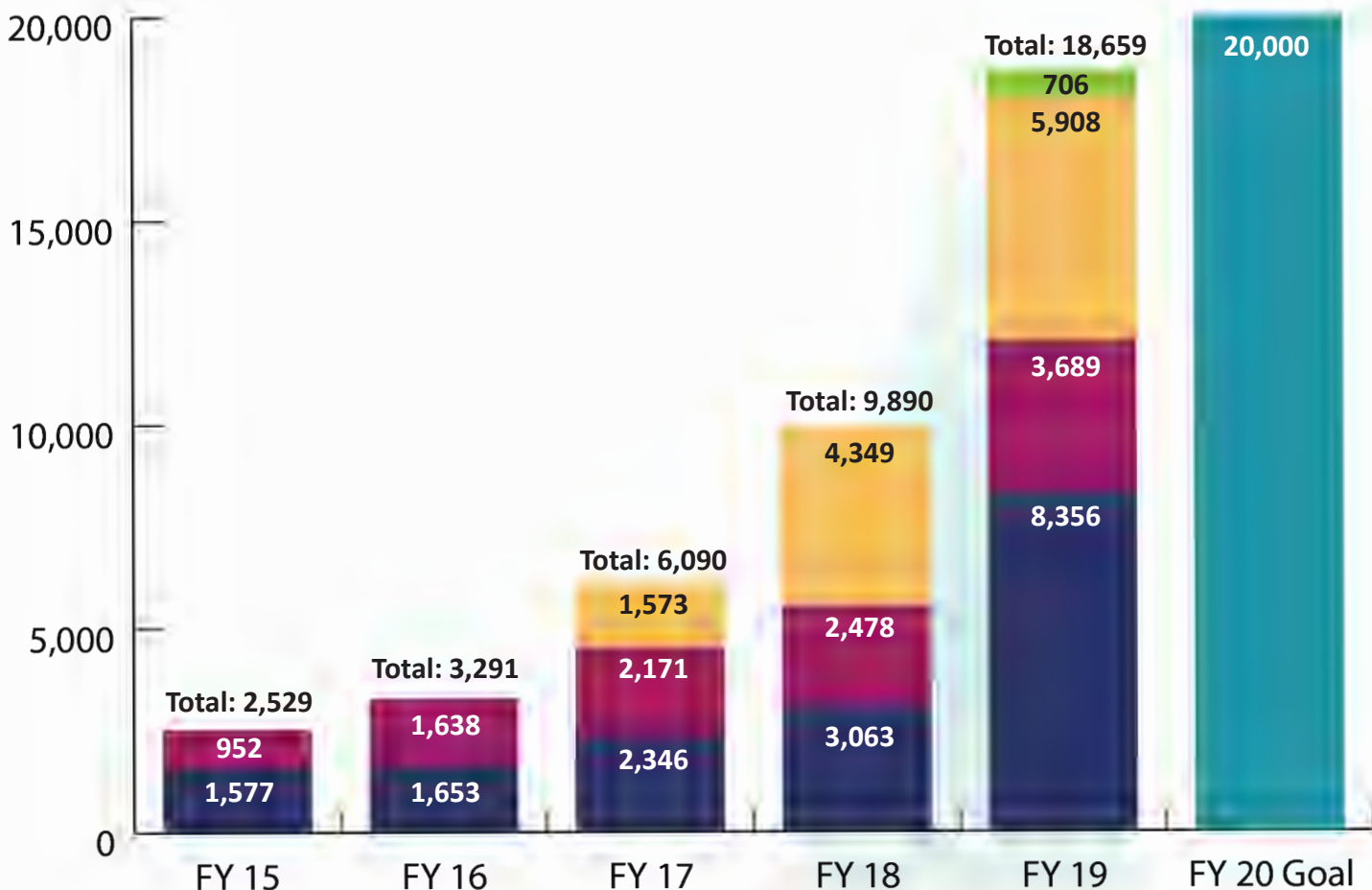


# CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND HIGHER EDUCATION

# Career, Technical, and Higher Education

Successful Career, Technical, and Higher Education (CTHE) completions have exponentially increased from 9,890 to 18,659 in the last two years.

Career, Technical, and Higher Education Completions FY 19



- OJT
- Skills/Trade
- Post-Secondary
- Vocational

# 189%

Increase of completions from FY 18 to FY 19

Available programs in FY 19 CTHE Services, which is an increase of 37 programs offered since FY 18

# 239



# CTHE FY 19 Program Completions



Safety, Health & Recreation  
**3,896**



Food Service  
**3,597**



Technology & Design  
**1,730**



Maintenance & Custodial  
**2,563**



Horticulture & Landscape  
**1,491**



Administrative & Office  
**1,120**



Welding & Metal Works  
**684**



Construction Career  
**684**



Diesel & Auto Mechanics  
**365**



Warehouse & Manufacturing  
**456**



Animal Care  
**232**



Carpentry & Wood Working  
**220**



Barbering & Cosmetology  
**121**



CDL, Forklift & Heavy Equipment  
**521**



Fire Fighting  
**50**



Post-Secondary  
**602**

Career, Technical, and Higher Education Monthly Enrollment



# Ashland University Partnership

In FY 19, GDC began a valuable educational partnership with Ashland University. This post-secondary program utilizes only federal funds and helps GDC to create a safer and more educated citizen by expanding learning opportunities for inmates. Ashland University is a recipient of the Second Chance Pell Pilot Experimental Site Initiative, in which more than 300 inmates have enrolled in fully accredited college classes.

## Ashland University

- Employs a Site Director at each facility
- Site Directors meet with students on a weekly basis
- Professors provide instruction through a secure platform on the Georgia Offender Alternative Learning (G.O.A.L.) device

Founded in 1878, the fully accredited university offers the longest continuously operational post-secondary correctional education program in the U.S.



# 4,851

**completed credit hours of coursework completed by inmates**

# 300+

**Inmates located in these facilities qualify for the Federal Pell Grant**

## GDC Facilities Offering Ashland University Program

- Calhoun State Prison
- Coffee Correctional Facility
- Dodge State Prison
- Dooly State Prison
- Georgia State Prison
- Hancock State Prison
- Jenkins Correctional Facility
- Metro Reentry Facility
- Pulaski State Prison
- Riverbend Correctional Facility
- Smith State Prison
- Wheeler Correctional Facility
- Whitworth Women's Facility

# Preparing Inmates for Employment

- The average monthly enrollment in CTHE programs increased **161%** since FY 18, and **199%** from FY 17.
- In two years, average monthly enrollment increased from an average of **3,749** to **7,748**.
- TC have access to the CTHE programming such as Forklift, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), ServSafe, and Commercial Driver’s License (CDL).
- GDC implemented a mobile training classroom designed for inmates to earn Electrician Assistant Certification through Wiregrass Technical College.
- The newly implemented mobile welding lab through the Technical College System of Georgia was also utilized at Riverbend Correctional Facility.
- Inmates enrolled in this program have the potential to earn national certification from the American Welding Society (AWS).
- Common Good Atlanta expanded accredited college courses to the Metro RF.
- Reforming Arts, a non-profit based out of Atlanta, began offering programming at Whitworth Women’s Facility.



**Pictured: Inmates participating in AWS program**

## Animal Care Programs

Through partnerships with Mostly Mutts dog program, City of Augusta, Guide Dog Federation, and Auburn University, GDC expanded rescue and dog training programs to correctional facilities across the state. The goals of these programs are to provide inmates with the education and training needed to facilitate employment and successful return to the community, improve inmate behavior and expand the inmates’ sense of responsibility and care towards others, as well as, provide socialization and training of the dogs to increase their adoptability.

### Animal Care Programs

- Veterinary Helper
- Dog Groomer
- Animal Caretaker
- Guide Dog Trainer
- Vapor Wake (Explosive Device Detection)

# 143

Completions of animal related programs in FY 19

# Braille Transcribers Program

The Georgia Prison Braille program, known as the Georgia Braille Transcribers located at Central State Prison, continues to provide benefits even after incarceration. Several former Georgia Prison Braille Transcribers have found promising careers as transcribers, while others are leading productive lives using the soft skills they learned while producing books for Georgia's blind and visually challenged students.

The Braille transcribing program is operating at full capacity, and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) seeks independent contractors to meet the demand. Currently, five former Braille transcribers from the program work as independent contractors for GaDOE and other organizations as well. Others are employed as full-time transcribers in highly regarded institutions such as the American Printing House for the Blind and Georgia Institute of Technology Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation.

GDC's Braille program has now expanded to include Emanuel Women's Facility as of July 2018. Inmates that successfully complete the Braille program are certified National Braille Transcribers, certified through the Library of Congress.

## Georgia Braille Transcriber Success Stories



One gentleman has developed a network among the former transcribers to subcontract their services in order to fill critical time-sensitive deadlines and proofread original works. Additionally, he provided technical training via Webcast to the current program participants during their recent 2-day professional learning mini-conference.



Another former member not only runs his own Braille transcription business, but actively supports reentry efforts and has become a certified Mental Health Peer Specialist at Metro RF.



**Pictured: Inmate using Braillewriter to transcribe literature**



**Pictured: Braille Embossing Press**





# Partnerships



**Technical College**  
System of Georgia



THE ARTHUR M. BLANK  
FAMILY FOUNDATION











**INMATE SERVICES  
IMPACT REPORT**  
Fiscal Year 2019

## Steven L. Perkins

Warden



Steven L. Perkins began his career with the Georgia Department of Corrections in April of 1989, as a correctional officer at Atlanta Diversion Center. In 1991, he was promoted to sergeant at JC Larmore Probation Detention Center. He served as sergeant at JC Larmore until he accepted a position as a probation officer at the same facility, in May of 1998. In 2002, Mr. Perkins decided to venture into a different sector of the Georgia Department of Corrections, and thus accepted a position as senior counselor at JC Larmore. However, due to the closure of JC Larmore In Oct, 2005, Mr. Perkins transferred to Clayton Transitional center as a counselor, where he remained until he was promoted to the position of assistant superintendent at Jimmy Helms Transitional Center, In July of 2010. In April of 2011, Mr. Perkins was promoted to superintendent of Helms Facility and remained there until he was promoted to warden of Atlanta TC/Metro Atlanta Complex on June 01, 2013. He served as warden of ATC/Metro Atlanta Complex until Dec 01, 2017, whereas he then accepted his current position as warden of Metro Re-Entry Facility/Metro Atlanta Complex. Mr. Perkins graduated from Langston University in 1986 with a Bachelor's degree in Corrections. Throughout his career with the Georgia Department of Corrections, he has acquired many certifications, to include the following: BCOT (Jun, 1989), Intensive Substance Abuse Training (Oct, 1992), Mental Health Training (Apr, 1994), POST IT (May, 1994), Georgia Gain Performance Management Training (July, 1995), Supervisor Development Training MD1 & MD2 (Sept, 1995), BPOT (May, 1998), and Hostage negotiation (Oct, 2000).

Warden Steven Perkins  
Georgia Department of Corrections  
Metro Reentry Facility  
Transitioning from Institutions  
April 22, 2020

The Issue:

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) manages an offender population of approximately 54,000, comprised of violent as well as non-violent offenders. As an agency, we strive to reduce recidivism throughout our state by providing the offender population with the tools essential to success prior to release. These tools consist of Academic and Vocational Education programs, personal development, extracurricular activities, and community service, along with counseling, cognitive, and substance abuse programming. Research has shown that offenders return to prison “due to a combination of personal, sociological, economic, and lifestyle factors.” The GDC strives to build offenders up in order to successfully identify factors that may negatively impact their overall success and reset before negative results begin. The Metro Reentry Facility (RF) is one of our many components used to meet this goal. The Metro Reentry program was designed to enhance and promote the success of returning citizens in the metro Atlanta area, and address the basic needs related to the successful reentry into the community. Access to housing, employment opportunities, family engagement and proper identification was the core focus of the plan. One third of inmates that are released each year call the Metro Atlanta area home, yet the GDC had no facilities in the Metro area from which to release these inmates. We believed with the help of the community we could improve the chances for success for those inmates returning home to metro Atlanta. With that in mind, the GDC identified the previously shuttered Metro State Prison for renovation and re-opening as the Metro Reentry Facility.

The Facility:

On May 1, 2018, the GDC opened the newly re-missioned Metro Reentry Facility in Atlanta, Ga. Originally opened in 1980 as a male facility, Metro State Prison was converted to house females in 1993, and ultimately closed in 2011. Currently, the facility has the capacity to house 355 male medium security offenders. The program initially accepted offenders from the Metro Atlanta counties of Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton and Gwinnett. However, due to increased requests and success from community partnerships, the program has been expanded to include Fayette, Henry, Rockdale, and Douglas Counties. The Metro RF program addresses the offenders needs as it relates to physical, social, intellectual, environmental, emotional, and spiritual through evidence-based practices and community collaboration. All offenders identified for the program have 12-24 months remaining on their current prison sentence, a High/Moderate risk for



arrest/recidivism, and some are classified as Mental Health Level II. In 2019, 4,355 offenders released back to the nine counties served by Metro RF. One of the most important aspects of the Metro RF program is the verbiage utilized to describe what is known in society as an “inmate” or an “offender.” The men housed at Metro RF are instead referred to as “returning citizens,” to identify their first step in preparing to return to their communities as productive citizens.

#### Best Practices:

All staff at Metro RF are trained in the following evidence-based programs: Motivational Interviewing, Effective Communication, Cognitive Leadership and Franklin Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Each of these courses provide staff with a dual role perspective of thinking as it relates to the care and treatment of returning citizens, and the security operations of the facility.

Additionally, the GDC has learned through evidence-based practices that family reunification plays a major role in the Returning Citizen’s success upon release. Focusing on building stronger family bonds provides a sense of stability. Metro RF accomplishes this goal through the following programs:

Little Readers – allows Returning Citizens an opportunity to connect with their children and grandchildren

Family Day – a day where Returning Citizens can freely spend a day with their loved ones sharing a meal and socializing with several bonding activities such as playing games, listening to music, and other forms of entertainment

One Day with God – a day dedicated to the fathers, allowing them one on-one-time with their children working on projects, games, reading, and as a father/daughter dance and father/son walk and talk

Program support and integrity are also important best practices. A twelve-month program the Metro RF model is comprised of four levels of progression that includes core curriculum and elective courses. The four levels are as follows:

Level I – Two-month Orientation. During this phase, the returning citizens receive information about structure and purpose. They meet with the staff and community partners to develop a life plan and set goals and objectives for themselves.

Level II – Five-month Treatment. In this phase, the returning citizens actively participate in programming and job training that supports their reentry goals. Strong focus is dedicated to work-ready and pro-social thinking.

Level III – Two-month Maintenance. The returning citizens focus on putting their plan into action. They work with staff and community partners to identify a residence plan, potential employment, and family reunification.

Level IV – Three-month Reentry/Transitioning. During this final phase of the program the returning citizens confirm their release plan for housing, mentoring, employment, and any other

essential resources needed to ensure a seamless transition into the community. We have learned that oversight of the program is critical to the program's success as well as community and executive leadership support. The Metro RF program also offers both vocational and on-the-job training programs to provide offenders with practical work skills that will allow them to obtain a job that will provide a livable wage upon their release. Additionally, they have an opportunity to continue their education through Ashland University and Common Good – a volunteer group of college professors who dedicate their time and wisdom to assist the returning citizens with earning college credit. A very important key to our success is the outside volunteers that come in and provide vocational programs and additional resources for our offenders.

Metro RF also utilizes mentors to bridge the gap between staff and returning citizens. The mentors help the returning citizens understand their strengths, and their greatest values not only for careers but in themselves for a successful life upon reentry. These mentors have been incarcerated for many years and were individually selected to come to Metro RF and serve as a model for the community-based environment. The mentors have four primary responsibilities: life mentors, life coaches, success coaches, and peer facilitators. They help returning citizens with day-to-day situations and coach them along the way to maximize their potential. The reentry program, through its 'university' style approach and housing environment, empowers the population through self-efficacy and prepares them for "real life" by taking them out of the mode of negative thinking that is often fostered by incarceration. In addition, a Faith Enrichment aspect is also available through chaplaincy services and volunteer programs.

Community involvement has been essential to the program's success. Project Safe Neighborhoods, sponsored by the Northern District of Georgia United States Attorney's Office, utilizes the Credible Messenger Program to reach gang members and returning citizens convicted of weapons charges in Fulton, Clayton and DeKalb counties. The program duration is six months and meets once a week. It provides the returning citizens with resources related to child support, various attorney needs, family reunification, and job readiness.

Those enrolled are followed and supported for three years after release with educational & vocational needs. Metro RF partner with more than 150 community partners that deliver a wide variety of courses/training and assistance to the returning citizens. Some of the services provided are business development/entrepreneurship, financial planning, public speaking, computer literacy, housing assistance, horticulture, parenting classes, driver services, vital records, and pro-bono legal aid. The partners also focus on the following soft skills: organization, identification, housing, employment clothing, transportation, parenting skills, selective service, alcohol and drug recovery, social networking/internet, restoration of rights and living under supervision. An example of community involvement is that the returning citizens are fitted for suits tailored by Men's Warehouse and issued a suit upon release.

The cultural dynamics of the facility provide the returning citizens with a positive overview of themselves. Instilling the mindset that they are men, fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands during their incarceration and upon release is an important component. Staff express and exemplify positive support and forward thinking daily. Overall encouragement and support during their transition from prison to society and after, provides motivation and hope for a successful future.

Metro RF allows the returning citizens to earn opportunities by implementing the following components: slightly relaxed institutional structure, increased freedom of movement within the facility, community outreach program participation, maintain low mentor-to-participants ratio as well as a returning citizen governance program which supports community living and offender accountability. The returning citizens utilize a token economy, allowing for “purchase” of rewards for positive behavior. The community living environment promotes trust and safety and as a result, locks are not used to secure personal property.

It is important to positively affect thinking patterns and behaviors prior to release in order to help them these individuals refrain from recidivating. Reentry begins at the time of sentencing and the purpose of Metro RF is to put into play the best practices and enhance them as we prepare these men to reenter society - ready to face the challenges that may come, knowing that they can handle whatever they may face and do so successfully.

Recommendations:

The development and support of more facilities like the Metro Reentry Facility with federal funds and grants.

The support and encouragement, at the federal level, of more community-based partners who are willing to participate in reentry programming at facilities like Metro Reentry Facility.

## H. Jean Wright, II, Psy.D.

Director of Behavioral Health and Justice Related Services, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services



H. Jean Wright II, PsyD, is a transformational, highly experienced and professionally trained Clinical and Forensic Psychologist with over 20 years of experience in behavioral health and proven success in passionately leading people and managing projects and initiatives in government; in private practice; in academia, as Assistant Professor and Clinical Faculty for Temple University; and in rehabilitation and correction. As a clinical consultant,

facilitator and trainer, Dr. Wright teaches the subtleties of human interaction to successfully embrace and celebrate the variety of personalities in the workforce and community. His extensive research in human behavior and skill in delivering mission-critical results in direct clinical care, supervision and management have contributed to his success in contributing as a subject matter expert for media such as WDAS FM in Philadelphia, where he is a regular contributor on “Headlines” with Frankie Darcell, a weekly radio program; and on cable TV programs such as “A Multitude of Counselors,” which is in its third season on faith network, Three Angels Broadcast Network (3ABN), providing content on behavioral health and faith. Dr. Wright is a regular contributor to journals, educational newsletters, and faith-based magazines, where his focus is on the connection between psychology, faith and spirituality.

Dr. Wright recently completed his book: *Find Strength in Your Struggle: Discover The Miracle in You*, which highlights his concept of “spiritual depression” and how it impacts the spiritual core of people from all walks of life. He conducts interactive and highly charged seminars, workshops and trainings on a variety of topics related to behavioral health and wellness, population health education, and trauma-informed care for a diverse group of clientele throughout the United States, including law enforcement, rehabilitation and correction, academic institutions, judicial appointees, faith-based organizations, and community service agencies providing behavioral health resources and support to people in recovery.