
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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History of Community-Based Corrections

Community-Based Corrections (CBC) is an alternative to incarcerating persons convicted of criminal offenses. The CBC District Departments supervise defendants on pretrial release and convicted offenders on probation or parole, and they provide the primary correctional supervision and treatment programs for adult offenders in Iowa. Approximately 80.0% of convicted offenders are supervised in local communities through the CBC District Departments. The State prison system is generally used for more serious or dangerous offenders and as an alternative when offender risk cannot be managed effectively in local communities.

History

Until the 1960s, parole and work release offenders were the responsibility of the Office of the Chief Parole Officer within the Department of Social Services. The Department was later reorganized into the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) by the 1983 General Assembly.

For probation, judges assigned adult probationers to the supervision of the Chief Parole Officer, under the control of the Executive Branch, or to a local program or the supervision of a private citizen, retaining the supervision of the offenders under the control of the Judicial Branch.

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, federal grants were available to establish community corrections programs. Programs began to develop primarily in Iowa's urban areas.

In 1973, the General Assembly enacted [SF 482](#) (Community Corrections Act) and [SF 66](#) (Work Release Act), furthering the development of the CBC system. CBC was locally administered within the eight judicial districts, and policy and program development were primarily locally controlled.

In 1977, the General Assembly enacted [SF 112](#) (Community-Based Corrections Act), creating a new CBC administrative structure. The Act placed pretrial release, presentence investigations, probation, and pre-institution residential services under the CBC District Departments.

During the 1983 Legislative Session, [SF 464](#) (Department of Corrections Act) modified the State's correctional system. All post-institution adult supervision, including parole and work release, was assigned to the CBC District Departments, with oversight provided by the DOC. The DOC had regulatory responsibilities for CBC programs, including statewide planning, budget oversight, establishment of program guidelines, and development of performance measures. The General Assembly appropriated funds to the DOC for each CBC District Department.

Under this correctional system and CBC administrative structure, each CBC District Department was a separate agency under the direction of a board of directors and was administered by a director employed by the board. The CBC staff members were only considered State employees for the purposes of collective bargaining and tort claims. Each CBC board set policy, provided input on budget requests for submission to the Board of Corrections, and oversaw program operations. In addition, each CBC District Department had one or more advisory committees.

More Information

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In 2023, the General Assembly enacted [SF 514](#) (State Government Alignment Act), which moved CBC under the authority of the DOC and established the current system. Under this system, CBC programs are controlled by the DOC. The Director of the DOC appoints the director of each District Department, and each CBC District Department has an advisory-only board of directors. Employees of the CBC District Departments are employees of the DOC. The General Assembly continues to appropriate funds to the DOC for each CBC District Department.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapters [901](#), [901B](#), [904](#), [905](#), [906](#), [907](#), and [908](#)
Iowa Administrative Code [201](#)

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