



NEWS RELEASE

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Study shows Ohio prisons more violent

Westerville – A study showing major increases in staff assault rates at the state prisons confirms what leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association have been saying for months: that violence in Ohio prisons has escalated. The new report, which was conducted by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and required under House Bill 86, indicates their own findings are “disturbing” and further states, “Assaults on staff resulting in serious injury to one or more staff members is a significant problem at the present time....”

Despite the DR&C’s analysis last year that prisons were getting safer and less violent, this report indicates just the opposite to be true. According to the study, in 2008, assaults on staff that resulted in serious injury *doubled*. After a slight decrease in 2009, that number went up another 25 percent in 2010, and then held steady in 2011 and in 2012. Even the researchers had to admit that assault-rate figures for these last three years are, “The greatest current problem in the prison system.”

But it’s not just major staff assault rates that are trending up. “Harrassment assaults” that include spitting and throwing bodily fluids against staff also shot up in 2011, and are expected to go up again for 2012. Inmate-on-inmate assaults also are on an upward trajectory in many categories.

“Our members knew from first-hand experience that the reality on the ground was different from what DR&C was reporting,” said OCSEA Corrections Assembly President Jimmy Adkins, who works at the Marysville Reformatory for Women.

“We think this report is a wake-up call to the Kasich administration that they need to take a serious look at some of the recommendations this union has made, including an increase in Correction Officers and other Correction employees. We’re not even filling the vacancies we currently have,” said Adkins.

The report also seems to bolster the theory that there is a direct correlation between the decrease in frontline staff and prison violence. Since 2008 there has been a steady decrease in the number of prison COs, according to DR&C’s figures. In January of 2008, Ohio employed 7,234 COs. In January of 2013 that number stands at 6,279, for a loss of nearly 1,000 officers. Most of the loss has occurred since Jan. 2011 when DR&C employed 7,028 officers.

“Understaffing has all sorts of ripple effects,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. “Not only are we seeing more major assaults on staff, we’re also seeing more inmate deaths and more illicit contraband.”

“What we are asking for is pretty simple. We need more eyes on inmates and more feet on the beat,” said Mabe.

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OCSEA represents approximately 33,000 public employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).