



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1110

October 25, 2021

Joanna Carns
Office of Corrections Ombuds
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to respond to the September 27, 2021, Office of Corrections Ombuds (OCO) report on the ‘concerns regarding the Incarcerated Individual Betterment Fund (IIBF).’

In early 2020, the department and the OCO began collaborating on IIBF policy revisions including a name change of the fund. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a pause which allowed the department, OCO, members of the Statewide Family Council (SFC) as well as additional stakeholders to work through policy revisions. The work group successfully finished their work and moved forward toward implementation.

The department responds to the OCO recommendations as below.

Recommendation	Response
<p>1. Create a more equitable structure that allows for greater decision-making by incarcerated persons and their families regarding the use of IIBF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Related, create a structured, established process for the collection of input from both family members and the incarcerated population regarding suggestions for the expenditure of funds, including	<p>The department will involve family members and incarcerated individuals in IIBF related decisions by soliciting information and input from incarcerated individuals and their friends and family. The department is also working closely with two SFC budget representatives on budget development and implementation. The newly named director of person-centered services may also play a role in IIBF conversations in the future.</p> <p>To gain feedback from families on improving visiting and extended family visitations (EFV), the Family Services Unit plans to survey families prior to the end of CY 2021 to gather ideas and feedback that will be used to develop a spending plan. Similarly, with the recreation and wellness activities, incarcerated individuals will be surveyed prior to the end of CY 2021 for ideas and feedback on which activities (i.e., music, hobby, recreation, etc.) the population would wish increased investment. The survey results will be shared with the SFC budget committee</p>



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<p>family friendly activities, per incarcerated individual allocation expenditures, and one-time capital projects.</p>	<p>members, incarcerated individuals, and internal/external stakeholders for discussion.</p> <p>Additionally, Local Family Councils (LFCs) will continue to meet with the community partnership program coordinators (CPPCs) each spring to provide input into annual events for the upcoming fiscal year. This will be enhanced by LFC conversations to plan “pop-up” events and other family centered activities.</p>
<p>2. Increase expenditures for family friendly activities, EFV program expansion, art classes, book clubs, music rooms, recreational equipment and other positive, pro-social activities that will directly benefit the incarcerated population. <u>Ensure IIBF funds are used to directly benefit the incarcerated population.</u></p>	<p>The IIBF Budget Committee and Family Friendly Budget Committee presented budget recommendations that would increase the amount allocated to family friendly activities. With legislative action to move staff salaries to state general fund funding, the department has greatly increased flexibility to expand spending in other areas. Family friendly activities include such happenings as the hotel voucher program, Statewide Family Council (SFC) support, Parenting Inside Out (PIO) activities and Parenting Sentencing Alternatives (PSA). Family friendly annual events are budgeted at the approved amount. SFC travel and meeting supplies, PIO and PSA are budgeted based on historical allocations.</p> <p>The following chart shows the family friendly budget allocation from fiscal year (FY) 18 – 22. (A FY begins July 1 and ends June 30.) FY22 also shows the reinvestment for improving the visiting experience/EFV in the amount of \$500,000.</p>



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	<p>IIBF Approved Family Friendly Allocations and Expenditures (*denotes yearly spending negatively impacted by Covid-19) Fiscal Year runs Jul 1 - June 30</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Fiscal Year</th> <th>Base</th> <th>Enhancements</th> <th>Expenditures</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FY18</td> <td>410,021</td> <td></td> <td>360,352</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY19</td> <td>408,928</td> <td>557,683</td> <td>886,363</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY20*</td> <td>437,333</td> <td></td> <td>323,854</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY21*</td> <td>437,290</td> <td>299,200</td> <td>391,637</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY22*</td> <td>740,000</td> <td>500,000</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The department will work toward improvements to the existing EFV program. EFV will not be expanded unless additional funding is provided by the legislature. The department will seek additional resources through legislative budget requests.</p> <p>After the results are analyzed from the incarcerated individuals' survey for recreation activities, the department intends to group similar items to seek a competitive bid to ensure the best prices, while procuring equipment that is built to last and consistently performs in outdoor recreation settings.</p>	Fiscal Year	Base	Enhancements	Expenditures	FY18	410,021		360,352	FY19	408,928	557,683	886,363	FY20*	437,333		323,854	FY21*	437,290	299,200	391,637	FY22*	740,000	500,000	
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<p>3. Create greater transparency and accountability by publishing a quarterly budget-to-actuals report including a detailed list of every item purchased with IIBF monies for each facility.</p>	<p>The department and SFC representatives are collaborating on developing more detailed budget reports that includes desired and useful information. The reports will be tested in one to two facilities, discussed at LFC meetings and feedback incorporated into the product implemented for statewide use. These new reports are anticipated to be implemented statewide after January 1, 2022 and placed online.</p> <p>In addition, the department is working on the development of several job aids that are intended to assist family</p>																								



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	<p>members in understanding how to read both the statewide and local facility reports. The goal is to make the reports more understandable to non-government/financial reviewers.</p>
<p>4. Create better accountability for IIBF through regular oversight review of detailed IIBF expenditure transactions by the IIBF Administrator.</p>	<p>Business Services is working on a process to provide a quality control review of IIBF expenditures. This is an ongoing activity in addition to the recently completed review by the State Auditor’s Office (SAO), which included IIBF activities. The SAO noted no audit findings or management letter recommendations related to IIBF.</p>
<p>5. While the new statewide IIBF events are appreciated to provide information on IIBF to family members, the current format is not accessible to everyone and also does not allow for live dialogue and discussion between family members and DOC staff regarding the use of the funds; DOC should consider using a different platform/structure that allows for more accessibility and dialogue.</p>	<p>The current platform of Microsoft Live does not support interactive communications. The department continues to explore different virtual meeting options to improve the overall effectiveness of the statewide public meetings while maintaining inclusive, respectful, and effective communication.</p> <p>The quarterly financial reports are posted on the department’s external website prior to the meeting to allow participants time to review the information and prepare questions.</p>

The department appreciates the Office of Corrections Ombuds, members of the Statewide and Local Family Councils and other stakeholders understanding of the unique processes across the correctional system and the addition of policies and procedures, as well as additional resource requests, being put in place to address them. The department is working proactively to continuously improve quality assurance standards as well as stakeholder engagement throughout the department.

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Moving forward, the Washington State Department of Corrections will continue to collaborate with the Office of the Corrections Ombuds to strengthen procedures and practices that positively impact individuals' health, safety and welfare, while supporting reunification efforts for justice-impacted families.

Sincerely,



Melena Thompson, Director
Executive Policy Office
Washington Department of Corrections

MT:mmr

cc: Anita Kendall, Comptroller
Lisa Flynn, Correctional program Administrator
Dianne Doonan, Assistant Comptroller