

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

PRESS RELEASE

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State Auditor Calls For Improved Oversight Of The Department of Corrections' Transitional Housing Program

MONTPELIER – Vermont State Auditor Doug Hoffer today released an audit report evaluating the Department of Corrections' (DOC) transitional housing program, which is aimed at helping offenders segue from incarceration to living in communities.

In fiscal year 2014, DOC distributed slightly less than \$6 million in grants to 25 organizations to provide housing and supportive services to about 1,000 offenders. The number of people served by this program grew by 59 percent between 2010 and 2014, and its costs increased 157 percent.

The new audit was a follow-up to a 2013 investigation, which found that a transitional housing grantee was non-compliant with grant terms and the DOC's oversight of that grant was deficient. In the wake of that inquiry, DOC reported taking corrective measures.

The Auditor's Office approached this audit with three objectives: 1) to assess the extent to which transitional housing grantees developed plans that specify what services should be provided to individual offenders, 2) to determine whether grantees accurately reported to DOC the services they provided, and 3) to assess whether and how DOC determines this program is meeting its goals of supporting community reintegration, maintaining public safety, and reducing offender recidivism. To meet these objectives, the audit team examined nine organizations and reviewed internal DOC documents.

In exploring the first objective, the auditors found that grantees often did not have plans for offenders that specified the services they needed and those plans that did exist were not approved by probation and parole officers as required by the DOC.

"DOC's program management was ineffective in this area," Auditor Hoffer said, "and there were no consequences for grantees that failed to develop these plans."

The audit team also found that the nine grantees reported inaccurate or unsupported data to DOC. The department, however, did not provide grantees with guidance on the type of documentation they should maintain, and grantees were not able to run reports from DOC's system to verify whether data was entered correctly.

"Without accurate reporting, the State cannot adequately monitor this program to determine its effectiveness and compliance with the grant agreements," Auditor Hoffer said.

While DOC has begun collecting data to measure how well this program helps offenders reintegrate into communities, the department has not yet developed the necessary measures to monitor progress on public safety and recidivism goals.

“DOC doesn’t have a complete set of performance measures for this program, and it should,” Auditor Hoffer said. “The program is intended to save the State money, but it can only be considered successful if it does so without compromising public safety.”

The audit makes 11 recommendations to improve this program. To read the full report, [click here](#).