

**WE ARE EXPERIENCING  
CRITICAL STAFFING  
SHORTAGES RESULTING IN:**

**STAFF BURNOUT**

**LOCKDOWNS**

**NON-COMPLIANCE**

**COTTAGE CLOSURES**

**ACCELERATED TURNOVER**

**INCREASED CONTRABAND**



# WE NEED YOUR HELP

NORTH  
**Dakota**  
Be Legendary.™

Corrections and  
Rehabilitation

The North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) is experiencing a major staffing shortage at the Youth Correctional Center (YCC), Heart River Correctional Center (HRCC), North Dakota State Penitentiary (NDSP), and James River Correctional Center (JRCC). Our facilities are operating 24 hours a day seven days a week with no option of closing. Additionally, telework is not an option for most team members.

Currently there are more than 70 vacant positions among these four facilities. These vacancies forced YCC to recently consolidate all juveniles (all are male) into one cottage due to lack of team members and experience. HRCC was unable to open both available cottages for female residents due to lack of team members. NDSP has nearly 30 vacant correctional officer positions with an additional eight National Guard members currently deployed. JRCC has more than 30 vacant correctional officer positions, which is 30% of all JRCC correctional officer positions.

Staff shortages are also costly. The DOCR has spent more than \$4.5 million on overtime compensation for CO, JIRS, and RTA positions in 2021-2022. This is an increase of nearly \$500,000 from 2019-2020.

Although we have been able to operate our facilities without major incidents thus far, vacancies are not improving and we need to be able to attract and retain more team members in order to continue operating safely.

Team members at JRCC and NDSP have had to work unprecedented numbers of overtime shifts to try to operate at safe staffing levels. For example, instead of 20 shifts in May, one JRCC employee worked 55 shifts. Despite heroic efforts from many DOCR team members to pitch in and work overtime, both facilities continue to run below minimum levels.

Overworked correctional officers and shifts operating below minimum thresholds not only endangers residents and team members, but also perpetuates team member burnout, leading to further turnover. Routine searches of residents and their housing units cannot occur, leading to increased contraband, substance use, and injuries. It is more difficult for team members to engage in dynamic security, core correctional practices, and de-escalation.

Rehabilitative programming that helps residents make better behavioral choices and feel safer often cannot occur, leading them to behave from a place of fear and aggression. At NDSP, for example, if fewer than 33 correctional officer posts can be staffed on a shift, the facility must enter a lock down. On a recent shift, only 29 correctional posts could be staffed, and NDSP had to lockdown.

# OUR SALARIES ARE MUCH LOWER THAN AVERAGE

## Correctional Officer Hiring Rates:

Burleigh County: \$24.73- \$26.08/hr  
 Cass County: \$21.92- \$25.26/hr  
 McKenzie: \$26.22/hr  
 Stutsman: \$19.57 - \$20.36/hr  
**DOCR: \$18.61-\$20.03/hr**

## Correctional Officer Average:

Market: \$4, 241 (\$24.47/hr)  
 DOCR: \$3,715 (\$21.43/hr)  
**Difference: -12.4%, over \$500 per month**

## Parole and Probation Officer Average:

Market: \$6,453  
 DOCR: \$4, 968  
**Difference: -23.0%**

**Walmart pays \$19.50/hr for a night shelf stocker**

FROM 2015 TO 2022, WE HAVE HAD:  
**64% FEWER JIRS APPLICANTS**  
**70% FEWER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH APPLICANTS**  
**82% FEWER CO APPLICANTS**



**NEARLY 50% OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS HAVE BEEN HERE LESS THAN FIVE YEARS**



Position Type	Avg. Experience - Years	
	2016	2022
CO I and II and Temp	11.5	4.8
JIRS I and Temp	13.9	3.3
Security Officer	8.1	6.2

As the job of CO becomes increasingly complex, retaining our team members is more important than ever. The demanding career is not only dangerous at times, but also requires mental strength. Positively influencing the life of a resident to make the right choices can potentially even save taxpayer money by reducing recidivism and state-funded programming.

The entire DOCR workforce consists of approximately 907 regular team members and 100 temporary team members. As of January 2022, 439 of our team members had been with us less than five years, making up 45% of our workforce.

Within the adult male facilities, 30% of new team members leave employment before completing new employee training.

The DOCR averaged 18 team members leaving employment per month in 2021. There were 36 team member separations in May 2022. At our largest facility, NDSP, during March 2022 through May 2022, **we have been running below minimum team members required for 90% of the time during the day shifts** and 25% during night shifts. During the day shift we require a minimum of 43 team members to function properly; we have operated with as few as 30.

All DOCR facilities, including NDSP (maximum security facility) and JRCC (medium security facility) normally run lean staffing, even when all posts are filled. For example, NDSP has 43 posts for correctional officers. If NDSP falls below 37 staffed posts on a shift, it has to file a deviation from federal law. From January 1, 2022 to December 12, 2022, NDSP has had to file deviation reports for 212 shifts.

## Annual Turnover Rates Per Position

Position	Turnover Rate
Residential Treatment Aide (RTA)	50.00%
Juvenile Institutional Resident Specialist (JIRS)	80.00%
Correctional Officer	42.60%

**"I am truly grateful for correctional officers who are here to make a difference and who are cognizant of the impacts they have had on my life. They have helped me make meaningful long-term change, which has given me the ability and chance to help others make those changes."**  
**-NDSP Resident**