State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

Utah Department of Corrections
Executive Office

MIKE HADDON
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 27, 2019

RE: Elimination of the A/B Security Threat Group (gang) Schedule

Five years ago, the Department of Corrections (Department) experienced an increase in gang violence between two specific gangs within the prison system. As with all significant safety and security related matters, the prisons were locked down, investigations were conducted, steps were taken to mitigate risk, and the prisons were supposed to return to normal operations.

However, in this particular situation, it became clear that several vulnerabilities needed to be addressed to maintain the safety of staff and inmates. Many of those changes required long-term projects that would take time to implement. In order to minimize the negative impacts of keeping the prisons locked down for an extended period of time, a schedule (known as the A/B schedule) was developed for those two gangs as a temporary solution allowing the prison to come off lockdown while mitigating violence between the two groups. The Department anticipated moving away from this temporary schedule once changes were completed and implemented.

Since that time, the Department has been working through significant adjustments to our facility structures, policies, staffing, processes, communications, equipment, programming, etc.

These include:

- Adjusting policies to allow more opportunities for gang members to step away from a gang without having to completely debrief or be housed in a more restrictive housing environment.
- Modifying facility structures, policies and training to create a faster and more appropriate staff response to prevent or mitigate violent situations that may occur.
- Changing our restrictive housing model to remove inmates from our maximum-security housing who only committed minor offenses and instead, focus this housing on inmates involved in physical or sexual violence, predatory or major person related behaviors.
- Adjusting emergency processes and training inmates on the new expectations.
- Improving processes related to contraband control, which includes the addition of new security equipment, in order to minimize the presence of weapons, drugs and other items.

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- Implementing evidence-based programming to address conflict resolution, anger management, effective communications, etc., to give a gang involved inmate constructive tools to work through conflicts without violence.

These are only a few examples of changes implemented with a focus on minimizing gang influence within the prison system, while also assisting gang involved and non-gang involved inmates successfully enter our communities and successfully exit the criminal justice system. With the adjustments now implemented, the Department is communicating to inmates and staff our expectation to transition away from the A/B schedule in the very near future.

We understand there are those who are concerned about this change. Please know that we take inmate and staff safety very seriously, and the A/B schedule, while temporary, was problematic. First, it only applied to two specific gangs (not all of them). Second, it only applied to the prisons and not to contracted county jails that house over 20 percent of the State's inmate population. Finally, and importantly, it has created negative impacts on inmates such as limiting access to programming, treatment, housing and work opportunities that can affect board hearings and prison releases.

A significant amount of thought and preparation has been put into this decision, and it is important that you understand why the change is taking place. Please communicate to your family and/or friends who are incarcerated that the Department takes violence within the prison system very seriously, and we want the safest environment possible for them to experience positive personal growth. If they are gang involved, encourage them to disengage from the behaviors associated with inmate violence. If they are not gang involved, encourage them to stay away from the behaviors associated with inmate violence.

Every inmate deserves to live safely within the prison system whether they are incarcerated for life or until reentering the community and successfully exiting the criminal justice system. Your help and your influence to effect this positive change will be incredibly powerful.

Sincerely,

Mike Haddon, Executive Director
Utah Department of Corrections

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