

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
Date: Friday, October 11, 2024 1:39:25 PM

From: Texas Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com>
Sent: Friday, October 11, 2024 1:08 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)

Submitted on Fri, 10/11/2024 - 10:27

Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about

[Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#)

Public Comments

1

Email

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Tdcj has an obvious resistance to adding air conditioning to state prisons, which exacerbates the staffing problems. Even units that have been slated/funded to add AC claim it will take 2+ years to install. That's obviously not true, it's a way to delay. No private business/company would take that amount of time to install AC. How many people can work up to 16 hours daily in an inmate housing area where the temps regularly exceed 100' while wearing the cheap cotton uniform made by TDCJ, covered over by a protective thrust vest?

TDCJ not keeping up with basic maintenance repairs (plumbing, locks, control switches, etc.) leaves these prisons looking like 3rd World prisons. It's humiliating that TDCJ has let these prisons get to this level of disrepair. When your employer gives the appearance of not caring how your facility is maintained, again, staffing shortages are exacerbated.

TDCJ's new policy regarding liquids not being allowed inside the prisons was a knee-jerk reaction to liquid K2 being brought in by compromised staff. The policy hasn't changed the amount of drugs coming in, the prisons are clouded with the K2 smoke in All housing areas, a true epidemic that is

also being swept under the rug. Drugs are rampant all over the agency. Meanwhile, all staff are punished by this new policy. Can't bring in their choice of sealed beverage containers, hand sanitizer, lotion, etc. TdCJ offers bottled Water to staff (improperly stored bottled water: stored in excessive heat/cold, which leaches chemicals from the plastic into the water, known to cause serious health problems). TdCj offers commissary to purchase drinks, but commissary has a limited selection, isn't open daily, and isn't open for night shift workers. TDCJ offers drink vending machines, but, again, the selection is limited and in this economy who can regularly afford to pay more than \$1 per beverage to cover a 12-16 hour shift? This is no way to retain staff.

The review indicated that "some critically understaffed prisons routinely have unfilled Priority 1 positions". This is deceptive. All TDCJ prisons currently have a minimum # of unstaffed Priority 1 positions they must not fill, by the agency's own policy. Each of those positions that would be staffed for a shift over the required "empties" are automatically forced to go work another short staffed unit. What this means is: every day these prisons are running shorter than 70% staffed, by their own policy. (A unit with 24 Priority 1 positions must be 8 priority 1 spots short every shift, or send the extras to other units, whether the other units have requested help or not.) So EVERY DAY we run the prisons with a lower percentage of officers than the unit Gonzalo Lopez escaped from.

Your Proposed Solution

Visit these prisons in August, not December. Schedule ACA audits for August, too. How county jails have a 65 to 85 degree requirement, yet TDCJ does not is unfathomable.

While there, pay attention to all the obvious needs not being met regarding repairs, living conditions. ACA would never accredit these facilities if they really audited and looked at all the broken down, quality-of-life-affecting-deficiencies plaguing ALL the prisons. Who is going to take pride in working for an agency that doesn't take pride in itself?

TDCJ needs to admit their poor decision in the change to the bring-in policy and return to the previous policy of allowing sealed beverages, hand sanitizer, lotion, etc into the prisons. Stop forcing staff to drink water from improperly/dangerously stored plastic bottles. Stop treating all staff as if they are compromised or the agency will never accomplish it's 2030 goal of being the favorite employer in the state.

My opinion: fix what's broken, install air conditioning & stop treating staff like felons...then they will stick around! It's not about pay raises.

I have 1 more recommendation. Begin a work visa program with Mexico. Open a training center in the valley. 6 weeks just like pre-service, with the added requirement to learn/pass a basic English test at the end. If you allow people from Mexico who just want to work the opportunity, TDCJ will be fully staffed in no time. Staffed with people who work hard and don't abuse their sick time. (As the agency progresses into a more digital workplace, officers equipped with tablets can use an application like "Google Translate" to communicate with inmates in any language.)

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes