

The Carden Group / Indiana Department of Correction

Site Visit Summary

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Overview

The Carden Group (TCG) had the opportunity to spend time in several IDOC locations with a goal to better understand the current structure and culture of the Department, spotlighting what is working, areas of opportunity for improvement, opportunities for enhancing leadership and the work environment, barriers to culture improvement, and desired outcomes from leaders and team members.

During our visits we met with team members at many different levels in focus group/round table settings and individual conversations.

Our findings captured in this summary reflect overarching themes from a process perspective and a skills, attitudes, and behaviors perspective.

Below are the key themes and insights that emerged.

Insights

Structure and Culture

- General feeling of support from the leadership team with a strong Department Commissioner, a new department-wide focus, and cultural change being led from the top down.
- People are willing to learn and to step up to help wherever needed.
- Many team members have immediate supervisors who go above and beyond to support their teams and remove barriers.
- There is an overarching feeling of “team” (staff is looked at as extended family).
- There is a strong sense of commitment to re-entry and appreciation for the vast amount of programs offered to the participants.
- Staffing challenges and the volume of new employees vary across facilities. These challenges tend to create additional workload and pressure for more veteran staff.
- Caseloads are high within Parole Districts and non-custody staff at facilities.

What’s Working – Skills, Attitudes and Behaviors

- Recent changes have created a feeling where the senior staff group is mostly aligned, with lots of trust and brings a great knowledge base. They share information freely which is appreciated and found to be refreshing. It’s what makes leaders not want to leave. They would like this to be the case department wide.
- Wardens focus on visibility. Making rounds daily, coming in on night shift and weekends. Staff appreciates the support provided and the transparency of communication from those leaders.
- People within IDOC want to do the right things for the right reasons.

- Everyone “steps up” voluntarily to fill voids and provide support where needed through staffing shortages. This includes all areas and workgroups within the facility and where other facilities can lend a hand as well.
- Safety is at the forefront of every action and interaction with attention to how staff can work together to minimize risk.
- Veteran staff acknowledges the need to mentor and train new staff and the impact to the organization when that is missing.
- The department offers flexibility, time off and overtime opportunities.
- Increase in social media is helping to improve the IDOC brand.
- Increased recognition and appreciation such as “Guardians of Engagement” and Graduations for new hires is increasing morale.
- Information is being shared at Roll Call and through emails to improve communication and better prepare next shift.
- Some Parole Districts and Facilities are partnering to increase community and employee engagement.

What’s Working - Processes

- Commissioner’s agency-wide messaging and videos are welcomed and appreciated by the admin teams.
- Tuition reimbursement program is an attractive benefit for continued growth.
- In areas where the facilities are being remodeled provide a more pleasant workplace.
- The Vision 2024 strategic plan has brought in a clarified vision and goals where team members recognize the focus on supporting staff.
- Sharing the ability to cross train and move throughout the department to other roles is a plus for recruiting and retention.
- Individual locations have some degree of autonomy when it comes to recruitment, hiring, training and on-boarding new staff.
- Under ideal conditions, aligning new hires to well-trained FTO's is a best practice.

Areas of Opportunity - Processes

- Continued focus on processes and procedures throughout the department will help drive even more benefit from systematic evaluation and improvement. This will also lead to successful deployment for greater buy-in, consistency, efficiency, and operational effectiveness.
- Providing clear alignment in expectations and standards. Every bracket has different “rules of the game” as to how team members go about their roles and responsibilities. This leads to inconsistencies in communications, policy enforcement, accountability and understanding in the goals and objectives at the department level.
- Focus on clarity and alignment of roles and responsibilities with veteran and new staff.
- Continuity of branding so staff can understand how initiatives blend together.
- Helping team members understand what they do, how what they do impacts the team, department and the community will help drive engagement and fulfillment.

- There is an opportunity to create a cascading clarity pyramid and focused recognition that IDOC is all one team.
- Consistency in onboarding is an opportunity to enhance throughout IDOC.
- Establishing a baseline for standards with skills and abilities that everyone needs to be proficient in for each role.
- Training has a whole came up at every location visited. Need for review and clarity around NEO training, expectations, on the job and on-boarding procedures.
- Improve communication flow from all Supervisors to all line staff.

External Factors

These are realities that need to be recognized as they have impact on the operations of the Department.

- Challenges getting timely support from the Central Office team and local HR and Business Offices.
- Appearance of lack of attention to facility maintenance needs and supplies.
- Competing with the private market and close proximity of facilities when it comes to recruiting.
- Staffing challenges create exposure to increased safety concerns.
- Will this new initiative (Leadership Development) be stalled or shut down post-election when there is a change in our Governor's Office? There is an uneasy/unknown feeling here.
- Pay, benefits and retirement are always a challenge at the state level.

Desired Outcomes

- Greater satisfaction with the Department resulting in improved physical and mental well-being.
- Creating clear expectations for goals, roles and responsibilities coupled with trust could lead to improved working relationships.
- Improved communication and transparency.
- Greater awareness of the individual skills and abilities of the team creates the possibility to delegate projects or tasks that are opportunity to others versus obligation.
- Greater work/life balance through building a strong working environment with trust, respect and rapport present along with grace and understanding.
- More robust on the job and succession planning.
- Through creating alignment and setting expectations at all levels, team members will feel less pressure to "keep all the plates spinning" and have the authority to focus on the highest priority initiatives.

- Through empowerment, education and development, leaders can gain trust that their teams are competent and confident within their role. Team members can also feel confident and the autonomy to act without always needing their supervisor. This will help reduce stress and frustration at all levels.
- A sense of calm that we are on the right path going in the same direction.
- Our teams can focus more on the population served by the department.
- Assessments will be more impactful and meaningful.
- Sense of belonging and value from being seen, heard, and recognized.

Next Steps

The Carden Group:

- Additional visits are scheduled for Central Office and Madison Corrections 3/12 - 3/13
- Develop a customized approach to facilitate sessions with IDOC supervisory personnel to cultivate the necessary skills to create even better working environments across the department.
- Create the appropriate materials for session facilitation.
- Foundation Sessions:
 - Schedule and coordinate logistics for Pilot Session.
 - 2 days
 - Possible dates
 - Week of 4/15
 - Week of 4/29
 - List of attendees
 - Day 1 – Admin Leaders (Central Office, Parole Directors, Wardens, Deputy Wardens)
 - Day 2 – Majors, Captains, Assistant Directors (Parole), possibly some additional “influencers” within the leadership ranks
 - Determine schedule and coordinate logistics for balance of leaders.
 - Estimated 50 participants per session
 - Sessions will be held by region
 - Dates to be determined
 - Estimated May-July
 - Pre-communications and invitations will be provided to IDOC

IDOC:

- Nancy's team will handle scheduling through the intranet for the Pilot Session followed by Foundation Sessions.
- The communications team is establishing a brand for the initiative: “Leading From Within”.