

FOCUS ON

Gwinnett County Corrections: Providing safety and value to the community

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Gwinnett County operates the Comprehensive Correctional Complex, an 800-bed facility—the largest in the state of Georgia. It's also the only accredited government-owned correctional facility in state. With an average population of about 360 medium- and minimum-security inmates and semi-incarcerated residents, it takes a workforce of qualified, professional staff to operate effectively.

The facility is run by 133 employees – 117 sworn and 16 civilian – under the leadership of Warden Darrell Johnson, a long-time public safety officer who progressed through the ranks to assume the role of warden in 2013. Corrections officers get four weeks of entry-level training conducted by the state at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, followed by a week of firearms training at the North Georgia Correctional Academy in Alto.

Corrections officers ensure the safe, secure, and orderly operation of the facility. They must respond effectively to fights, disturbances, escapes, fires, natural disasters, and other emergencies while considering the safety of the general public, any hostages, and the offenders in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to protect government property. They routinely inspect locks, windows, doors, gates, and fences for signs of tampering and report security breaches and unusual occurrences. Officers also inspect the facility for unsanitary conditions, contraband, and fire hazards. They evaluate the quality/quantity of work performed by offenders and prepare disciplinary reports.



In 2009, the Gwinnett County Comprehensive Correctional Complex became the only accredited government-owned correctional facility in Georgia.



On weekends during 2014, WAP participants picked up 35,523 bags of litter from 2,178 miles of Gwinnett County roads.

Corrections officers also supervise inmate work crews throughout the day that provide supplemental labor in Gwinnett County. You may see inmates doing janitorial or landscaping work at the Justice and Administration Center, along Ronald Reagan Parkway, or at other government buildings, roadways, and parks. Last year, work crews worked 160,194 hours, saving the County and other local governments more than \$1.9 million.

The facility also has 288 Work Release Program beds for non-violent criminal offenders such as parents who failed to pay court-ordered child support. Work Release is an alternative sentencing program that allows offenders to maintain regular employment while serving non-working hours in custody. Each resident is required to pay administrative and daily fees to offset the costs of the program in addition to any court-ordered fines, probation fees, and child support payments.

Qualifying inmates get classroom training in job search skills, such as resume writing, cover letters, thank-you notes, 30-second summaries, and interviewing, plus help with job placement and finding programs available to them after their release. Inmates attend training after their regular work assignments. Corrections' innovative training programs have won numerous awards and have been featured on Georgia Public Television. The department also offers literacy classes, GED classes and testing, and self-help programs such as substance abuse, anger management, family violence, victim impact, and voluntary religious services.

Corrections staff also play a part in preventing the county's youth from becoming part of the system through its Prison Awareness Program. Once a week, corrections officers and hand-selected inmates

give troubled youth a raw, behind-the-scenes look at life in prison. Many have been caught shoplifting, doing drugs, fighting, or being just plain unmanageable at home or school and are referred to the program by judges, police officers, or exasperated parents.

"We want to show the realities of going to prison," says Senior Corrections Officer Scott Riner, who runs the Prison Awareness Program along with Senior Corrections Officer Kimberly Steele, who helps with the girls. "Our inmates know how to 'talk the talk' and they've already been down that road."