

# Update on the Current State of the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (MDCR)

## Director Timothy Ryan's Presentation to the Independent Review Panel

Summarized by Fernando L. Robreño  
March 16, 2007

***During the February 22, 2007 Panel Meeting, newly appointed Director Timothy Ryan presented his vision for the future of MDCR and responded to recommendations made by the IRP regarding his department under previous administrations. Below is a summary of the information offered by Director Ryan regarding the current state of MDCR and goals for the future.***

### **Accreditation**

As it now stands MDCR only has three entities accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA), the Women's Detention Center, its Central Administrative Offices and the Boot Camp Program. Director Ryan stressed that one of his major goals is to have the entire department accredited by both the ACA and the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission. The process will take several years to complete.

In addition, Director Ryan hopes to improve upon the "direct supervision" model currently employed by the department. This style of supervision calls for officers, who are trained to engage the inmates and be available for inmates to discuss issues, to be placed in the center of dormitory style modules. Currently, all MDCR lieutenants and captains have undergone training in "direct supervision."

### **Facilities**

Throughout the years the Panel has received several complaints regarding jail conditions. Director Ryan acknowledged that some facilities have deteriorated greatly, especially the Pre-Trial Detention Center, or Dade County Jail, a building that has long outlived its usefulness and should be replaced rather than refurbished. In addition, Director Ryan stated that the mental health unit needs to be revised as approximately 20-30 percent of the inmate population is under mental health care.

MDCR has already hired consultants to determine what repairs need to be made to existing facilities and develop a timeline to have those completed. In addition, MDCR is exploring alternative sites for a new facility, possibly near the Krome Detention Center.

## **Video Cameras**

The Panel has stressed the importance of video cameras in the prison system, for both inmate and officer safety. Director Ryan pointed out that he is a strong advocate of video cameras, especially during the intake process. The cameras currently installed at the Pre-Trial Detention Center are inadequate and will be replaced. All facilities will have video cameras installed in six months. Videos will be archived for ninety days and MDCR administration will randomly select videos every quarter to review them for compliance with departmental policy and procedure.

## **Internal Affairs**

The Internal Affairs unit is of great importance to the Panel and the community since it handles all complaint investigations against departmental personnel. An issue that was raised by the Panel was the fact that some supervisors were involved in the disposition of complaints they had direct knowledge of, possibly compromising objectivity. Director Ryan indicated that this issue needs to be addressed, however in order to correct it, supervisors from other units need to be cross-trained so that they can better understand the procedures of another unit and make informed decisions.

Historically, the length of time for IA investigations has been unacceptably long. Director Ryan assured the Panel that the timeframe for investigations to be completed will be shortened, even more so with the passing of a new Florida State law requiring that IA investigations be concluded within 180 days. In addition, the database used by MDCR automatically assigns a due date when a complaint is entered allowing supervisors to track its status.

The Panel was also updated on employee photo lineups used during IA investigations. A database is now in place and all employees are required to take new ID pictures.

Complaint brochures are now being developed and will be placed in the lobbies of all correctional facilities.

## **Inmate Issues**

A new issue facing the jail system in America is the “reentry” of former inmates into the community. Mayor Carlos Alvarez mentioned in his State of the County Address that he will make “reentry” a focal point of his agenda. As it stands now, there are no reliable statistics regarding “reentry.” Director Ryan informed the Panel that he is in the process of creating a system to track the recidivism rate in MDCR.

Director Ryan explained to the Panel that currently the main concern is housing inmates and preventing escapes, with little or no focus on rehabilitation and curbing recidivism. In response to this new “reentry” effort, MDCR will begin to study and implement programs that will assist in the rehabilitation of inmates and help prevent their return to the jail system.

In addition, Director Ryan stated that MDCR will place inmate information, such as name and incarceration location, on the web in order to let family and community keep track of those in jail.