

Memorandum



Date: July 19, 2021

To: The Honorable Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Chairman
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(18)
October 5, 2021

From: Daniella Levine Cava
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava".

Subject: Report on Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department
Inmate Meal Program

The following information is provided pursuant to a request made by Commissioner Heyman during the March 11, 2021 Community Safety and Security Committee's (CSSC) meeting directing Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (MDCR) to evaluate the feasibility of transitioning the inmate food service function to a contracted vendor. This information is preliminary in nature as comprehensive research regarding the use of contracted food service vendors is being conducted in other jurisdictions.

Background

MDCR is responsible for providing three nutritionally balanced meals daily to about 4,100 inmates. Meals are based on the total required daily caloric intake and menus are certified by a registered dietitian to ensure daily nutritional needs are met. The General Population diet averages 2,700 calories daily and includes two hot meals and one cold meal. Meals include fresh fruit daily, milk daily, frozen vegetables instead of canned, fortified fruit drink, and real eggs rather than powdered. To meet the varying needs of the inmate population, MDCR offers other menus such as Boot Camp Program; Juvenile Boot Camp Program; faith-based menus such as Kosher, Halal, and Vegetarian; and therapeutic-based menus, as ordered by the medical provider, such as No Salt Added, Dialysis, Soft Diet, Liquid Diet, Rehydration Diet, Celiac Diet, and Low Residue Diet. In order to produce over 14,000 daily inmate meals, meals are prepared approximately 72 hours in advance via a cook-chill process, and meal preparation and assembly schedules are strictly maintained. Any deviation from the meal production schedule can adversely impact the ability of the Department to provide inmate meals within prescribed timelines in accordance with the Florida Model Jail Standards (FMJS).

MDCR also provides approximately 37,000 meals annually on behalf of the Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD) to the residents of the New Directions Residential Program, participants of Head Start, other community programs, and to the Juvenile Services Department (JSD), as requested. Each department is invoiced for the cost of the meal. Meal service will continue to be provided through MDCR for the organizations mentioned above if a contracted vendor is selected.

Staffing

The delivery of inmate food services is contingent on a sufficient cadre of workers. The inmate food service function has an annual budget of \$16,000,000 with 115 budgeted positions. Positions include correctional officers, cooks, food service supervisors, labor supervisors, administrative staff, account clerks, inventory clerks and other staff required, who are responsible for meal production. MDCR has experienced great difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified candidates to fill the most critical food service positions. These positions are Cook 1, Cook 2, Food Services Worker 2, Food Services Supervisor 1, and Food Services Supervisor 2. A review of recruitment efforts from January 1, 2016, and January 1, 2021 indicates the hiring of 27 employees (.5% of the 5,342 total applicants). Additionally, 10 employees separated from County service between January 1, 2016 and January 1, 2021.

Retaining staff is also a challenge. One possible solution to retain staff is to conduct a comprehensive salary review to determine if salaries are competitive and to evaluate the feasibility of increasing salary for critical food services positions within a correctional facility.

MDCR utilizes inmate workers to support its food service operations. These inmate workers assist in all aspects of the food service operations to include meal assembly on the tray line, dishwashing, loading and unloading vehicles, and general kitchen sanitation activities. Historically, MDCR utilized between 90 to 150 inmate workers to support the operation daily. Using inmate workers mitigated the difficulty in hiring. Inmate workers are carefully selected based on an established criterion, which includes criminal charges, custody level based on an objective jail classification system, disciplinary and corrective consultation history, mental health and mental health diagnosis, escape history, history of incidents such as fighting and aggressive behavior towards staff, hold for other agencies status, and length of stay, if sentenced. Inmate workers must also be cleared medically. Considering these criteria in the selection process helps to ensure that a safe food service operation is maintained. The availability of inmate workers has decreased over time as a result of several legislative initiatives to identify alternatives-to-incarceration for low level offenders. As such, MDCR food services operation now utilizes approximately 45 inmate workers per day. Additionally, 35% percent of the budgeted food service positions are vacant due to attrition and extended leave of absence. These operational vacancies, coupled with the significant shortage of inmate workers, have strained the daily operations of food services.

Cost per Inmate Meal

The cost per inmate meal (cost does not include personnel cost) has been calculated by using total cost of food purchased divided by the total number of inmate meals. MDCR has also calculated an all-inclusive cost per inmate meal to include the total personnel costs associated with meal preparation, administration, support and supervision of inmate workers. The all-inclusive cost per inmate meal has greatly increased as the average daily population has decreased but Miami-Dade County personnel costs have increased. Below is a chart of the cost per inmate meal and personnel costs for a six-year period:

	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20
Actual Inmate Meals Served	4,912,000	4,688,000	5,251,000	5,267,000	4,212,000
Average Daily Inmate Population	3,905	3,952	4,184	4,359	3,683
Total Actual Expenditures	\$15,392,000	\$15,604,000	\$15,304,000	\$16,459,000	\$16,798,000
Average Cost per Meal – Marginal (excludes personnel costs)	\$1.32	\$1.41	\$1.27	\$1.37	\$1.71
Average Cost per Meal-All Inclusive (includes personnel costs)	\$3.13	\$3.31	\$2.91	\$3.13	\$3.99

Analysis of Contracted Food Services

MDCR has conducted preliminary research regarding the cost per inmate meal in other jurisdictions. The preliminary research included responses from ten jurisdictions operating correctional facilities and reveal the marginal average cost per meal ranged from \$1.07 to \$1.56. Of the ten responding agencies, only one agency did not outsource food operations. Pursuant to the responses provided, additional information was requested from the three agencies in South Florida whose inmate population numbers most closely approximate MDCR's average daily population rate. Specifically, the Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO), the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBCSO), and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) were used for this comparison. Both BSO and PBCSO provided additional information regarding how their cost per meal is calculated, inmate workers in the meal production process, kitchen security, calorie counts, and number of hot meals provided each day. Both BSO and PBCSO provided responses indicating that they provide FMJS compliant meal services, utilize inmate workers in the meal production process, and provide sworn staff (kitchen security) to supervise inmate workers during the meal preparation process. With respect to their cost per meal, the costs associated

with providing Correctional Officers or Deputy Sheriff's for kitchen security is not included in the cost per meal. The marginal cost per meal for BSO is \$1.36 and for PBCSO is \$1.41. This cost does not include the expense of sworn staff providing kitchen security.

Other Considerations Regarding Contracted Services

MDCR's preliminary market research has revealed that many of the companies involved in the delivery of services to correctional agencies have undergone significant industry-related consolidation. Specifically, those companies that provide inmate commissary, inmate banking, inmate food services, inmate telephones, inmate tablets, inmate video visitation, and electronic payment services have undergone the most significant consolidation. The Keefe Group, a leader in inmate commissary services, provides inmate banking services, electronic payment services, inmate video visitation services, and inmate telephone services. The Trinity Services Group is a leader in the correctional food services industry. The Keefe and Trinity Services Groups are both owned by H.I.G., which is a private Equity LLC and frequently market their services as a package. GTL, a leader in the inmate telephone services, inmate tablets, and video visitation services, owns TOUCHPAY, an electronic payment services company, who frequently partners with ARAMARK Correctional Services a leader in inmate commissary, banking and food services. SECURUS, the second largest inmate telephone services provider in the country, owns JPAY, a corrections-based electronic payment services. Food services providers are also acquiring and partnering with larger food services providers and food services management companies to increase their market share and remain competitive. The Elior Group, through the Trusthouse Services Group, owns A'VIANDS. A'VIANDS owns both the Summit Food Services Group and Consolidated Food Management, two large companies that specialize in Healthcare, Corrections, Education, and Business Dining.

These consolidations have resulted in the packaging, bundling, and consolidation of services that were previously offered and acquired through separate solicitations and contracts. A contractor seeking to provide food services could potentially offer a lower and more attractive cost per meal if the contractor also expects to provide other services that are capable of generating revenue. In some cases, contractors have structured their contracts to allow inmate commissary revenue to subsidize the delivery of food services. Thus, these companies are providing inmate food services as a gateway to other revenue producing products and services. In a highly competitive marketplace, a contractor may be willing to forgo profit from the delivery of inmate food services, as long as they have access to providing other inmate products and services. As a result, the final analysis of any costs per meal information provided by an external contractor must be examined in the context of current market conditions as well as including a review of the extent to which the contractor in question is providing other revenue generating services in a manner that influences the cost per meal.

Potential Benefits of External Contracting

Contracting inmate food services to an outside vendor could mitigate several of the challenges currently facing MDCR and transition daily responsibilities of inmate food services as summarized below:

- Provide food services regardless of MDCR staffing levels
- Eliminate the need for MDCR to hire and retain qualified food services employees. MDCR food services positions would be reduced through attrition and realignment of staff
- Eliminate the reliance on inmate workers thus offsetting the inmate worker shortage issue. This will significantly reduce the number of correctional staff required to supervise inmate workers and the need for an administrative clearance process for inmate workers assigned to food service operations

- Provide and maintain food services equipment and an inventory of food and supplies required to support its food service operations, including but not limited to, food, beverages, condiments, wrapping film, cleaning and sanitation equipment and supplies, soap, bleach, towels, aprons, hats, garbage can liners, paper cups, plates, bowls, trays, napkins, foil paper, carts, and other related items potentially required to support the inmate feeding process
- Provide refrigerated vehicles, carts, coolers, or containers, and / or execute the transportation of both hot and cold inmate meals from MDCR kitchens or the Contractor's off-site meal preparation facilities as required to ensure the delivery of two hot and one cold meal each day to all members of the inmate population at the appropriate time intervals
- Provide two hot and one cold meal each day to all members of the inmate in a manner that permits transportation, staging, warming, and service to inmates at temperatures that meet or exceed the standards established by the Florida Department of Health
Provide inmate meals three times per day, seven days per week, three hundred sixty-five days per year – (three hundred sixty-six days in a leap year) as required to ensure uninterrupted inmate meal services with intervals between meals compliant with Chapter 6 of the FMJS
- Provide inmate menus that include an increased variety of quality, healthy and nutritious foods, appealing in presentation, appetizing, and varied in quantities equal to the appropriate caloric intake by meal type, conform to the inmate meal rotation cycle of 28 days consistent FMJS, and ensure meal services consistent with the security level of the housing unit to include no utensils or finger foods only for certain mental health inmates
- Provide required annual review of all menus by a licensed, registered dietician who affirms in writing that the recipe and quantity of each menu meets or exceeds all established National Research Council Recommended Daily Allowance standards, American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation standards, FMJS standards, and any other standards incorporating Recommended Daily Allowances by age group

Despite the potential benefits, some correctional agencies which had privatized have **experienced concerns** associated with contracted food service vendors. As such, it is important to summarize possible challenges below:

- Disruption of inmate food services in the event of vendor non-performance
- Privatization can change focus from service delivery to profits by reducing the quality of inmate meals
- Reduced meal portions as a cost savings method
- Decline in food safety and sanitization.
- Inmate meal dissatisfaction can result in disturbances

Fiscal Impact

MDCR has tentatively identified potential cost savings of \$3,043,000 with the transition to contract food services resulting from the realignment of correctional staff that were responsible for kitchen security when inmate workers were assisting in the food service function.

Correctional staff, consisting of 4 corporals, 4 sergeants, and 29 correctional officers, would be reassigned to other operational posts. This would mitigate the need to hire 37 correctional officers and the savings could be used to fund other important initiatives such as reentry services. Additional savings could be realized with the realignment of food service support staff to other functional areas in MDCR. However, MDCR employees with primary food services responsibilities would assist the contracted vendor but remain MDCR employees, and any reduction of County staff would occur through attrition.

Further Research

Comprehensive research on the various inmate food service models and providers needs to be conducted. This research should include: the quantity and quality of inmate meals, reliability of food

delivery, compliance with FMJS and other regulatory standards, availability of special diets, consistency of inmate meal portions, satisfaction by correctional agency with vendor services, redundancy to ensure continuity of inmate meals during emergent situations, and the evaluation of best practices by other correctional agencies. Opportunities to include small businesses and ensure any potential future solicitation prioritizes local firms and local employment will be pursued.

MDCR is committed to improving its overall operations and providing quality inmate meals in the most efficient manner. MDCR will continue researching the feasibility of transitioning to contracted food services and will work with the Internal Services Department throughout this process. Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact Director Daniel Junior, Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department, at telephone number (786) 263-6010.

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