

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

VIRTUAL ACADEMY FOR CORRECTIONS ANALYSTS: KICKOFF WEBINAR

November 8, 2023
3:00–4:30 p.m. ET



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



Presenters



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Andrew Barbee
Director, Research
and Development,
Texas Department
of Criminal Justice,
VACA Advisory
Committee
member

Webinar Purpose



Orient audience members to the tools and services that will be offered by the Virtual Academy for Corrections Analysts Program and provide an opportunity to begin to build peer relationships.

Agenda

Welcome and Introduction

Analysis of Engagement Questionnaire Results

Overview of VACA Tools and Services

Audience Q&A

Analysis in Action with a Corrections Research Director

Peer Breakouts

SECTION 1

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



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What Is the Office of Justice Programs?

- The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides **grant funding, training, research, and statistics** to the criminal justice community.
- OJP is **one of three grant-making components** of the Department of Justice along with the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

BJA – Bureau of Justice Assistance



BJS – Bureau of Justice Statistics



NIJ – National Institute of Justice



OVC – Office for Victims of Crime



OJJDP – Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



SMART – Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking





U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance

Mission: BJA's mission is to provide leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support state, local, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. BJA works with communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations to reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement, and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system.

**Karhlton F. Moore, BJA
Director**

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<https://bja.ojp.gov/>



How BJA Supports the Field



Fund

Invest diverse funding streams to accomplish goals.



Educate

Research, develop, and deliver what works.



Equip

Create tools and products to build capacity and improve outcomes.



Partner

Consult, connect, and convene.

BJA is committed to helping departments of corrections (DOCs) build capacity for data-driven decision making.

Based on feedback from DOC directors and state leaders, BJA has prioritized bringing critical resources to DOCs through a suite of programs that enhance agencies' ability to effectively assess, analyze, compare, and utilize the data they collect.

New BJA-funded Programs to Enhance Corrections Data Analysis



Resident Corrections Analysts (RCA) Initiative



Virtual Academy for Corrections Analysts (VACA)

These programs...

1. Give DOCs the **direct support** they need, when they need it, **to build their data analysis capacity.**
2. Build the national corrections data analyst **workforce over the long term.**

What Is the Resident Corrections Analyst Initiative?

The Resident Corrections Analysts (RCA) Initiative **embeds analysts at state DOCs** to help agencies build out their data infrastructure and more fully integrate the use of data analysis practices, tools, and reporting into their daily operations and management.

More information is available at:
<https://csgjusticecenter.org/projects/state-corrections-data-analysts-in-residence/>



27 agencies applied in 2023



4 agencies awarded analyst placements



Placements last up to 1 year

The Council of State Governments Justice Center



We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

How We Work

- We bring people together.
- We drive the criminal justice field forward with original research.
- We build momentum for policy change.
- We provide expert assistance.

CSG Justice Center Goals

- Break the cycle of incarceration.
- Advance health, opportunity, and equity.
- Use data to improve safety and justice.

What is the Virtual Academy for Corrections Analysts Program?

The **Virtual Academy for Corrections Analysts (VACA)** program will build data literacy and analytic capabilities of DOCs nationwide to further data-informed planning and decision making.

How does the Virtual Academy for Corrections Analysts Program work?

DOC researchers and analysts will be able to access the program's self-paced learning materials and core competencies, communities of practice, peer-to-peer networks, and technical assistance at no cost.

VACA Advisory Council

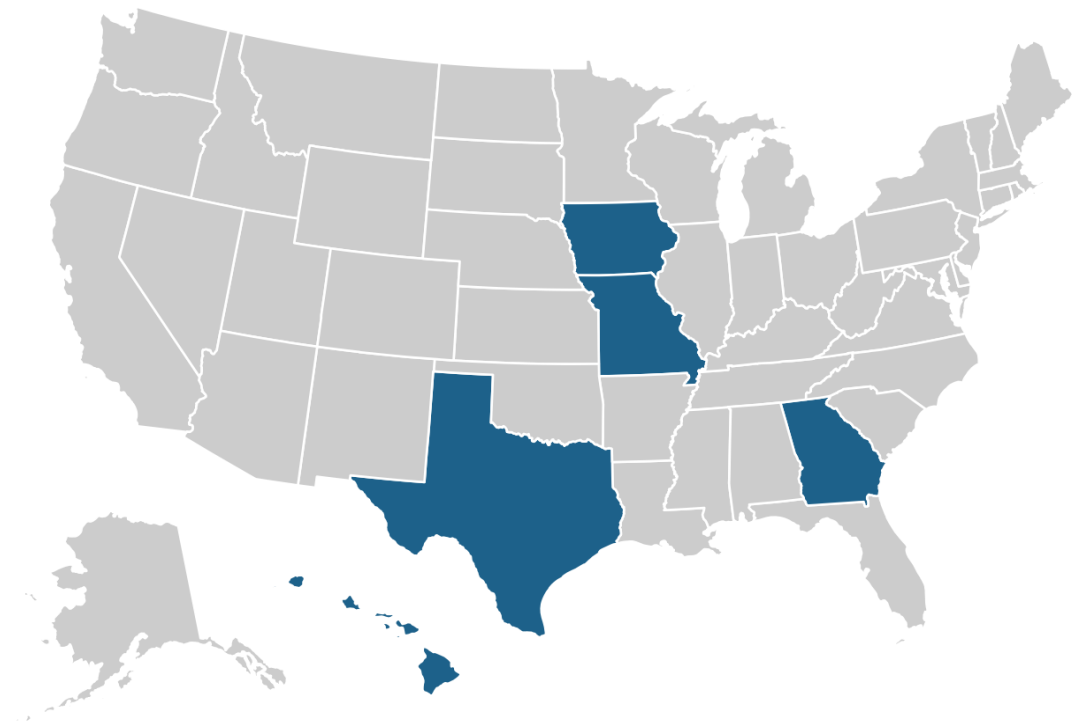
Andrew Barbee, Director, Research and Development,
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

David Edwards, Director of Research, Planning & Process
Improvement, Missouri Department of Corrections

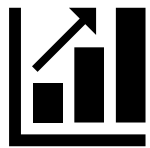
Sarah Fineran, Director of Research, Iowa Department of
Corrections

Dr. Erin Harbinson, Director, Criminal Justice Research
Institute, The Judiciary – State of Hawai'i

Dr. Nick Powell, Director of Strategic Planning & Analysis,
Georgia Department of Community Supervision



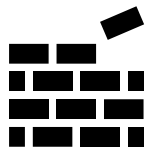
Why VACA?



Corrections analysts (CAs) are required to conduct myriad analyses—from tracking populations and key performance metrics to conducting program and impact evaluations.



CAs usually spend most of their time responding to data requests and fulfilling mandated reporting requirements.



DOCs do not have the infrastructure in place to institutionalize analysis capabilities and processes.

To respond to these needs, VACA will...



Develop core competencies.



Train DOCs.



Provide resources.



Build communities of practice.

SECTION 2

ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS



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Who responded to the questionnaire?

Job titles of questionnaire respondents

111

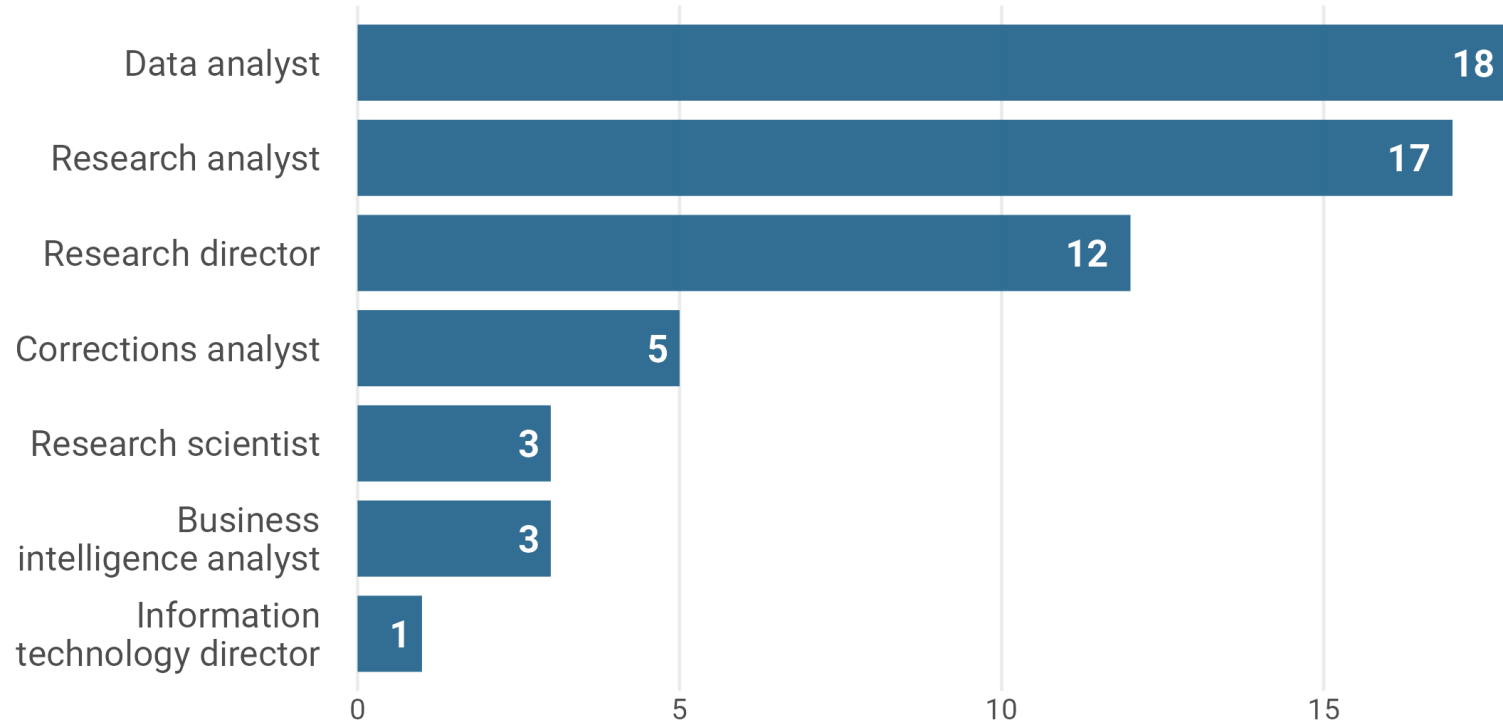
Respondents*

34

State corrections agencies

1,049

Combined years of experience in corrections analysis

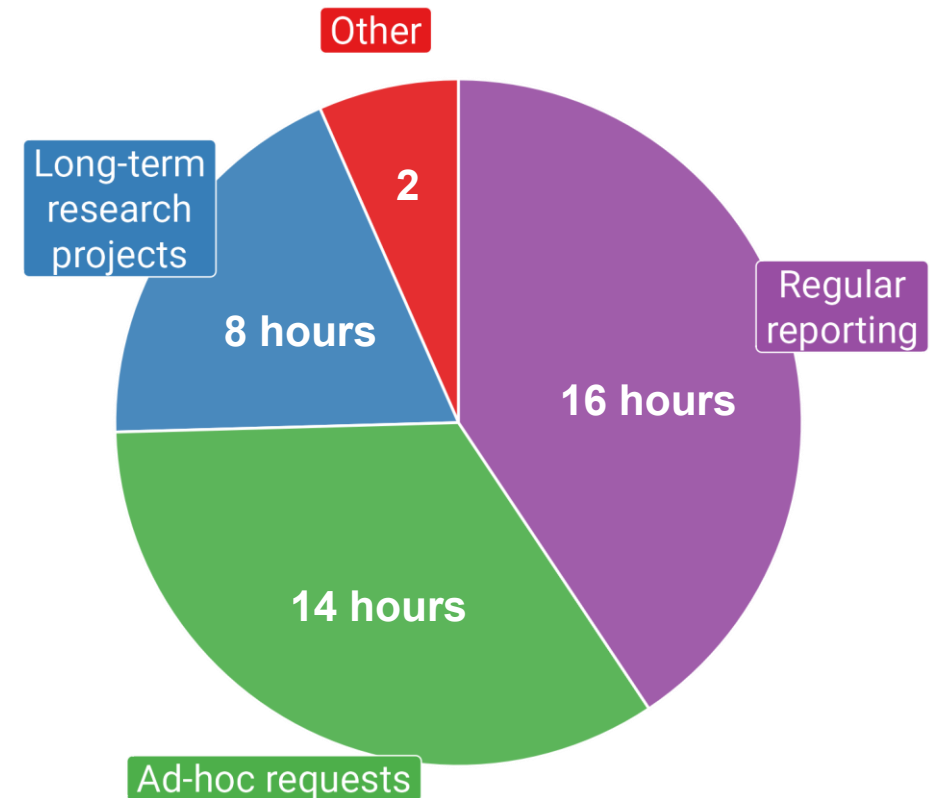


*53 respondents had "Other" job titles.

What do corrections analysts do?

1. Generate **regular, ongoing reporting** for internal agency operations.
2. Respond to **ad-hoc data requests** for internal agency operations, oversight bodies, media requests.
3. Produce and analyze data for the purposes of **quality improvement**, such as performance metrics, program evaluations, or gap analyses.
4. Generate regular, ongoing reporting **for public display on a website**, such as monthly or annual reports or dashboards.

A typical week for a corrections analyst



What are corrections analysts' biggest challenges?

“Data quality is a huge problem. We have **huge swathes of missing data**, and it’s very difficult to parse all the missing data and incorrectly entered data. Second is the lack of staffing and time. **Too many requests to answer** to get all the work done in a timely manner.”

“As the sole statistician in a large organization, I often have to **switch priorities at a moment’s notice**. That means I have many irons in the fire at the same time.”

“There is not a lot of established methodology for analyses, and many of the techniques have been developed by people who have never worked with correctional data, so they **don’t understand the processes that generate the data**, the limitations of the data, or the limitations of the processes ... we have to **work with many different people across multiple disciplines** and communicate effectively to gather the right information to be able to provide meaningful analysis.”

What do corrections analysts want?

“Knowledge and **best practices** from people who are already successful at this position.”

“Corrections-centric data analysis considerations, tools, and methods continuing education. The creation of a group of other analysts from other states to **discuss challenges and find new and innovative ideas**, instead of constantly ‘reinventing the wheel.’”

“We are learning new ways to pull data and prepare reports ... with some combination of SQL and Power BI. We have had online classes in Power BI, but corrections are different from the sales examples they used. An **online class set up for corrections, specifically using incarceration metrics**, would be very useful.”

“More training in SQL or help with **creating efficient outputs.**”

What type of training and professional development do corrections analysts want?

95%

interested in **accessing tools and resources** to develop technical skills.

84%

interested in **attending conferences** with other corrections analysts.

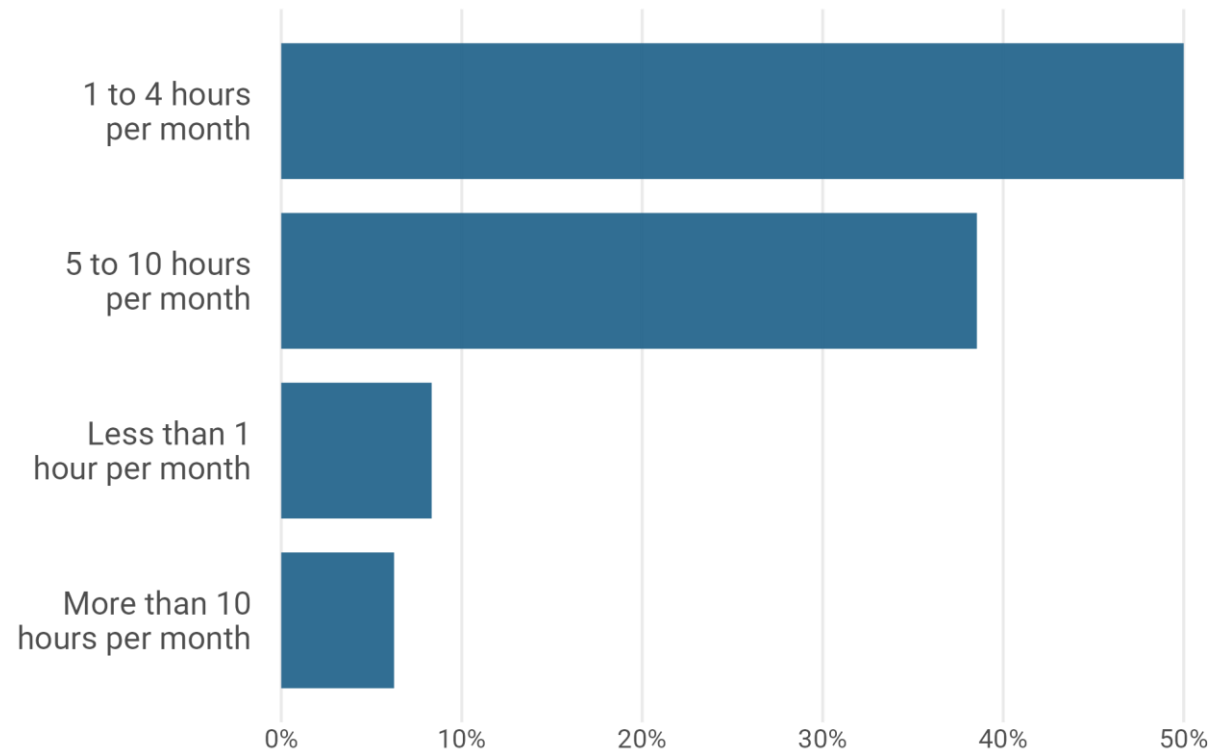
42%

interested in **receiving mentorship** from another corrections analyst.

23%

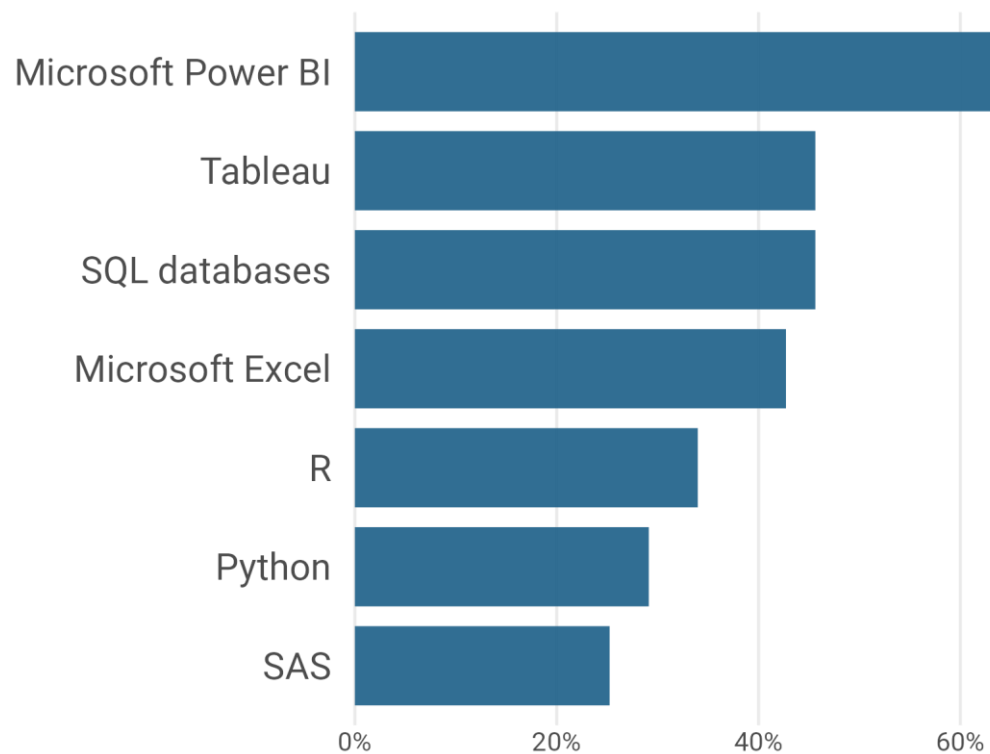
interested in being a **mentor** for other corrections analysts.

Time for professional development

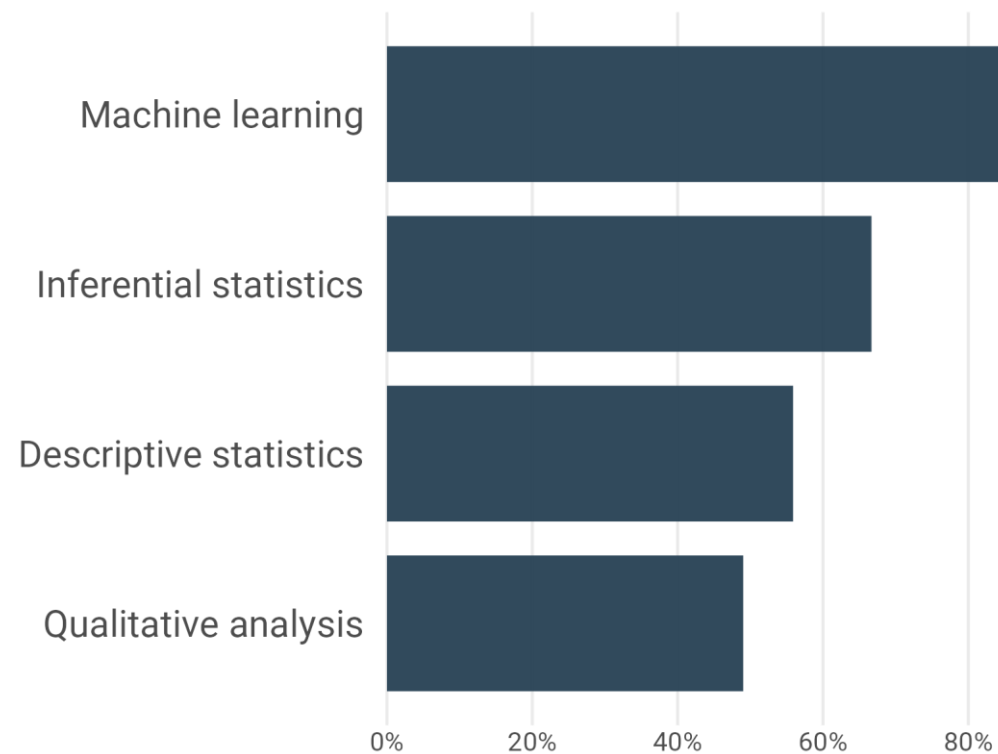


What tools and methods do corrections analysts want to learn about?

Technical tools



Research methods



Let your voice be heard!

- We are still collecting input from research directors and corrections analysts.
- After this webinar, you'll receive an email with a link to the engagement questionnaire. If you haven't responded yet, please fill it out or forward it to the appropriate people at your agency.

SECTION 3

OVERVIEW OF VACA TOOLS AND SERVICES



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VACA will provide DOC leaders and analysts with opportunities to...

- Access **resources** on methodological standards and substantive topics.
- Engage with **customized tools**.
- Receive training through online and self-guided modules.
- Join a **community of practitioners**.
- Work with subject matter experts to **receive targeted technical assistance** and learn how to better communicate research results.

VACA Services and Tools Overview: Core Competencies

Resource	Example	Tools	Services
Methodological Standards	Guidance on key statistical analysis topics (such as linear regressions)	✓	
Substantive Standards	Guidance on sector-specific subjects (such as population projections)	✓	
Hiring Materials	A list of core competencies designed to assist DOCs in hiring qualified analysts	✓	

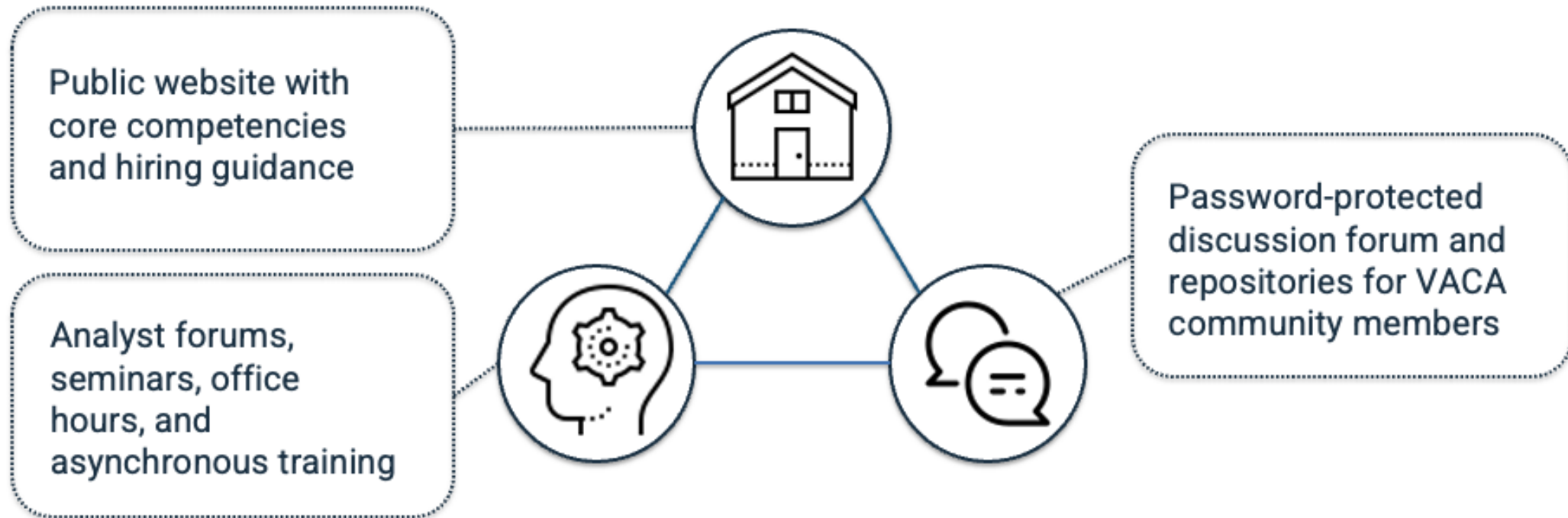
VACA Services and Tools Overview: Training and Capacity Development

Resource	Example	Tools	Services
Self-guided Trainings	Modularized online training on methodological and substantive standards	✓	✓
Model Code Template Repository	A code repository of templates that analysts can use to re-create analyses using their own data	✓	
DOC Report Repository	A gated repository of reports authored by DOCs to provide ideas to others and facilitate collaboration	✓	
Targeted TA	Working directly with analysts to run analyses and troubleshoot problems		✓

VACA Services and Tools Overview: Communities of Practice

Resource	Example	Tools	Services
Analyst Seminar Series	Virtual meetings for corrections analysts to share ideas, challenges, and successes		✓
Peer-to-Peer Mentoring	Matching less experienced analysts with veteran researchers		✓
Office Hours	Weekly office hours where analysts can “drop in” to work with SMEs		✓
Discourse Online Forum	Members-only discussion web forum to make peer connections while discussing ideas and sharing challenges	✓	

VACA Delivery of Services and Tools



SECTION 4

AUDIENCE Q&A



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For additional questions and comments, please contact us at vaca@csq.org or use the QR code above to visit the webpage.

SECTION 5

ANALYSIS IN ACTION:

ANDREW BARBEE

DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT,
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



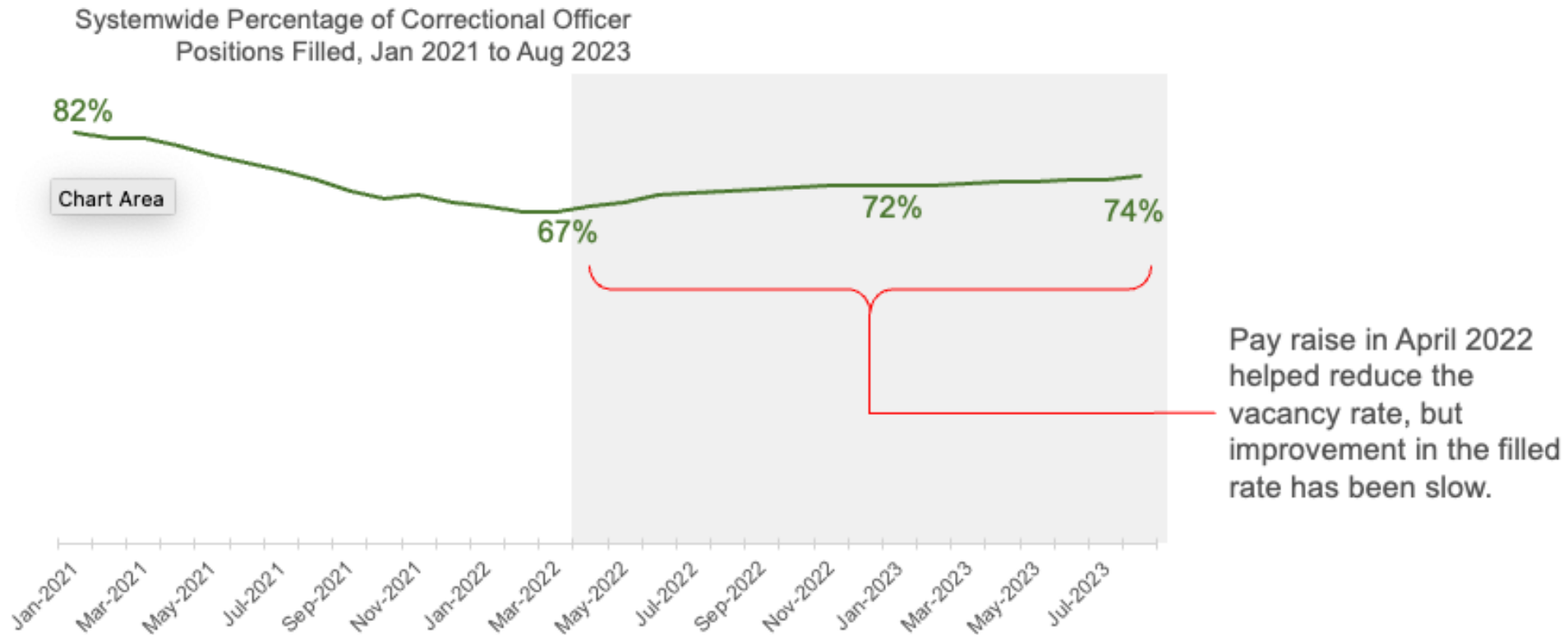
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Texas Department of Criminal Justice Update on Correctional Officer Retention

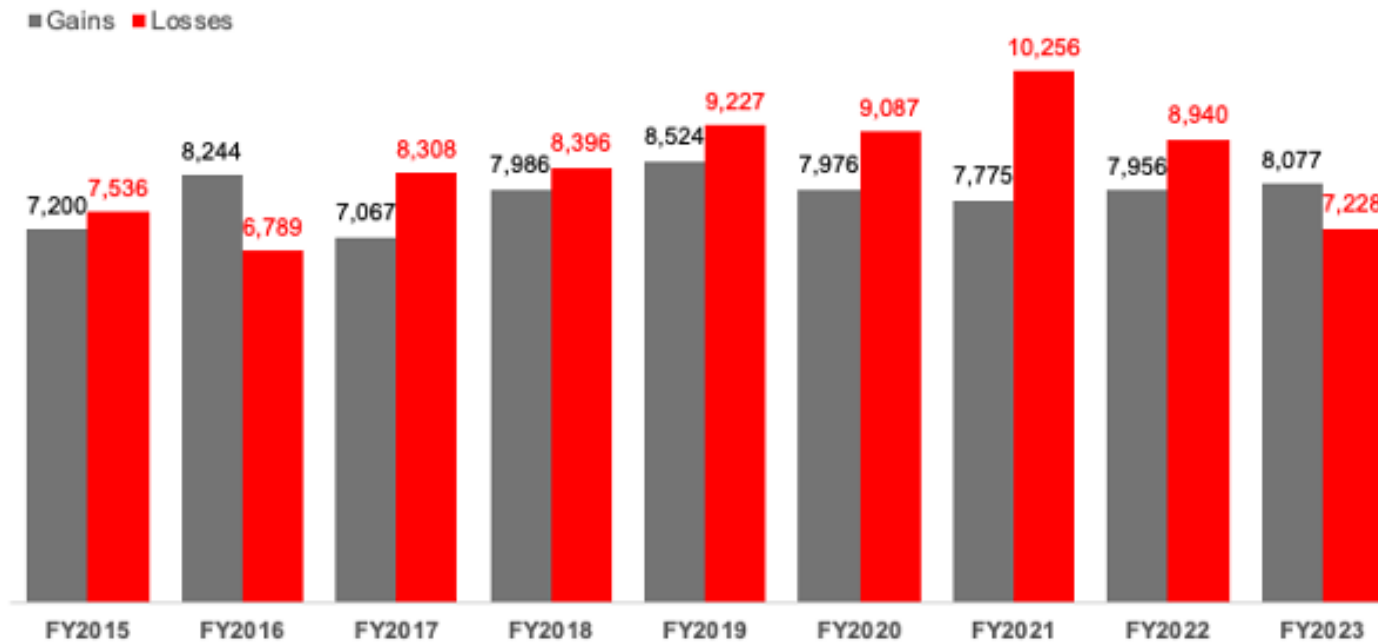
November 2023

Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Research and Development Department

Correctional officer “fill rate” was at low of 67 percent during COVID-19.



In FY2023, CO gains exceeded losses for the first time since FY2016.



CO losses peaked in FY2021 and were 51% higher than FY2016 losses.

- Fortunately, CO losses declined 30% from FY2021 to FY2023.

During these 9 years:

- Over 70,000 people hired, and
- Almost 76,000 people separated.

Noble efforts and frustrating results

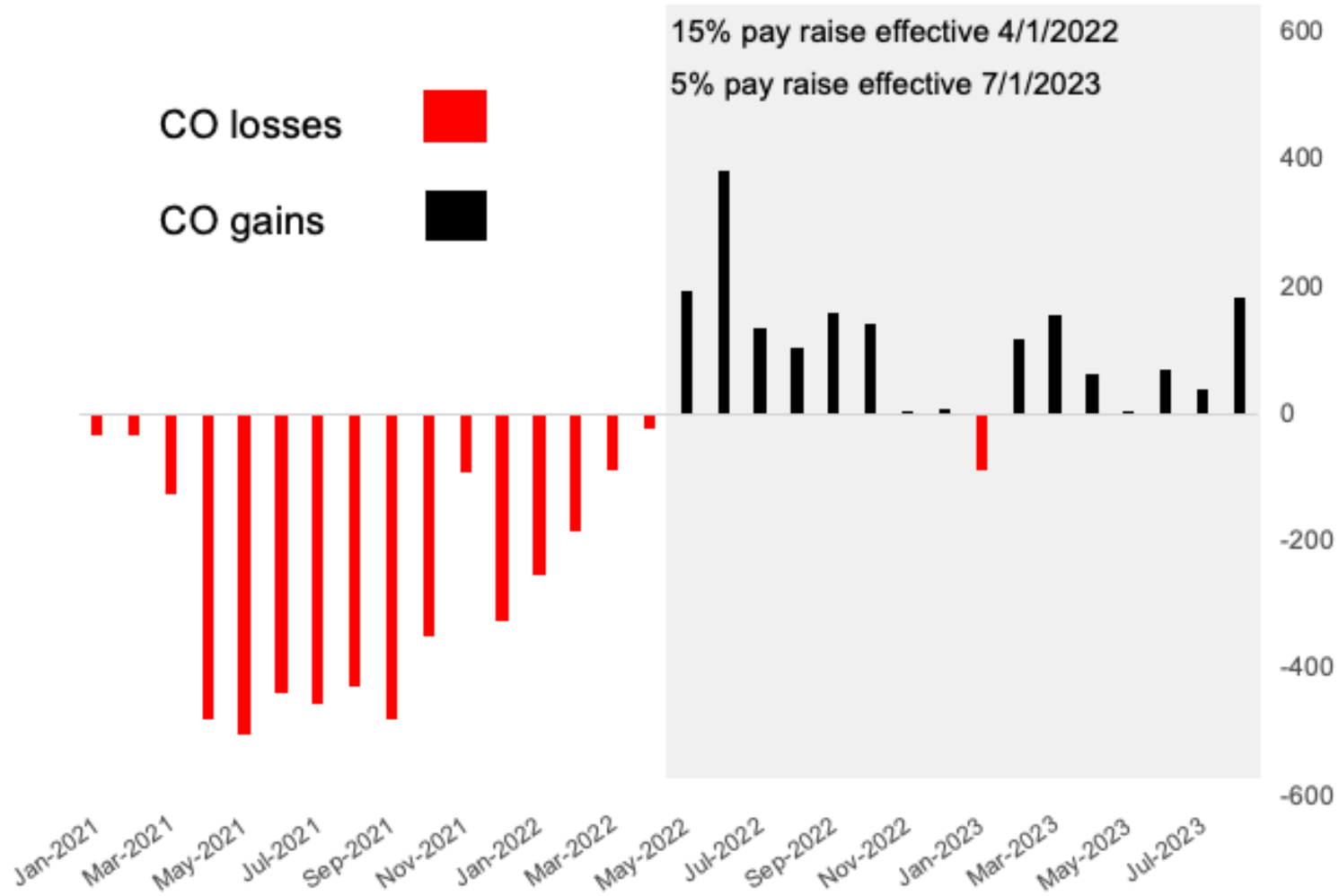
Initiative

- Targeted recruiting of veterans
- Hiring bonuses
- “Direct hire” by wardens
- Retention “specialists” on units
- 15% and 5% pay raises

Results

- Among fastest to quit
- Among fastest to quit
- No impact
- Retention unimproved
- Positive bump

Correctional officer gains following recent pay raises



Public attention and coverage of likely across-the-board pay raise during recent legislative session may have further incentivized retention in recent months.

Correctional officer losses are increasingly through voluntary separation.



Voluntary separations accounted for half of CO losses in FY2023.

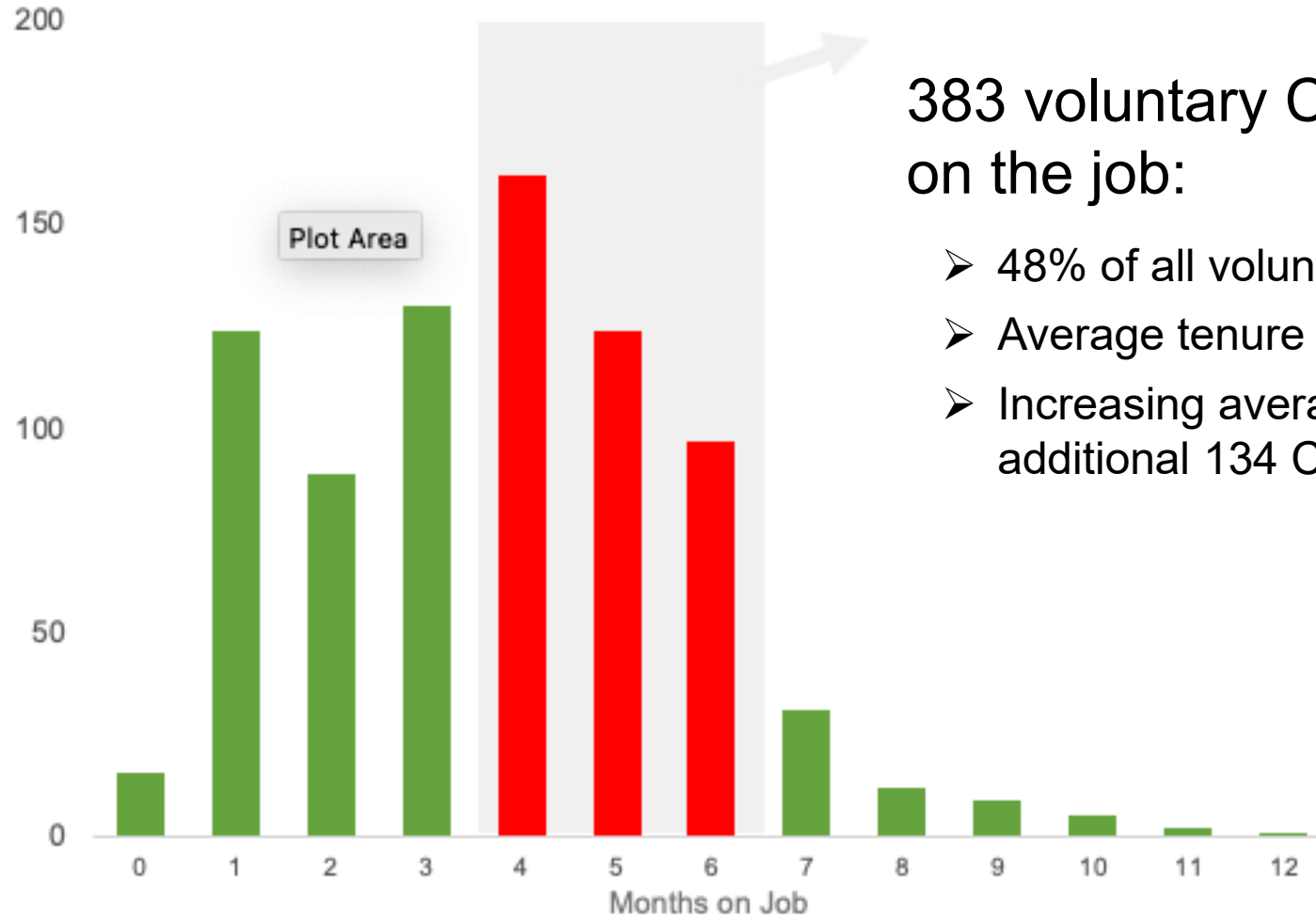
Separations within the first months after hire have been a growing problem.

Fiscal Year of Hire	Original Hire Cohort #	Share of CO Hires Lost			1 year loss rate
		0-6 mos	7-12 mos	13-24 mos	
2015	7,200	24%	16%	18%	40%
2016	8,244	25%	19%	21%	44%
2017	7,067	28%	19%	20%	47%
2018	7,986	29%	19%	22%	47%
2019	8,524	29%	20%	20%	49%
2020	7,976	31%	21%	22%	52%
2021	7,775	41%	22%	14%	63%
2022	7,956	37%	16%	---	53%
2023	8,077	28%	---	---	---

Setting Targets

- Analyses can become overwhelming
- Identify subsets of larger problem (e.g., Veterans and college grads)
- Use of workgroups and field staff to collaboratively prioritize and make incremental operational changes

CO II voluntary separations in FY 2022 by tenure



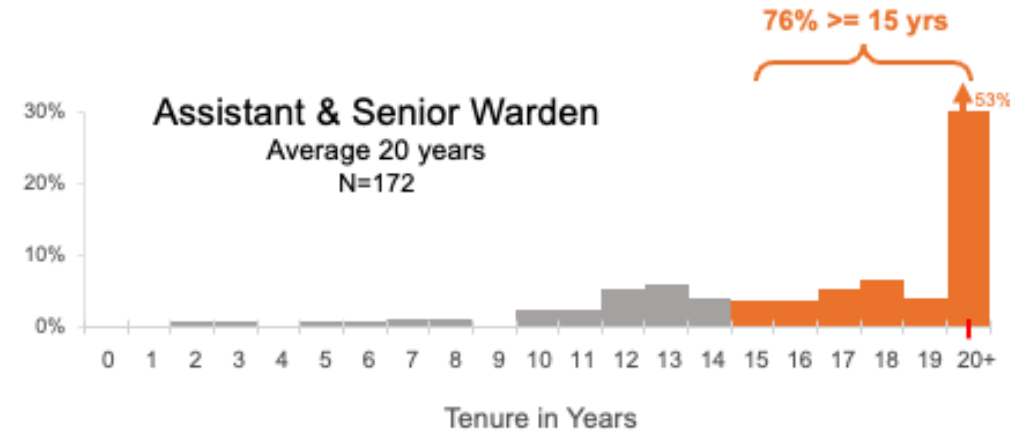
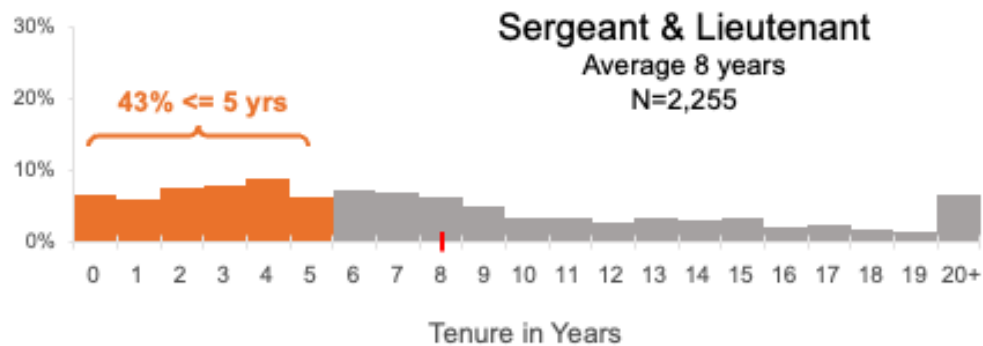
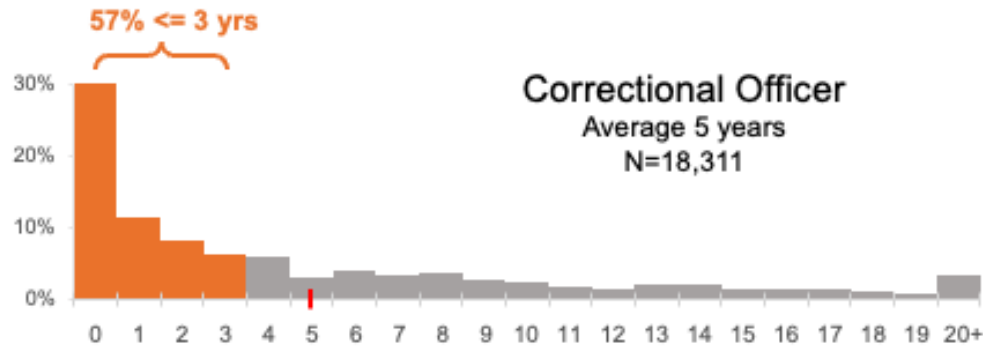
383 voluntary CO II separations within 4–6 months on the job:

- 48% of all voluntary separations among CO II ranks
- Average tenure = 4.8 months (includes pre-service)
- Increasing average tenure to just 9 months would yield additional 134 COs available for duty

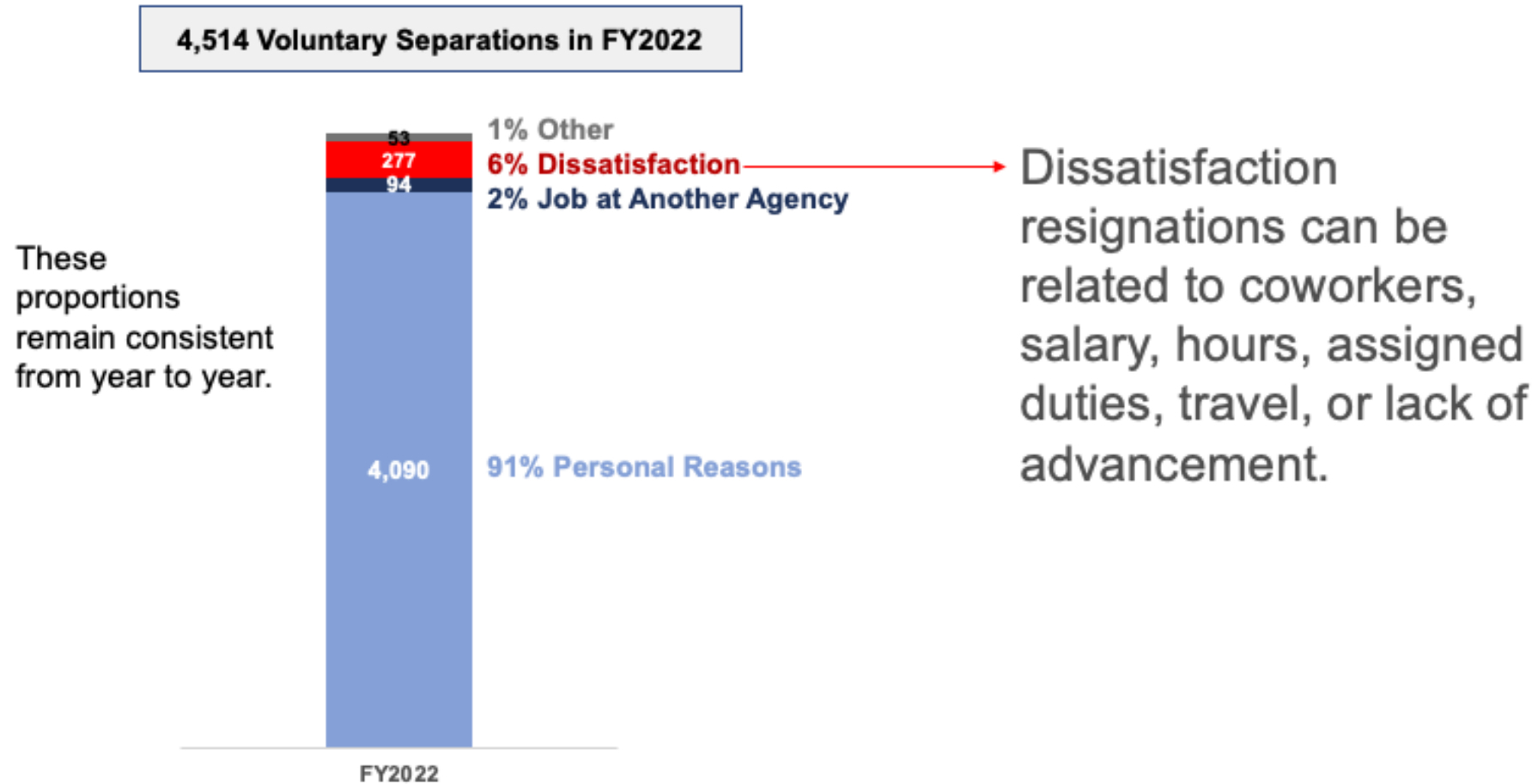
Changing Culture

- People leave people and environments
- Historical approaches inadequate
- Staff must genuinely perceive their opinions are sought and heard
- Start at foundational level

Security workforce as of 2/28/2023 by rank and tenure



Traditional “exit interview” sheds little light into reasons why correctional officers are leaving.



TDCJ is moving towards system of regularly surveying staff

Milestone Targets

- Pre-Service
 - Once prior to graduation
- Annual
 - In-service
- Separation, retirement, or transfer

Random Sampling

- Monthly
 - 1,000 COs
- No repeat sampling
 - Max of once annually
- Stratified by rank and tenure
 - Monthly sample will reflect composition of the CO workforce

Survey administration should yield 5,000–10,000 responses annually

SECTION 6

PEER BREAKOUTS



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Transition to Peer Breakouts

- The purpose of the peer breakouts is to begin creating community among the webinar participants and help build professional relationships across state systems.
- CSG Justice Center staff will also use this time to gather additional feedback on needs across the field.
- Please select the breakout room that best aligns with your job title and the issue area you find most interesting.
- The breakout session will last **20 minutes**, and each room will have a CSG Justice Center staff facilitator.

Choose your peer breakout session

Leaders, directors, and administrators

Room 1

Hiring and training corrections research and data staff

Room 2

Corrections research in action

Operations and program staff

Room 3

Corrections research in action

Analysts, researchers, and IT staff

Room 4

Statistical methods for corrections research

Room 5

Software tools for corrections reporting and analysis

Room 6

Data infrastructure, systems, and exchanges

Room 7

Corrections research in action

Stay Connected!

- For more information about VACA: vaca@csg.org
- For more information about BJA programs and services:
 - Heather Tubman-Carbone: Heather.Tubman-Carbone@usdoj.gov
 - Ben Shelor: Robert.Shelor@usdoj.gov

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