

Corrections Overtime Planning Study

May 11, 2006

**Conducted for the
Performance Audit Committee
Pierce County Council**

by

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Summary

The question most often asked about overtime use in jails focuses on whether overtime is a cost-effective use of staff. The answer to the question, however, does not address the much larger, cost-impact issues related to the number of inmates served, the design of jail facilities, and the overall staffing resources that are needed to operate a jail efficiently. The last time one of these issues was addressed in detail for Pierce County was in a jail staffing analysis conducted in 1999 on behalf of the Performance Audit Committee. In 2003, several years after that study, the county opened its second jail in downtown Tacoma. Neither the new jail, nor the old and new jails in combination, has been the subject of a comprehensive review.

Nevertheless, there are key questions about overtime that can and should be answered under any circumstances, even absent a comprehensive review, so that cost-effective decisions can be made about its use. This report asks and answers many of the key issues related to overtime. The major findings of the report are:

- Contrary to a common misperception, overtime is not necessarily more expensive than the use of full-time officers for staffing needed posts in the jails.
- There are operational concerns related to relying too heavily on overtime.
- In some instances overtime use is unnecessary from an operational point of view and could be eliminated. Approximately \$270,000 could have been saved in 2005 had there been different policies and practices in place regarding the scheduling of leave and the use of compensatory time. However, the policy concerning leave scheduling, which resulted in the bulk of the unnecessary overtime, is prescribed in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement and would have to be changed to achieve these savings.
- This report does not conclude that a performance audit specific to overtime is needed. However, several issues that can have an impact on overtime, such as difficulties in filling officer vacancies, inmate processing and classification matters, and the staffing of the jail escort function, could be incorporated in a larger study or addressed as separate studies.
- This report finds that the Corrections Overtime Worksheet, which was developed by Budget and Finance to analyze the reasons for overtime, needs to be validated, and recommends that the results of the validation process be reported to the Performance Audit Committee.
- This report further recommends that the County consider utilizing an Operations Forecast Model that would, among other benefits, show the breakeven point between the costs of using full-time staff versus overtime.

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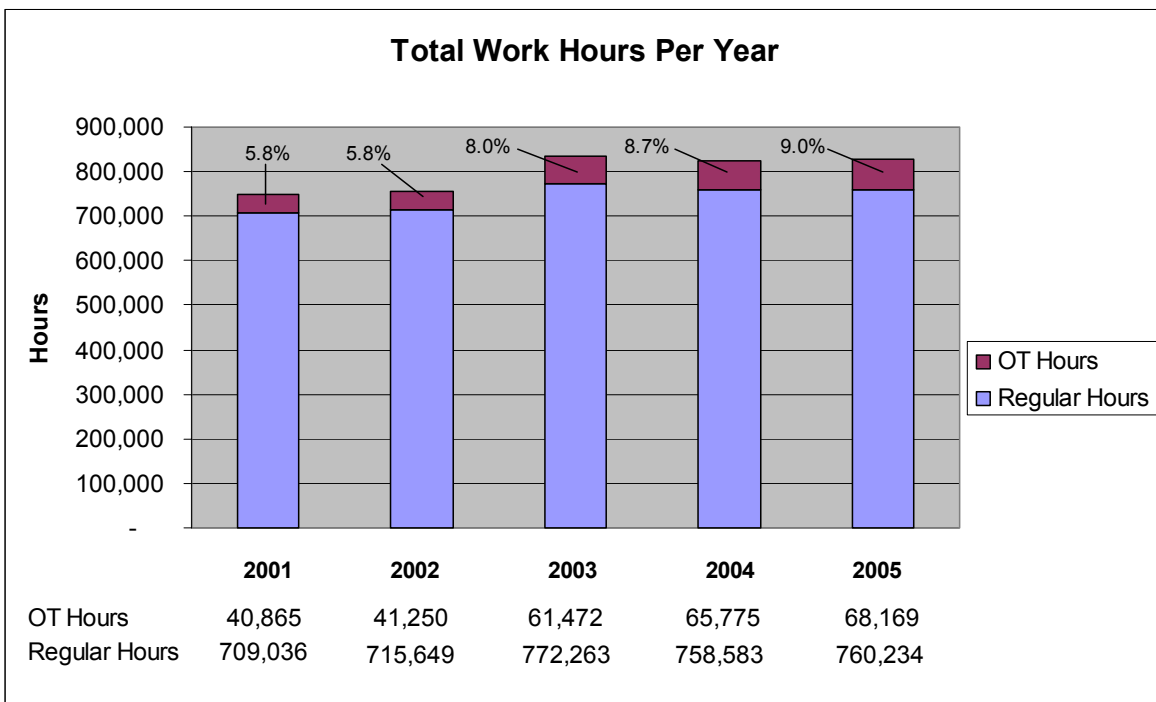
Chapter 1

Introduction

The Corrections Bureau has the largest overtime expenditures among County agencies, with expenditures totaling approximately \$2.7 million in 2005. Since 2001, total hours worked by staff in the jail have increased by about 7%, which corresponds with the increase in total FTEs. During the same period, however, overtime hours have increased 67% from just under 41,000 in 2001 to over 68,000 in 2005.

This means that overtime hours, as a percentage of all hours worked, have been increasing. It also means that, on average, jail staff have worked more overtime each successive year. Exhibit 1 displays information on total hours and overtime hours worked from 2001 to 2005.

Exhibit 1



Having reviewed the overtime trends at the Corrections Bureau and other agencies, the Performance Audit Committee decided to focus attention on overtime at the jail. At its meeting in January 2006, the Committee approved a Corrections Overtime Planning Study. To facilitate the study, a Working Group was convened to share views, review and collect data, develop analytical techniques, and formulate issues that might be addressed in a future performance audit or other kind of study.

Working Group members included:

- Bob Thomas, consultant to the Performance Audit Committee
- Patrick Kenney, Director, Budget and Finance
- John Broughton, Administrative Analyst, Budget and Finance
- Eileen Bisson, Corrections Chief
- Lieutenant Rich Morvel, in charge of overall scheduling at the jail
- Lieutenant Deanna Davis, day shift supervisor in charge of shift scheduling
- Tom Weber, Council Administrator for Research and Policy
- Matt Temmel, Performance Audit Coordinator

The consultant's work included meeting with the Working Group and subgroups, interviewing with Corrections staff and others as needed, and conducting independent data collection and analysis.

Although the consultant's work focused on reviewing issues raised by the Working Group and formulating issues for future review, it was expected that the review process itself might help to resolve some of the questions about overtime use and other aspects of jail operations. Accordingly, Chapter 2 focuses on providing specific answers to questions posed about jail overtime. Chapter 3 contains recommendations for resolving the issues that have been identified. Chapter 4, in turn, discusses additional issues that could not be fully addressed in this planning study, but which could be included in a future performance audit of the Corrections Bureau.

The consultant submitted a draft of this report to the Performance Audit Committee staff, the Director of Budget and Finance, and the Corrections Chief for technical review and comment. Where appropriate, the consultant made revisions to the final report based on their input.

Chapter 2

Questions & Answers Regarding Corrections Bureau Overtime

Question 1:

Is the use of overtime generally more expensive than hiring full-time staff to work assigned posts at the jail?

Answer: No.

Over the long run the financial costs are about the same. When new officers are hired, Pierce County must pay for their medical and dental benefits, whereas these benefits have already been paid for officers working overtime. Also, new hires are paid for time away from work (e.g., for annual leave and sick leave). When officers work overtime, they are paid only for the hours they work.

There is a common misconception that overtime is expensive and should be avoided due to the fact that it is paid at the rate of time-and-a-half of regular hourly wages. However, in the context of providing staffing to work posts in the jail, there are two factors that make the use of full-time staff just about as expensive as overtime:

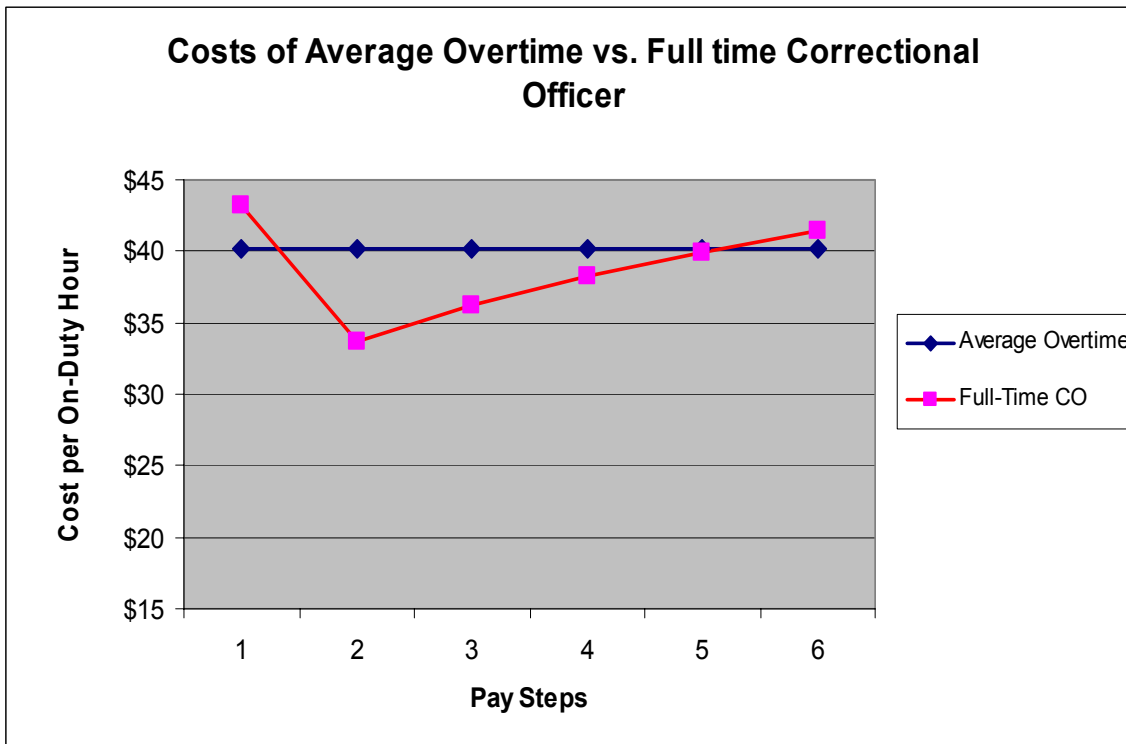
- Full-time officers are paid for 2,086 hours per year, but on average they actually work at their assigned post about 82% of the time. This is because they are away from their post due to training and to planned and unplanned absences, such as vacation and sick leave. In contrast, when officers work overtime, 100% of their overtime hours are for time working at assigned posts.
- The County spends close to \$11,000 per year on medical, dental and life insurance for each officer. These are fixed costs that are only paid once and must be accounted for in the full cost of an officer. However, when officers work overtime, the time-and-a-half rate they receive applies only to their hourly wage, not to their total salary that includes fixed benefit costs.

A typical officer, costs the County about \$68,000 per year in salary and benefits, and works at a post approximately 1,710 hours per year (82% of 2,086 = 1,710). This works out to about \$40 per hour for each hour worked on the post ($\$68,000/1,710$). That is almost the same cost as the average cost of an overtime hour – \$40.12.

Exhibit 2, shown below, compares the average overtime cost for Corrections Officers to the yearly, on-duty costs of full-time officers. The on-duty costs are determined by dividing the annual costs of officers by the number of hours they spend actually working

posts. The full-time costs are shown for the six pay steps for 2005. Each step corresponds to a year of service, with the hourly rate capped after six years.

Exhibit 2



Full-time officers are relatively more expensive the first year (Pay Step 1) because they spend three months in training, and they are not available to work an assigned post.

As officers increase their years of service, they progress through the pay steps and begin accruing more leave time. By year six, and thereafter, the use of full time staff becomes slightly more expensive. As officers progress through the steps, their overtime hourly cost also increases. Exhibit 2 shows the average hourly cost of overtime in 2005.¹

Having the flexibility to use overtime, within reasonable limits, affords the Bureau the opportunity to address staffing needs that arise due to unplanned absences and additional workload. Overtime should be avoided if the hours are unnecessary, but the same can be said about regular hours worked.

¹ A table showing the components of these hourly costs is included in Appendix A.

Question 2:

Since the costs of full-time staff and overtime are similar over the long run, should Pierce County be indifferent to the amount of overtime being used?

Answer: No.

The use of overtime is desirable when it does not increase costs, and when it affords the jail flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Overtime is undesirable when it overextends staff or when the costs incurred are unnecessary.

Of concern to the Bureau is the impact that overtime can have on operations. Using too much overtime could have an adverse effect on morale, and how effectively officers conduct their duties. Granted, some officers may like, and may even rely upon, the extra pay they receive; but the additional hours can result in burnout, which can manifest itself in ways that are undesirable – inattention at work, sick leave usage, less patience with peers and inmates, etc.

Also, some overtime may simply not be needed. In the course of this review, we identified two practices that are leading to costs being incurred for overtime use, and in these cases the costs could be eliminated entirely.

- a. One practice has to do with the number of officers who are allowed to take scheduled leave on any given day.
- b. The other practice relates to the use of compensatory time.

a. Scheduled Leave

Under the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Corrections Officers and Sergeants, the maximum number of Corrections Officers allowed to be on leave per day, per shift, is based on a formula that takes into consideration the number of officers assigned to the shift.

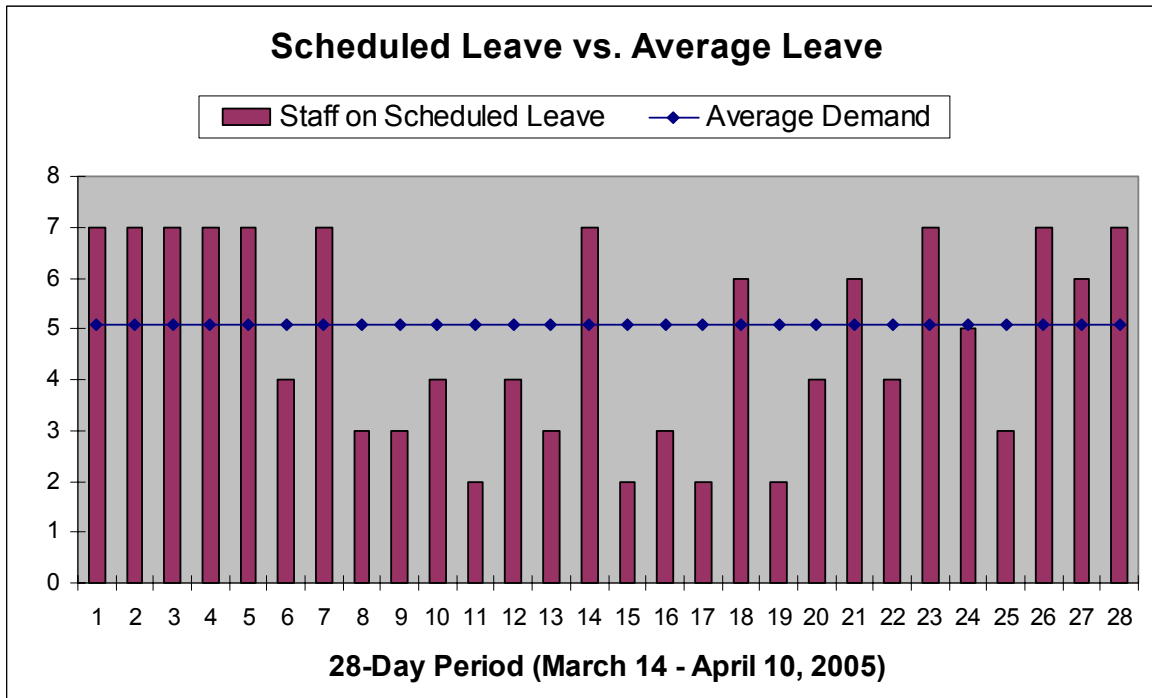
However, there is a discrepancy between what the formula allows and the number of officers who are scheduled and can actually backfill for officers who are on leave.

For example, on the day shift for the Care and Custody unit in the old and new jails, the formula allowed 7 leave slots per day in 2005.² However, staffing levels for that shift in 2005 were only sufficient to cover the average leave use of 5 officers per day.

² Care and Custody includes the staffing of the housing units and escorts, Control, and Booking.

As shown in Exhibit 3, even during a moderate scheduling period, such as the 28-day schedule in March and April, there were 13 days in which leave most likely had to be covered with overtime.

Exhibit 3



In this exhibit, every day that the number of absences fell below the average, there may have been enough officers scheduled to work that day to cover the absences; but on the days when the absences exceeded the average, overtime was almost certainly required to cover the absences. If scheduled leave were strictly managed so that the same number of officers would be on leave each day, the need for overtime would be avoided.

During the summer months in 2005, practically every day required overtime for scheduled leave. For all three shifts in Care and Custody in 2005, there were few occasions when additional staff members were available to offset the excess scheduled leave.

Cost Impact

A conservative estimate of the cost impact of the scheduled leave policy in 2005 would be in the range of \$237,000 per year.³

³ See Appendix B for the basis for this estimate.

For 2006, the formula from the Collective Bargaining Agreement is resulting in 8 scheduled leave slots for the day and swing shifts for Care and Custody. This will mean that the cost impact in 2006 can be expected to be even greater.

As a result of this cost increase, more officers were able to take leave during the times of the year when vacation time is more desirable.

Although the Collective Bargaining Agreement sets the maximum numbers of officers per shift and operational unit that can be on scheduled leave, no minimum number is mentioned. In practice, officers who have requested leave will have their requests granted as long as doing so does not result in exceeding the maximum number of slots allowed.

b. Compensatory Time

Under the provisions of collective bargaining agreements, Corrections Officers, Sergeants and Lieutenants may elect to accrue compensatory time in lieu of overtime for the first six hours of overtime worked in a fourteen-day period. Within a year, Corrections Officers and Sergeants can accumulate up to 80 hours of compensatory time, and Lieutenants up to 60 hours.

In 2005, Corrections Officers, Sergeants and Lieutenants took 2,679 hours of compensatory time and accrued an additional 1,469 hours.

According to the collective bargaining agreements, “it is understood that compensatory time will not be used when it requires the replacement of the absent officer with an officer on overtime.”

The reason for restricting the use of compensatory time is that comp time can cost one-and-one-half times as much as overtime:

Potential Cost Impact
Average overtime pay for 8 hours of overtime worked by a Corrections Officer:
8 hrs x \$41.12 = \$320.97
Cost when compensatory hours are paid for by overtime:
8 hours x 1.5 = 12 hrs. 12 hrs x \$41.12 = \$481.46

Lieutenants in charge of scheduling at the jails try not to schedule time off for compensatory time if it can be seen that it will clearly result in additional overtime use. However, since compensatory time off is scheduled in advance, there are many days when overtime will be used on the same day that compensatory time is taken. This situation is due to several factors such as high sick leave use, the rules about vacation and holiday use, and the need to staff additional posts. According to the Bureau, it is not uncommon, and in fact it is most often the case, that the time off for comp time takes place at the same time that overtime is used.

Although the amount of comp time that can be accrued is limited, the policy of allowing it to be scheduled like vacation and holiday leave is having a cost-impact that could be avoided.

Cost Impact

Assuming that overtime was used 80% of the time that compensatory time was taken, the cost to Pierce County was approximately \$32,000 in 2005. This cost could have been avoided, and it created a future liability, in terms of accrued compensatory time, of approximately \$17,000.

According to the collective bargaining agreements, the Chief of Corrections has the authority to disapprove the accrual of compensatory time in lieu of overtime. The current practice is to allow the accrual.

Question 3:

Is there a way to track overtime use to understand when and why it is being used and to ensure that overtime is being used only when necessary?

Answer: Yes.

Pierce County has a model in place that is used to analyze and track the use of overtime, but the model does not accurately predict overtime. For 2005, the model identified almost twice as many potential overtime hours for Corrections Officers than were actually paid.

The Department of Budget and Finance utilizes a model called the Corrections Officer Overtime Worksheet to identify the possible reasons for overtime use and to compare these reasons to the assumptions used in establishing the jail's budget.

This model is potentially a powerful tool. It provides detailed information for each of the jail's major operational units, by shift, by calendar periods, and by type of sworn staff. To the extent that extraordinary demands on staff time occur, such as due to heavy court dockets, the model can help to measure those demands, and highlight areas where jail management may need to review its operations.

Currently, however, the model produces some information that may not be accurate, or at least not easily understandable. For example, for 2005, the model identified almost twice as many potential overtime hours for Corrections Officers than were actually paid. This is shown in Exhibit 4, on the next page. The exhibit is a copy of a summary sheet from the model. It displays information for all the days in 2005, for all Corrections Officers working all shifts in all units.

- The number circled at the top of the sheet is the total overtime hours paid to officers.
- As shown at the bottom of the page, the model estimated that there could have been a potential 85,652 hours of overtime, which is almost twice the number of paid hours.
- Most of the difference between the estimated, potential hours and the actual paid hours is in a category called "overtime avoided." This is simply a number that is derived in order to balance the worksheet.

Thus, either the model has flaws or the actual operations of the jail are markedly different from the operations that are assumed in building the jail's budget.

The model can, however, help to point out situations that can lead to overtime. It does this by showing when actual absences (e.g. vacation) exceed the average amounts used to determine the number of officers needed. As previously discussed, current practices for scheduling leave result in times when demand for officers to fill in for absences exceeds supply. A similar situation occurs with unscheduled leave (sick leave, jury duty, etc.), because it occurs randomly. *See the discussion about the relief factor, below.* Although the model can help to point out problems and potential reasons for overtime as they occur, it is limited in its ability to predict such occurrences.

The Department of Budget and Finance is presently working with the Corrections Bureau to review and validate the model. This is an effort that deserves a high priority given the potential value of this management tool.

Exhibit 4

Corrections Overtime Worksheet

Date

Shift

[Job Class](#)

Unit

Worksheet		
Filling		467593.98
Regular	58449.247	
Posts		
Overtime (Payroll)	5579.222	44633.78
Total for Worksheet	64028.469	512227.75

Category	Potential Reasons For OT (Posts)	Use Above Standard	Use Below Standard	Net Posts	Net Hours
Intake Overflow	1418.187	-1418.187	0.000	-1418.187	-11345.50
Heavy Court Docket	77.109	-77.109	0.000	-77.109	-616.87
Admin Leave	20.000	-20.000	0.000	-20.000	-160.00
Clinic Security	487.180	-487.180	0.000	-487.180	-3897.44
Court Extension	21.285	-21.285	0.000	-21.285	-170.28
Loaned To Court	140.470	-140.470	0.000	-140.470	-1123.76
Special Assignment	261.367	-261.367	0.000	-261.367	-2090.94
Vacancy	3020.125	-3020.125	0.000	-3020.125	-24161.00
Hospital Guard	736.982	-736.982	0.000	-736.982	-5895.86
Vacation	4170.710	-2195.105	760.690	-1434.415	-11475.32
Sick or Family Leave	2458.020	-1234.903	603.233	-631.670	-5053.36
Furlough / Holiday	2523.469	-1304.934	993.660	-311.274	-2490.19
Workers Comp	615.750	-486.533	399.573	-86.960	-695.68
Military Leave	1191.000	-1072.670	170.480	-902.190	-7217.52
Training	1539.737	-1284.671	658.109	-626.562	-5012.50
BVMT/CAT/Jury/Comp	410.980	-345.349	289.259	-56.090	-448.72
Leave Without Pay	11.000	-11.000	0.000	-11.000	-88.00
Step-up Sergeant	134.625	-134.625	0.000	-134.625	-1077.00
Light Duty (if not filling a regularly scheduled post)	329.000	-329.000	0.000	-329.000	-2632.00
Other	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00
Potential Overtime Due to Standard Variances	19566.996	-14581.495	3875.004	10706.491	-85651.93
Overtime Avoided	-	-	-	6045.780	48366.24
Extra Staff (No O.T.)	-	-	-	449.947	3599.58
UNCATEGORIZED OVERTIME VERTIME (8.4 %)	-	-	-	468.564	3748.51
Total Reasons for Overtime	-	-	-	-5579.222	-44633.78

Question 4:

Does the relief factor approach to jail staffing and budgeting help to identify the break-even point between the level of staffing and the level of overtime?

Answer: No.

The relief-factor approach does not address overtime use.

The relief factor is used to compare the total number of hours required for post coverage to the actual number of hours available by Corrections Officers to staff the posts.

For example, coverage of a single, day-shift post in one of the jail housing units requires 2,920 hours per year (365 x 8). However, in a year, a Corrections Officer is paid for 2,086 work hours, and officers typically will spend about 376 of those hours away from the assigned post due to sick leave, vacation, training, and other types of absences. This means that one Corrections Officer can provide about 1,710 hours of the total 2,920 hours required for the post.

In its most simple form, the relief factor approach divides the total hours per post (2,920) by the average hours available per Corrections Officer (1,710) to derive a ratio, in this case of 1.71 to 1. In other words, it is assumed that each post will require 1.71 staff.

This approach has major limitations:

- In most cases the number of posts to be staffed does not perfectly match the number of officers who can be scheduled to be on duty to staff those posts.⁴
- The relief factor approach assumes that each day will have the same number of planned and unplanned paid days of absences. As previously discussed, in the case of scheduled leave, there are many times when the number of officers taking leave will be higher or lower than the average. For unplanned leave, such as sick leave, military leave and jury duty, there can be a wide variation between actual leave usage compared to the average usage.
- For each day and for each shift when not enough officers report for work, overtime must be used. The relief factor does not take into account the days and hours of under-coverage, and it cannot be used to calculate the amount of overtime that will result from scheduling practices and from all of the times when the number of absences exceeds the average.

⁴ As is the case in the Bureau of Corrections, where the vast majority of officers work five-days-on and two-days-off, the only instances when schedules work perfectly to cover for the two-days-off is when the number of posts to be covered is a multiple of seven.

Because the relief-factor approach to staffing does not address overtime demands, the practice of the Department of Budget and Finance is to use historical overtime hours and expenditures as a basis for estimating future hours and expenditures.

Question 5:

Is there a method for identifying the break-even point between the level of staffing and the level of overtime?

Answer: Yes.

Instead of answering the traditional question about how many officers are needed to cover a given number of posts, the method answers a more relevant question: What is the most cost-effective mix of overtime and full-time staff for carrying out jail operations?

A particular approach that can be employed and validated is to develop an Operations Forecast Model that will:

1. Take into account the cost of overtime versus hiring staff for post coverage; and
2. Employ statistical methods for predicting the number of hours of overtime that will be required based on the number of posts and any given number of officers that would be assigned to staff those posts.⁵

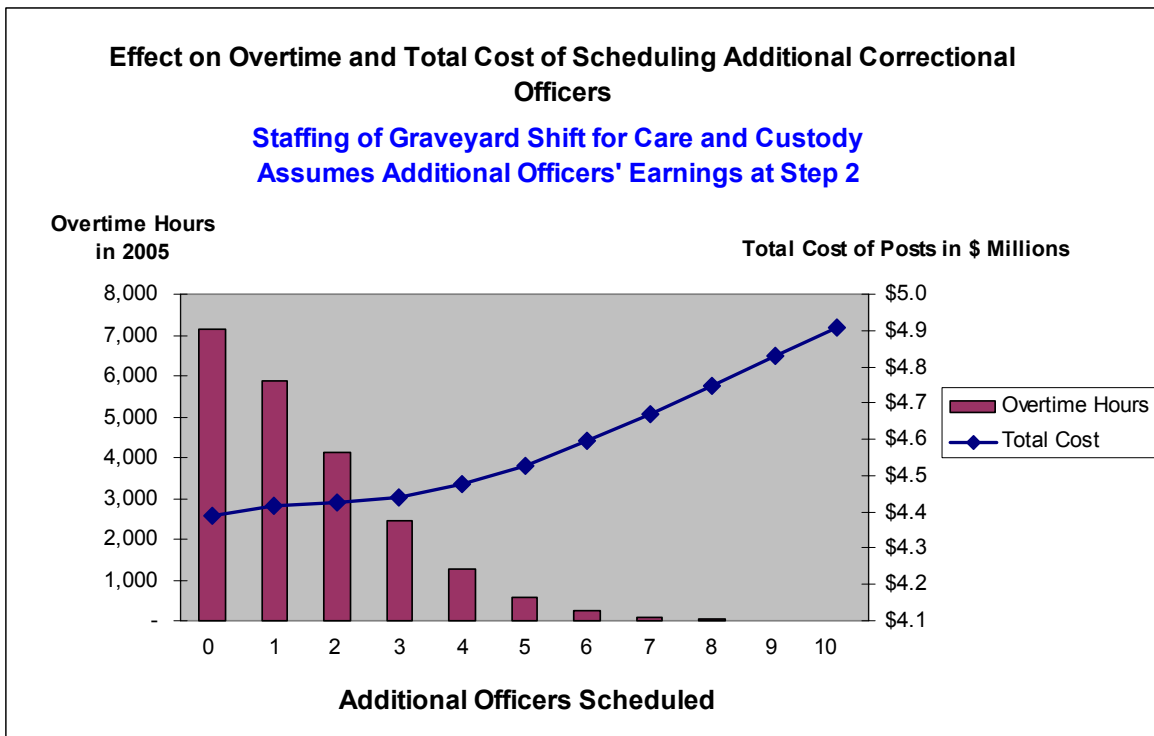
Whereas the relief-factor approach attempts to determine how many officers are needed to cover a given number of posts, the forecast model approach seeks to identify the most cost-effective mix of overtime and full-time staff for carrying out jail operations. It should be noted, however, that the most cost-effective mix of officers and overtime may not be the least costly mix. This is because there may be operational concerns and limitations regarding how much overtime officers should be allowed or required to work.

For the purposes of this study, the consultant developed a model that takes into consideration 2005 data on Corrections Officer work hours and absences, wages and benefits, and total post-staffing requirements. Because it looks at Care and Custody in isolation, the model is not comprehensive. To be comprehensive, the model would take into account all operational units, including the lending and borrowing of staff that takes place between those units. The graveyard shift (11 p.m. to 7 a.m.) is discussed in the following analysis because it does not overlap with others areas of operations. Thus it offers an opportunity to view how staffing level and overtime use are interrelated, and how an Operations Forecast Model can be used.

⁵ One method that is relatively easy to use and to understand is the use of binomial distributions to estimate how many days of unplanned absences will occur for a given number of staff assigned to cover posts.

As illustrated in Exhibit 5, the number of overtime hours would be reduced as more staff are scheduled, but the total cost of the shift would increase.⁶ If enough staff were added, overtime could be avoided almost entirely, but at a prohibitively high total cost. What this means, and the lesson to be learned, is that adding officers does not automatically reduce an equivalent number of overtime hours by the amount of the actual hours worked.

Exhibit 5



The dollar amounts in the table, beginning with the addition of one scheduled officer per day, are based on the cost of new officers at Pay Step 2 – the lowest cost of adding officers.

Based on this estimate, the cost of scheduling more officers does not begin to rise steeply until the third officer is scheduled.⁷ At the same time, however, overtime hours are reduced steeply. If the current level of overtime per officer is an operational concern, then such additional costs can be weighed against the benefit of the reduced hours.

⁶ For each officer scheduled to work each day, 1.4 officers would need to be hired, based on the officers' five-day work week.

⁷ The net additional costs of 1, 2 and 3 officers scheduled are, respectively, \$31,000, \$40,000 and \$54,000 annually in 2005 dollars.

This kind of analysis can also be used to identify the cost impacts, and effects on overtime, of Corrections Officer vacancies. It should not be a foregone conclusion that vacancies necessarily increase operating costs. The answer depends on the number of posts to be staffed, the number of Corrections Officers currently assigned, and the relative costs of hiring staff versus using overtime.

Question 6:

Would the use of part-time officers help to reduce the overall costs of staffing the jail posts?

Answer: Not necessarily.

Regularly scheduled part-time officers have an hourly cost that is about the same as full-time officers, and their use does not provide jail management with any advantages in terms of scheduling.

Regularly scheduled part-time employees who work at least 70% time but less than full-time pay pro rata shares of the costs of medical and dental benefits. They also receive pro rata portions of other benefits, such as sick leave, vacation, and holidays. On an hourly basis, their cost is almost identical to officers at the same pay steps who work full time.

Instead of adding flexibility to how officers are scheduled, the use of regular part-time schedules can make the scheduling process more complex. In post-coverage situations, their place in the daily roster can lead to staffing inefficiencies resulting in having extra officers present on some days or fewer officers than are needed on other days.

As an alternative to using regular, part-time officers, the County Code provides agencies the option of hiring “extra-hire” positions that can be used for seasonal peak workloads, emergency workloads, vacation/leave relief, and other situations involving fluctuating staffing needs or the need for additional work. An extra-hire position is defined as a career service exempt temporary position without health benefits filled for a maximum duration of six months in a 12-month period, unless specifically extended by the Human Resources Director. Extra-hire employees who work less than 70 hours per month may work for an indefinite period.⁸

Extra-hire employees are not eligible for health benefits, and therefore could be a lower cost option for providing relief *provided* that the hourly wage for such extra-hire officers were sufficiently low. It should be noted, however, the Bureau is currently having difficulties filling vacancies at current pay rates and for positions that confer full benefits. Therefore, attempting to create and fill extra hire positions at this time may not be practical.

⁸ County Code 3.08.120, Employment Positions.

Question 7:

Is there a pattern showing that Corrections Officers who work high levels of overtime hours use more sick leave?

Answer: No.

The correlation between overtime hours worked and sick leave hours used is very weak.⁹ There are numerous instances of officers who work many overtime shifts during a year using very little sick leave, and there are also many instances of officers who use relatively high sick leave but work very few overtime hours.

It is possible that some individuals who work high overtime hours have high sick leave use as a consequence. But there is no overall pattern suggesting that this is happening or that there is a systemic problem.

Question 8:

Do Corrections Officers with higher seniority work relatively more overtime hours, resulting in a higher, average overtime cost?

Answer: No.

At the end of 2005, the average length of service for all Corrections Officers was 9.7 years. For officers who worked a relatively high number of overtime hours (500+) in 2005, we found that their average number of years of service was almost exactly the same as the average for all officers.

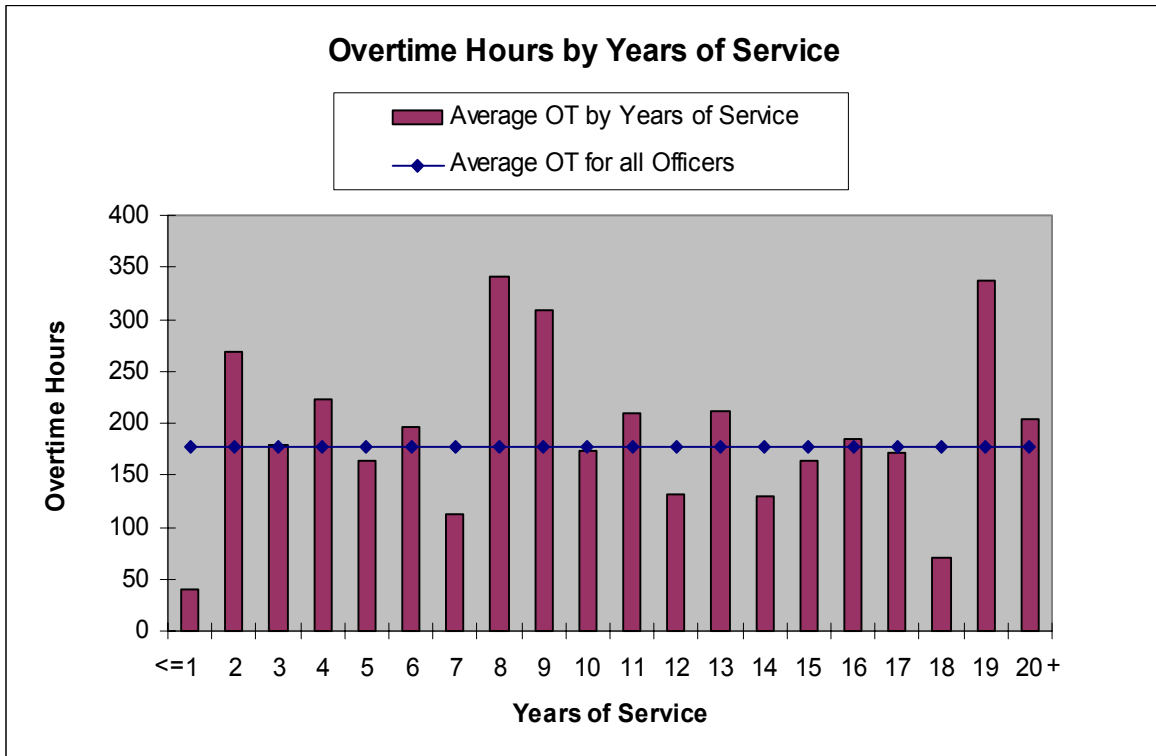
Exhibit 6 shows average hours of overtime by years of service for all Corrections Officers in 2005. A statistical test of the data showed no relationship between these two variables.¹⁰

The one predictable observation from the exhibit is that officers who had one year of service or less would be expected to earn fewer hours of overtime. The reason is that some officers worked less than a full year, and all new officers spent three months in training.

⁹ For Corrections Officers, the coefficient of correlation, R , for overtime and sick leave for 2005 was .17, and the coefficient of determination, R^2 , was .028. The R^2 indicates how well one variable predicts another variable, on a scale of 0 to 1. An R^2 value of .028, since it is so close to 0 on the scale, suggests that neither variable is predictive of the other.

¹⁰ $R = .02$, $R^2 = .0004$.

Exhibit 6



Another question related to whether officers with more seniority work more overtime has to do with the potential impact of overtime on retirement benefits and sick leave. Since overtime pay is counted as part of average final compensations, working more overtime in the years prior to retirement can boost retirement benefits. In some other jurisdictions it is known that overtime use among staff approaching retirement has been associated with higher sick leave use. However, our review of Pierce County pay records and the collective bargaining agreement for Corrections Officers and Sergeants revealed that:

- There have been only four retirements from the officer ranks since 2003; and for these officers there were no overtime hours reported that were out of the ordinary.
- For officers who are approaching retirement and have many years of service, there may be an incentive to accrue sick leave rather than use it. Officers hired before May 20, 1991 are still under a program that allows them to cash out substantial portions of their unused sick leave upon ending service with Pierce County.

Question 9:

Does the current practice of changing Corrections Officers' schedules every 28 days result in unnecessary overtime?

Answer: No.

Pierce County has an unusual practice whereby each officer's work week is moved forward by two days every 28 days. Thus, if an officer currently has a work week that begins on a Tuesday, at the end of the current 28-day schedule the officer will move to a work week that begins on Thursday. Most jails change work schedules only once or twice a year.

A situation that arises with the 28-day schedule is that the schedule change causes some officers to work 6 or 7 days within a 7-day period. Normally, working more than five days would result in overtime; and since a year has thirteen 28-day schedules, the potential cost impact of changing schedules so often could be large.

Nevertheless, the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Corrections Officers explicitly addresses this issue by providing that officers can work up to 7 consecutive days without incurring overtime during the week prior to and one week following the schedule change.¹¹

¹¹ This provision of the Collective Bargaining Agreement is allowed under the Section 207 of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Chapter 3

Recommendations

1. Vacation, Compensatory Time, and Furlough Scheduling

Summary Finding: Current provision of the CBA allows for more officers to be scheduled for vacation, compensatory time and furlough than staffing levels can cover, resulting in additional overtime. Adding more staff to address this issue would be costly and inefficient. A solution is to limit the number of staff on scheduled leave.

Recommendation 1: As part of labor negotiations, Pierce County should specifically address the cost impact of Article 9, Section 7.2 of the collective bargaining agreement for Corrections Officers and Sergeants.

Timeline: In 2006 (the current agreement expires 12/31/06).

2. Compensatory Time in Lieu of Overtime

Summary Finding: Under current scheduling practices, granting compensatory time often costs Pierce County 50% more than paying overtime for the additional hours worked.

Recommendation 2: The Corrections Bureau should discontinue the practice of allowing compensatory time in lieu of paying overtime.

Timeline: Immediately

3. Corrections Officer Overtime Worksheet

Summary Finding: In 2005, the model identified almost twice as many potential overtime hours for Corrections Officers than were actually paid. This means either that (a) there are flaws in the model itself, or (b) the actual operations of the jail are markedly different from the operations that are assumed in building the jail's budget.

Recommendation 3: Budget and Finance, working with the Corrections Bureau and Pierce County information technology staff, should conduct a validation review of the CO Overtime Worksheet Model, and present a report to the Performance Audit Committee.

Timeline: Three months from the time of this recommendation

4. Operations Forecast Model

Summary Finding: An Operations Forecast Model could help to identify the most cost-effective mix of full-time staff and overtime.

Recommendation 4: Budget and Finance and the Corrections Bureau, with consultant assistance if necessary, should: (a) explore the development of an Operations Forecast Model, (b) as a preliminary step, assess the current data systems available to support a model, and (c) report the findings to the Performance Audit Committee.

Timeline: 2006-2007

Chapter 4

Additional Topics That Might Be Addressed in a Performance Audit

A major issue addressed in this report is whether overtime is a cost-effective use of staff. However, the analyses in this report either do not address or do not fully address some of the larger, cost-impact issues for the jail, such as:

- How many inmates enter the jail and how long they stay
- The configuration and capacity of the inmate housing units, and the efficient use of those units
- Standards, rules and policies that govern how many staff are needed to provide for safe and secure jail operations
- Decisions about the most cost-effective ways to have staff available when and where they are needed

These issues were most recently addressed in the 1999 Jail Staffing Analysis conducted on behalf of the Performance Audit Committee. This was before the new jail opened in 2003. Since that time, the staffing and operation of the County's jails has not been analyzed in a comprehensive manner.¹²

At the beginning of this Planning Study, members of the Working Group expressed interest in several topics that can have an impact on overtime use, but which could not be evaluated fully within the timeframe for this study. It was found that each of these areas would require its own separate study, or would have to be incorporated into a larger performance audit. However, before reaching this conclusion the consultant made initial inquiries into the topics and gathered information. Some of this information may prove to be of interest and use to the Performance Audit Committee in considering whether a larger study or performance audit of the Corrections Bureau is warranted.

Each potential topic is described below.

¹² In 2005 the Pierce County Sheriff's Office requested and received technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections for an assessment of Pierce County's Jail and Justice System. This assessment relied on two days of interviews with key justice system officials and a review of publicly available data. Although broad in scope, this assessment was not an in-depth or comprehensive analysis of jail operations. One of the report's seven recommendations was that the County should select an outside consultant to do a thorough staffing analysis of the jail. Billy Wasson and Bill Crout, *Jail & Justice System Assessment*, September 2005.

Topic 1: Evaluate the process used to recruit, screen, train, and hire Corrections Officers

The Working Group raised this issue because staff shortages can result in overtime use to cover required posts.

As indicated in Chapter 2, having fewer officers scheduled due to vacancies can increase overtime costs, but will not necessarily increase overall costs for the Bureau. Vacancies result in salary savings that can offset the cost of overtime. The issue of the cost impact of vacancies is part of the larger issue of determining the most cost-effective mix of overtime and full-time staff, which can be addressed by the use of an Operations Forecast Model.

In 2005, there was an average 7.56 vacant officer positions, with vacancies per month ranging from just over 1 to just over 11 officers. In April 2006, due to an extraordinary high number of officers leaving the bureau, vacancies reached 20 officers during the third week of the month.

Several observations can be made about hiring and vacancy issues:

- Pierce County is in a highly competitive market for attracting and hiring Corrections Officers. Neighboring counties and the State Department of Corrections are aggressively recruiting officers and face similar problems in filling vacancies
- An evaluation of best practices in recruiting could potentially assist the County in attracting and hiring more qualified applicants.
- Based on the last two hiring processes conducted in 2005, less than six percent of applicants who showed up for the Corrections Officer examinations were eventually hired. About half of the applicants who took the exams failed them. For those who passed, most either eventually withdrew their applications or were disqualified. Out of 159 applicants who took the exams, only 9 were eventually hired or remained in a status where they were eligible for hire.
- Eligibility and selection criteria for Corrections Officer positions vary widely among jurisdictions in areas such as past experience with illegal drugs, credit and job history, and felony convictions. From our inquiries to other jurisdictions, and through discussions with Bureau staff, we learned that eligibility and selection criteria are based on professional judgment. We could find no instances where jurisdictions know of or rely on empirical studies that can help to predict whether certain experiences and qualifications of applicants are predictive of how successful the applicants would be in careers as Corrections Officers.

Thus an evaluation of best practices in recruitment and hiring might be of assistance to the Corrections Bureau in streamlining its processes and potentially achieving a greater hiring percentage.

Topic 2: Determine how the number of escort staff is calculated for budget purposes

Currently there are 14 eight-hour escort posts in the old jail, 15 posts in the new jail, and an additional 9 posts in the Booking/Release Office that serves both jails. These posts translate into a budgeted staffing level of about 62 officers. The salary and benefit cost for these officers is about \$4.2 million annually.

Besides escorting inmates, escort officers perform other functions as well, such as backfilling for other officers during break periods and responding to incidents.

Three facts about the topic of escort staffing may be of interest to the Performance Audit Committee in considering whether this topic might be included in a future study:

1. The minimum number of 12 escort posts for the old jail is prescribed by a Stipulated Order that went into effect in January 1996. As indicated above, the current number of escort posts in the old jail is 14.
2. The Stipulated Order does not apply to the new jail or to the Booking/Release escort officers.
3. The Bureau is not aware of any workload studies that have been done to determine the number of posts currently needed for either of the jails. However, Pierce County acknowledged in the Stipulated Order, in relation to the old jail, that the staffing levels called for in the Order adequately meet the minimum constitutional standards for safety and security for jail inmates.

A determination of the staffing needs for escort posts would require its own study, or could be incorporated into a larger performance audit.

Topic 3: Evaluate the impact on overtime of classifying and processing inmates

The Working Group had several questions about how the jail's Booking/Release and Classification units are staffed, and how the inmate classification process works. The issues of concern are:

- a) If inmates are not classified and processed promptly, there may be too many unclassified inmates in the jail, requiring the use of an additional housing unit as an intake unit, which requires additional staffing; and

- b) If there are too many inmate classifications, or if the rules about mixing inmates of different classification are too restrictive, this may result in an inefficient use of housing units.

In instances when additional posts must be staffed, beyond the number that has been budgeted, additional overtime must be worked.

Issues related to the efficient use of housing units and how inmates are processed through the jail are matters that could be addressed in a larger study of jail operations, but, due to their complexity, could not be addressed within the time limitations of this planning study.

Appendix A

Comparison of Weighted Average Overtime Cost to On-Duty Costs of Full-Time Corrections Officers

Cost of Staffing Full Posts	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Weighted Average All CO's
CONVENTIONAL CORRECTIONS OFFICERS							
Regular Hourly Wage	\$19.03	\$19.99	\$21.90	\$22.95	\$24.09	\$25.28	\$24.51
Regular Hours Compensation per year	2086	2086	2086	2086	2086	2086	2086
Yearly Wage Compensation	\$39,691	\$41,693	\$45,677	\$47,867	\$50,245	\$52,727	\$51,120
BENEFITS							
Workers Comp - 1.8% (fixed amount)	\$1,653	\$1,653	\$1,653	\$1,653	\$1,653	\$1,653	\$1,653
Medical Insurance (average amount)	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10	\$3,349.10
FICA (rate)	\$3,096.57	\$3,183.54	\$3,294.30	\$3,461.83	\$3,693.73	\$4,033.60	\$3,910.71
Retirement (rate)	\$287.43	\$617.06	\$676.09	\$708.43	\$743.62	\$780.36	\$756.58
Life Insurance (fixed amount)	\$21.60	\$21.60	\$21.60	\$21.60	\$21.60	\$21.60	\$21.60
Dental Insurance (average amount)	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45	\$1,508.45
Quarterly (fixed amount)	\$672.00	\$672.00	\$672.00	\$672.00	\$672.00	\$672.00	\$672.00
Annual Cost Wages and Benefits	\$59,519	\$57,705	\$62,024	\$64,442	\$67,057	\$69,745	\$67,992
COMPENSATED LEAVE HOURS							
Average Hours Usable (all Leave (sick leave etc.)	170.86	170.86	170.86	170.86	170.86	170.86	170.86
Vacation Hours (based on accrued)	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00
Holiday Hours (based on average accrued)	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00	96.00
Camp Hours Accrued	9.07	9.07	9.07	9.07	9.07	9.07	9.07
Minus 1st-Year Training	428.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Subtotal Hours Above From Post	800.38	371.93	371.93	403.93	403.93	403.93	394.86
AVERAGE HOURS ON POST	1285.34	1715.78	1715.78	1681.78	1681.78	1681.78	1690.85
ON-DUTY COST PER YEAR	\$43.19	\$33.67	\$36.21	\$38.32	\$39.88	\$41.47	\$40.21
WEIGHTED OVERTIME RATE							
Regular Wage	\$24.51						\$24.51
Times 1.5	36.76						36.76
FICA	\$2.81						\$2.81
Retirement	\$0.54						\$0.54
OT Rate							\$40.12

Appendix B

Method for Calculating Cost Impact Range of the Current Scheduled Leave Policy

Information for scheduled leave taken by day was available for 46 weeks out of the 52-week period extending from 1/17/05 to 1/15/06 for day shift officers in Care and Custody.

For the first 6 weeks for which leave information was not available, the leave use for 3/1/05 to 3/13/05 was used as an estimate, according to information from Bureau that patterns of scheduled leave use during the first three months of the year are similarly low.

Based on average scheduled days off apportioned to the day shift (5.06), the number of excess hours (hours taken that are more than average) for the 52-week period was an estimated 3202. However, in estimating the impact of the current leave policy it was noted that at times the number of staff taking scheduled leave may vary, and may exceed any caps that may be put in place, due to the fact that officers may change shift assignment during the year, yet retain their original, approved leave schedule. Recognizing this reality, the estimates below utilize an upper range of 6 for setting a cap on scheduled days by rounding up the average 5.06 officers off per day.

The following table shows the results of the analysis in establishing a range based on a low cap using the 5.06 average scheduled days and a high cap using 6 days. The results are then extrapolated to the other two shifts for Care and Custody, based on the number of officer who where assigned to those shifts.

Range	Day Shift Excess Hours	Swing Shift Excess Hours	Grave Shift Excess Hours	Estimated Totals	OT Rate	Est. Impact
Low	3208	3140	2677	9025	\$40.12	\$362,082
Mid Point	2336	2286	1949	6571	\$40.12	\$263,651
High	1464	1433	1221	4118	\$40.12	\$165,221

The mid point of this range is \$263,651. Taking 90% of this mid point, to reflect the fact that there may have been some occasions when there was actually an extra officer available to cover an excess leave, yields an estimate of \$237,236, which is the value presented in Chapter 2. Since this estimate takes into consideration information for Care and Custody only, it may be considered a conservative estimate.