

Public Safety Trends and Outlook

SFAC Staff

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Overview of Public Safety Budget, Offender Forecasts, and Crime Rates



Public Safety Secretariat is 7.7 Percent of GF Appropriations

- The Virginia Public Safety and Homeland Security (“Public Safety”) Secretariat GF appropriation is 7.7 percent of total GF operating appropriations in FY 2025.
 - In FY 2025, the GF appropriation for the Secretariat was \$2.7 billion.
- State-responsible inmates, or individuals in state custody, are the primary driver of the public safety budget and are the focus of this presentation.
 - In FY 2025, the Department of Corrections (DOC) received \$1.2 billion GF for care of inmates in state custody and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) received \$101.3 million GF for care of juveniles in state custody.
- Personnel costs account for 67.1 percent of GF expenditures in the Public Safety Secretariat in FY 2025.
 - Public Safety agencies have nearly 17,000 employees, the second most of any Secretariat (surpassed only by Education).

Sources: Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly; Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) expenditure database of Cardinal accounting data, accessed November 11, 2025; Department of Human Resource Management, “Commonwealth Workforce Update: Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee,” January 1, 2025.

Number of Inmates and Correctional Officers Remains Lower Than a Decade Ago

- Nationally and in Virginia, both the adult state inmate population and the number of correctional officers are lower than they were a decade ago.
- Virginia's Offender Forecast Committee projects that the state-responsible adult inmate and juvenile offender population will flatten over the six-year forecast.
- The projected stabilization of population trends after volatility during COVID-19 provides an opportunity to revisit how agency funds are allocated and conduct long-term planning.

Sources: U.S Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2023 – Statistical Tables, September 2025; The Marshall Project analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, May 7, 2025.

Virginia's Offender Forecast has been Fairly Accurate in Recent Years

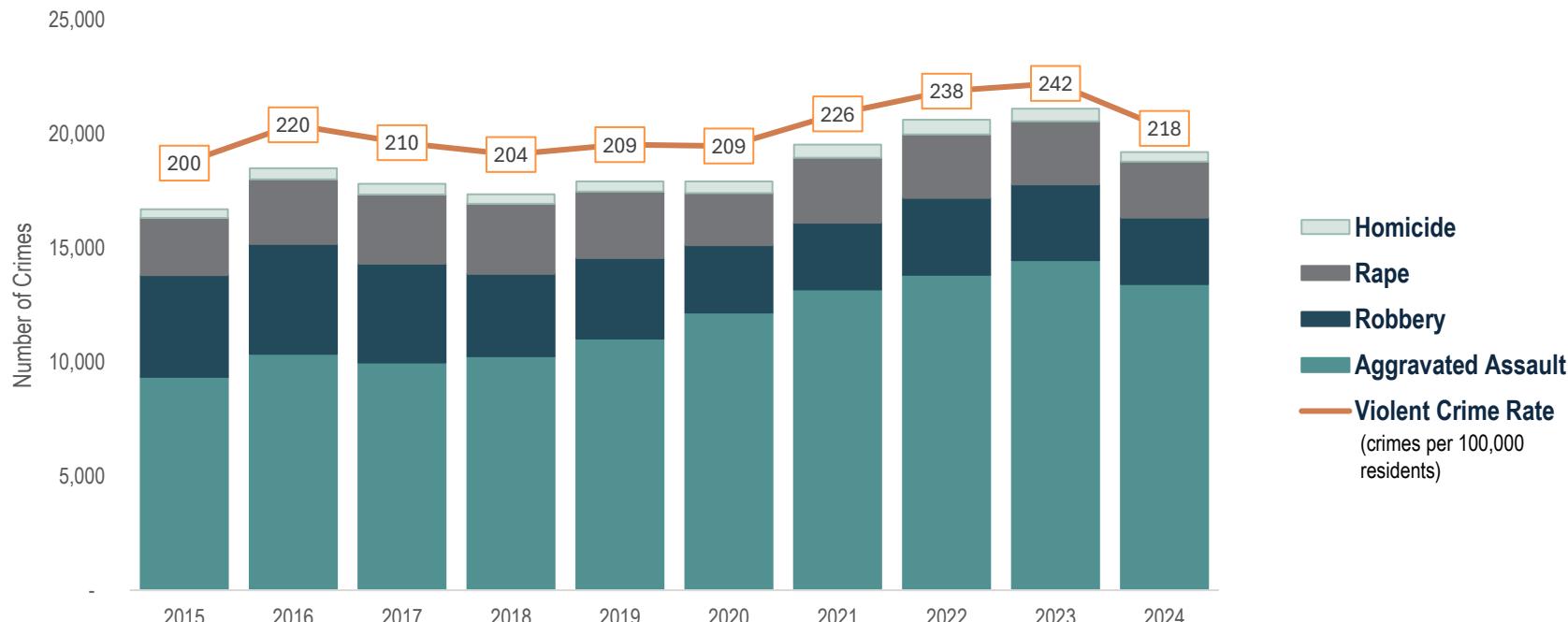
- Virginia's Offender Forecast Committee ("Committee") estimates inmate populations after reviewing crime rates, statistical models, and any policy changes.
 - **Crime rates provide broad context for criminal justice system workloads, and statistical models based on recent inmate population trends determine the offender forecasts.**
- The Committee, managed by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, provides a six-year forecast for various inmate populations. For state-responsible (SR) inmates*, that includes:
 - Adult SR inmates, who have been convicted of a felony and sentenced to at least one year in confinement. DOC manages all adult SR inmates but houses some in local and regional jails; and
 - Juvenile SR inmates, who have been committed to direct care and are managed by DJJ.
- The Committee's state-responsible projections in 2022 through 2024 were all relatively close to 2023 through 2025 actuals, with less than a 5.0 percent error rate (approx. 1,355 offenders) for adult inmates and less than a 10.0 percent error rate (approx. 32 youth) for juveniles.
 - The Committee's projections are typically more accurate during periods with less systemic change, and less accurate during times with criminal justice system disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources: Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Research Center, Presentation to the Offender Forecast Policy Committee, September 16, 2025; Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, Offender Forecast reports 2019-2025.

*Note: This presentation focuses on state-responsible inmates since they are the primary budget driver for the Public Safety Secretariat; however, the offender forecast also estimates local-responsible populations.

Virginia's Violent Crime Rate Decreased in 2024 After Increasing for Several Years

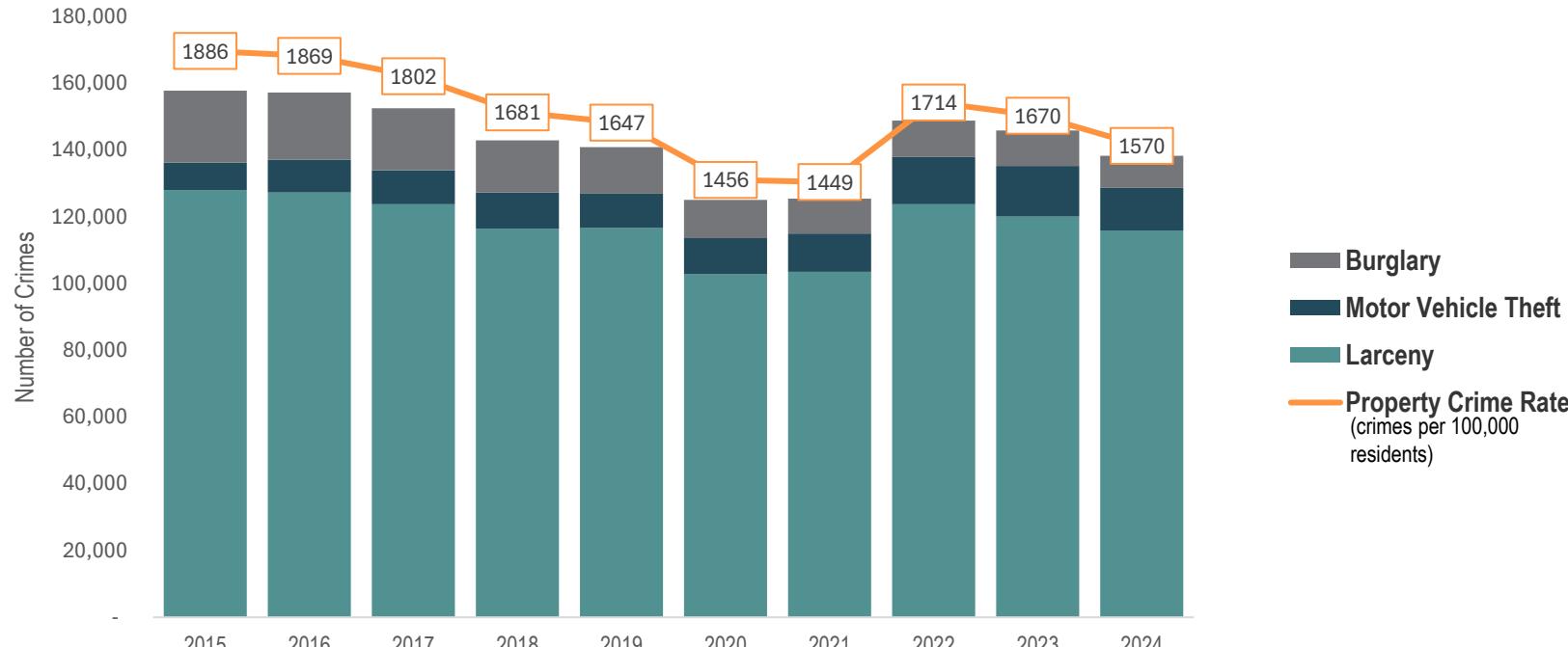
Between 2023 and 2024, the number of violent crimes in Virginia decreased from 21,101 to 19,200 and the violent crime rate decreased from 242 to 218 (crimes per 100,000 residents).



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Summary Reporting dataset, updated August 5, 2025. **Note that numbers for recent years may change as additional localities submit data.**

Virginia's Property Crime Rate Decreased for the Past Two Years After Increasing in 2022

Between 2023 and 2024, Virginia's property crimes decreased from 145,881 to 138,307 and the property crime rate decreased from 1,670 to 1,570 (crimes per 100,000 residents).



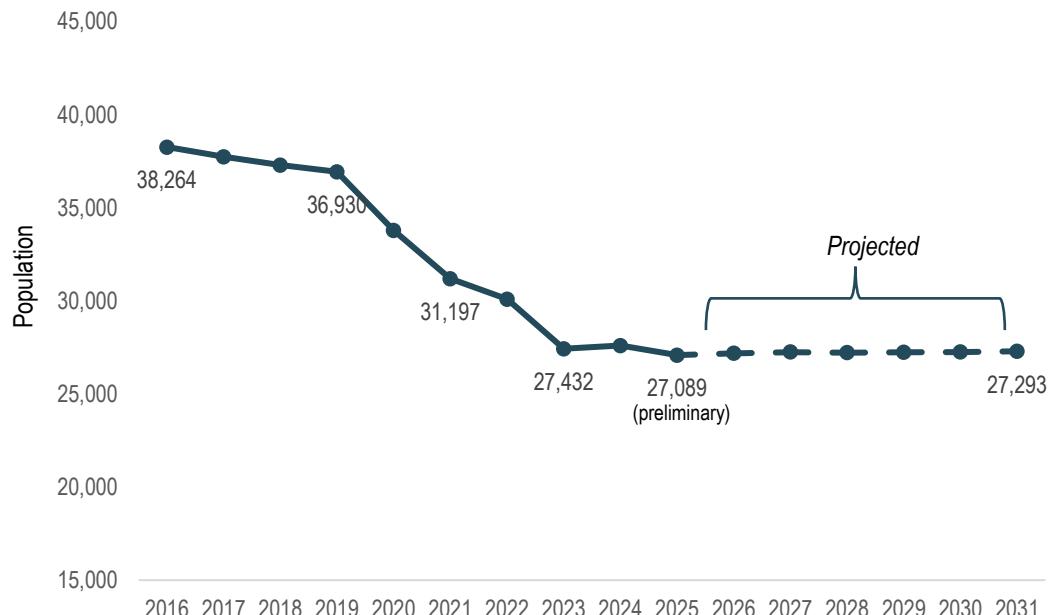
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Summary Reporting dataset, updated August 5, 2025. **Note that numbers for recent years may change as additional localities submit data.**

DOC Offender Forecast and Budget Drivers



State-Responsible Offenders Expected to Remain Flat

Adult state-responsible inmates decreased 29.2 percent over the past decade and are expected to increase only 0.8 percent over the next six years.

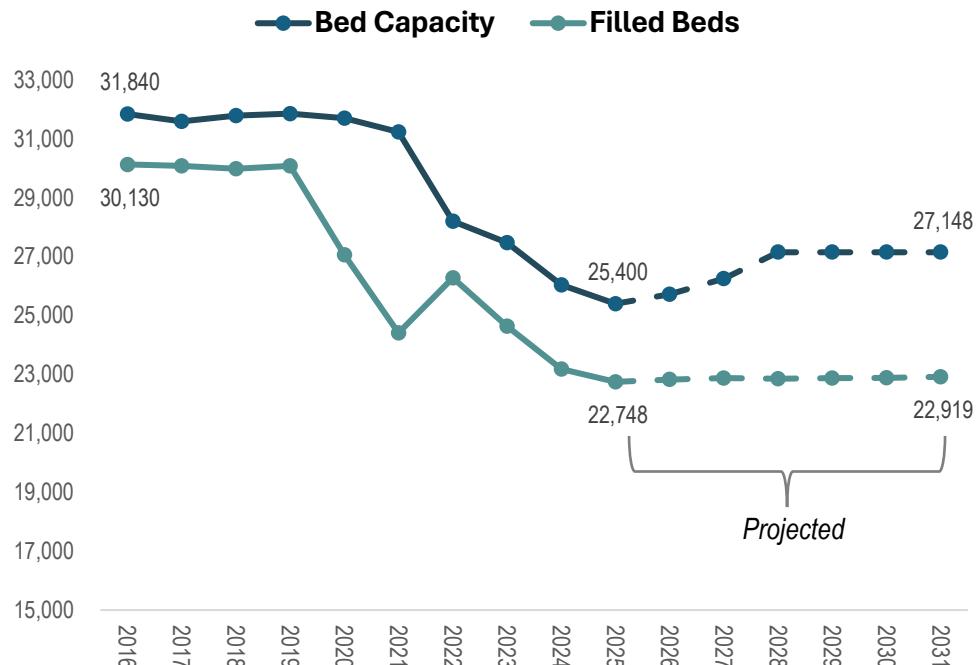


- Population is determined by two factors: the number of new inmates entering state custody and each inmate's length of stay.
- Average number of new inmates remained relatively steady in FY 2024 and FY 2025, with an average annual change of 1.3 percent (123 inmates).
 - The number of new inmates is projected to increase 0.6 percent (61 inmates) on average each year through FY 2031.
- Median expected length of stay has been decreasing for inmates entering custody since FY 2017, from 18 months for the FY 2017 cohort to 13 months for the FY 2024 cohort.

Sources: DCJS Research Center, Presentation to the Offender Forecast Policy Committee, September 16, 2025; DOC Research Unit, July 31, 2025. Population data is from June 30th of each year.

Number of Inmates and Beds have Declined From a Decade Ago

Since 2016, the population in DOC facilities has declined by 7,382 inmates and DOC capacity has declined by 6,440 beds.



- In FY 2025, 95.2 percent of general population beds were filled but only 63.4 percent of non-general population beds (e.g. medical, mental health, specialized treatment) were filled.
- DOC plans to conduct a facility stratification study to better align the types of beds with inmate need and security levels.
- DOC has taken units and facilities offline in recent years due to the declining inmate population, lower staffing levels, and aging facilities, including:
 - Designating Augusta Correctional Unit as surplus property to be sold by the Department of General Services; and
 - “Mothballing” Sussex II State Prison and Haynesville Correctional Unit for potential future use by DOC.
 - DOC budget was reduced by \$62.2 million annually to account for the closures beginning in FY 2025.

Sources: SFAC staff forecast based on DOC bed reports, 2025 bed space master plan, and 2025 Offender Forecast. Assumes current use of double bunking and recent average number of state-responsible inmates in jails (3,851 for September 2024 through August 2025) and incorporates beds coming back online after planned renovations. Data represents June 30th of each year.

State-Responsible Inmates Drive DOC Spending

- Services for state-responsible inmates, which includes security, medical, and educational services, account for 77.0 percent of DOC's total spending in FY 2025.

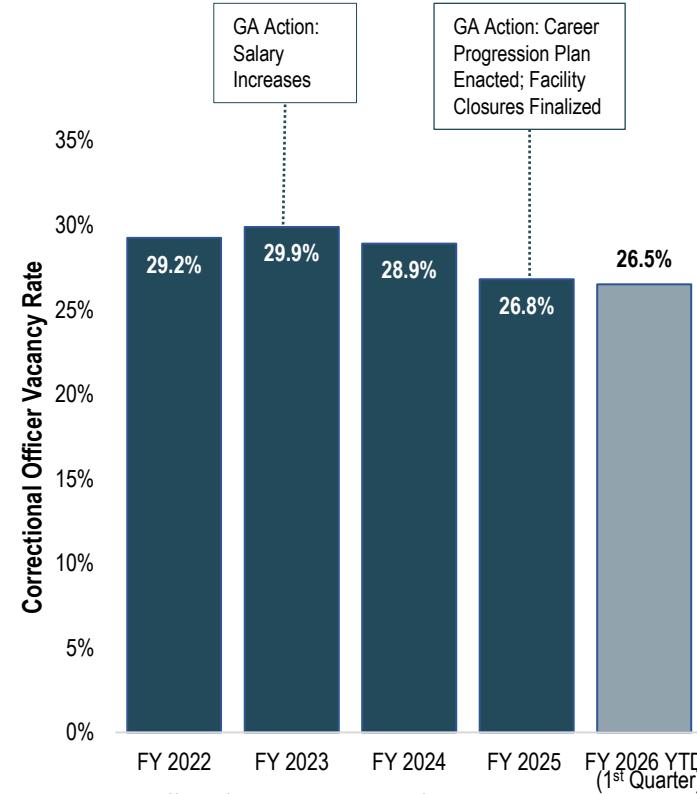
Spending Category (NGF & GF \$ in millions)	FY 2025 \$	FY 2025 %
Security staff and other facility operational costs	\$908.3	56.5%
Prison medical services	294.4	18.3%
Administration and support	213.5	13.3%
Community supervision	131.9	8.2%
Inmate education	34.6	2.2%
State Residential Community Correctional Facilities	23.5	1.5%
Total	\$1,606.2	100.0%

- Recent reports and agency requests highlight emerging needs in all three inmate programs: facility operations, education, and medical services.
- Questions remain about the current allocation of DOC resources given recent inmate population trends.
- DOC should continue to examine its allocation of staffing, medical, and educational resources included in its base budget as new requests are being considered.**

Source: DPB, Expendwise data, accessed November 6, 2025.

DOC Plans to Reevaluate its Security Staffing Posts, Which may Change Security Funding Needs

- An independent consultant recommended that DOC conduct a comprehensive reevaluation of its security posts.
 - Consultant recommended reducing the number of posts but increasing the number of positions available to fill each post. The net effect on security staffing needs is unknown until the post evaluation is completed.
- DOC plans to conduct the security post evaluation as part of its upcoming facility stratification study.
 - Chapter 1, 2024 Special Session I, had directed DOC to include the evaluation in its 2024 staffing study, but the evaluation was not in the report.
- DOC security staff vacancy rates and staffing levels may change after the security post evaluation.
- DOC is also exploring staffing efficiencies recommended by the independent consultant, including considering replacing some security posts with non-security posts, improving coordination of external transportation, and expanding use of technology.

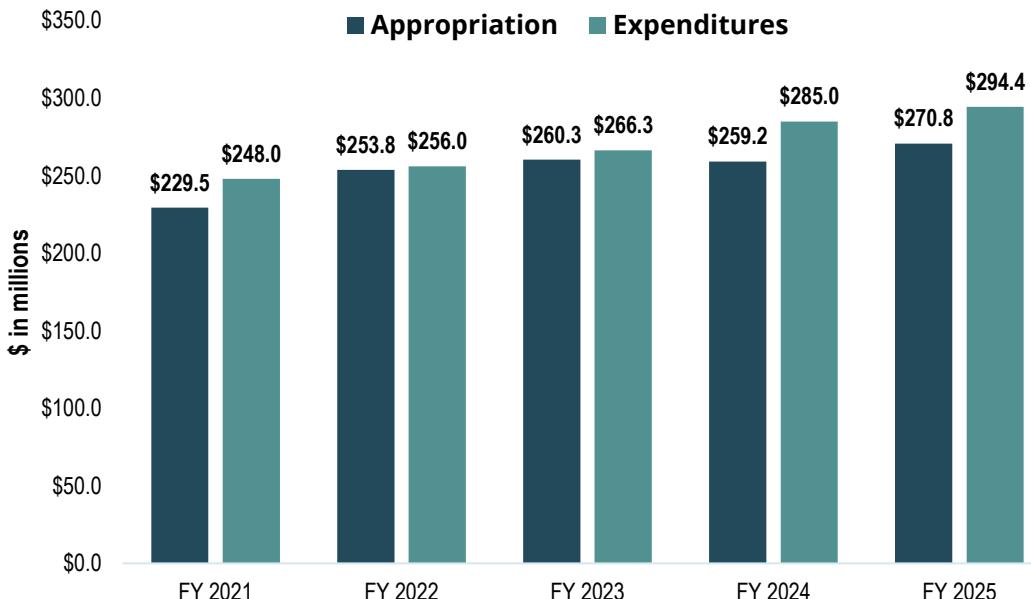


Source: CGL, DOC Security Staff Assessment and Relief Factor Recalculation, November 2024.

Source: DOC, staff email communication, October 22, 2025.

Unspent Security Staffing Funding has Likely Supported Inmate Medical Cost Overruns

Inmate medical expenditures exceeded their budgeted amount by \$25.8 million in FY 2024 and \$23.7 million in FY 2025.



- DOC is required to provide medical services to inmates.
- The inmate medical program budget enacted by the General Assembly is based on DOC's projections.
- **When DOC's medical budget is insufficient, DOC transfers funding from other sources to support its medical program.**
 - In FY 2025, the primary source of funding to cover the shortfall came from DOC's facility operations program, likely from vacancy savings.
 - In FY 2025, DOC issued a partial hiring freeze to ensure sufficient funding was available for medical expenses.

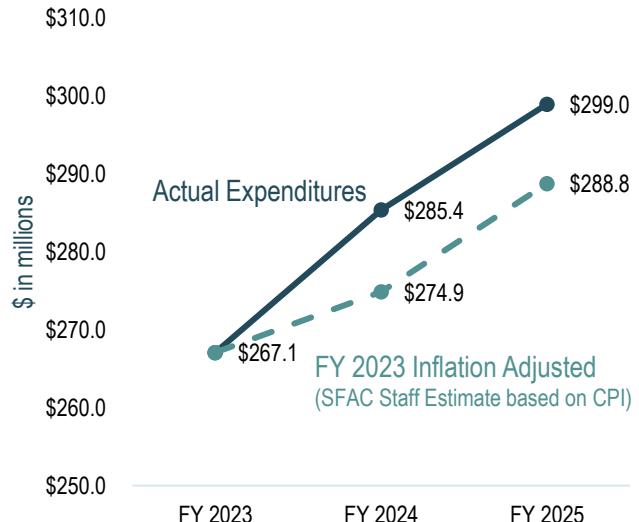
Sources: DPB, expendwise, appropriations, and budget executions databases, accessed November 14, 2025; Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly.

Note: SFAC staff working to reconcile differences between expendwise data and DOC spending data. However, the trends displayed here are similar in both datasets.

Recent Medical Cost Growth Likely Exceeded Inflation

- DOC bases its projection on prior year inflation as measured by the consumer price index (CPI) for certain healthcare services.
- However, SFAC staff analysis found that actual expenditures likely exceeded CPI inflation for healthcare services in FY 2024 and FY 2025.
- Given recent cost overruns, DOC should consider:
 - Are consumer inflation factors the best measure for healthcare inflation in a correctional setting? DOC could work with the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to explore alternative forecasting approaches.
 - Would using future-looking inflation measures better account for growth in medical staffing and pharmaceutical costs?
 - DOC should review their management of medical personnel (including contracts) to increase their ability to control costs while maintaining adequate service levels. They should explore alternatives including the ability to hire a sufficient level of state employees to reduce reliance on contractors.

In FY 2024 and FY 2025, DOC medical expenditures exceeded SFAC staff inflation adjusted estimate.*



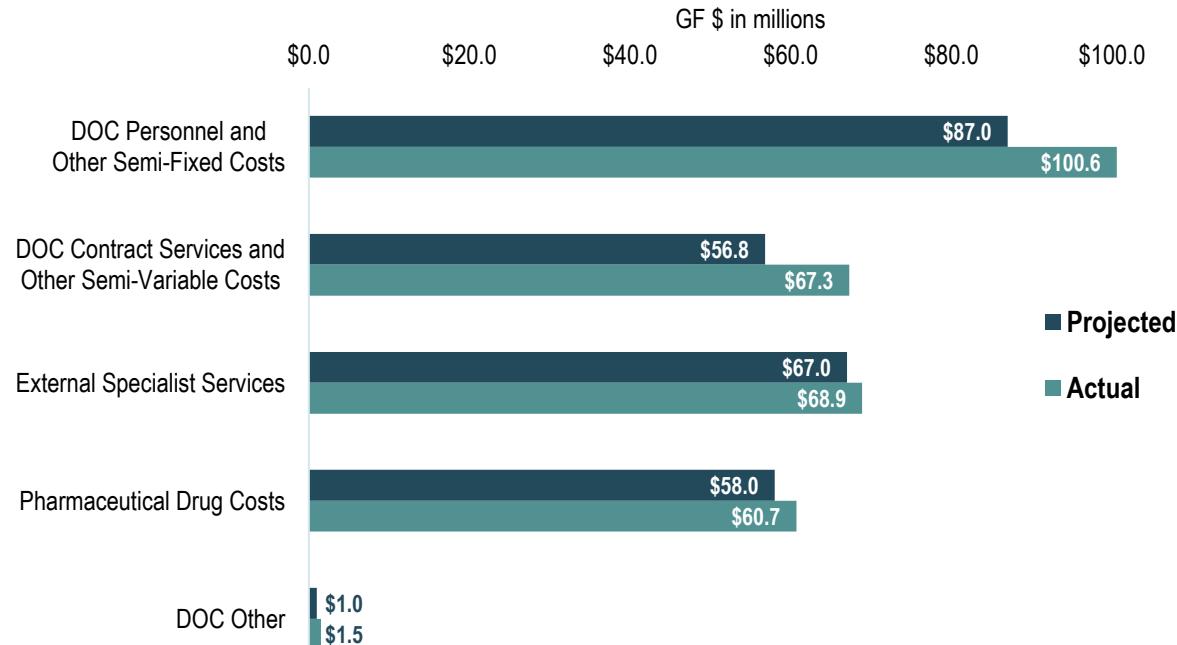
*Notes:

- This analysis does not include funding amounts for statewide salary increases.
- Actual expenditures are not directly comparable to the FY 2023 inflation adjusted estimate due to changes in the inmate population that are not captured in the spending data.

Source: SFAC staff analysis of DOC working papers for "Provide Funding to Support Increases in Inmate Medical Costs" decision package, October 10, 2025.

Biggest Driver of FY 2025 Overrun was Medical Personnel Costs

FY 2025 actual expenditures were 10.8 percent higher than projected, primarily driven by DOC personnel and DOC contract services.



- DOC increased compensation for some state medical employees to improve recruitment, contributing to an 18.1 percent increase above its FY 2025 projection.
- DOC also experienced a 20.0 percent cost overrun for contract medical personnel, including temporary and short-term contract providers.
- DOC assumed management of healthcare at all facilities in FY 2024, in part because it reported it could manage services as efficiently as the previous vendor.
 - Recent cost overruns suggest additional oversight of DOC management of healthcare personnel may be needed.

Source: SFAC staff analysis of working papers for "Provide Funding to Support Increases in Inmate Medical Costs" decision package, October 10, 2025.

DOC Should Consider JLARC Recommendations to Maximize Use of Existing Education Funding

- JLARC reviewed DOC's correctional education programs in 2025 and found that recent participants had better employment and rearrest outcomes shortly after release.
- DOC should consider JLARC's recommendations related to maximizing use of its education budget (\$34.7 million in FY 2026), including:

Consider recidivism risk assessments when making educational enrollment decisions.

Focus more of its Adult Basic Education Program on improving foundational literacy skills and less on frequent GED test administration.

Establish a policy to consider enrollment in career and technical education (CTE) programs when making decisions to transfer inmates between facilities.

Negotiate cost-sharing arrangements with relevant higher education institutions, where feasible.

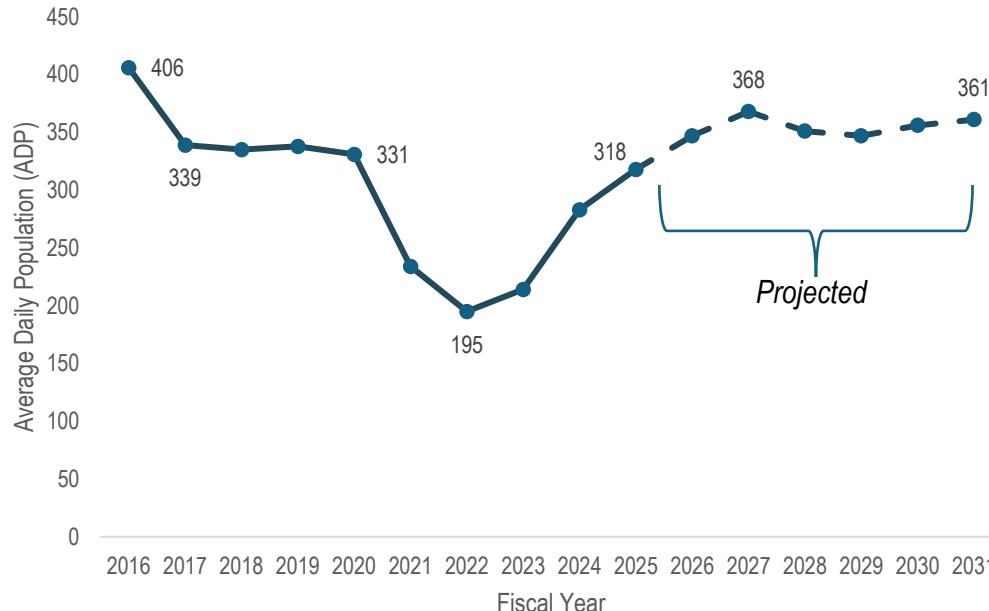
Identify the reasons for the lack of educational technologies and take steps to address these issues.

Juvenile Offender Forecast and DJJ Updates



State-Responsible Juveniles Expected to Increase Through FY 2027 and Then Remain Flat

DJJ state-responsible population is expected to increase from 318 to 368 youth through FY 2027 and then remain below pre-2017 levels.



- State-responsible (direct care) youth have been committed to state custody due to the serious nature of their offense.
 - According to DJJ, an average of 4.4 years of community interventions have failed prior to commitment to direct care (FY 2024 data).
- Number of new admissions are expected to increase from 173 annually in FY 2025 to 192 in FY 2031, for an average annual change of 1.8 percent.
 - Projected annual admissions remain lower than pre-2021 levels.
- Average length of stay has increased five months since FY 2022, partially due to new length-of-stay guidelines implemented in FY 2023.

Sources: DCJS Research Center, Presentation to the Offender Forecast Policy Committee, September 16, 2025; DJJ, "DJJ Updates" presentation to the Commission on Youth, April 1, 2025.

DJJ Provides a Continuum of Services and has Budget Reallocation Authority for “Transformation” Goals

- Direct care accounted for 31.1 percent of DJJ spending in FY 2024 and court services units accounted for 28.9 percent, in part due to “Transformation” reallocation authority.

Spending Category (NGF & GF \$ in millions)	FY 2024 \$	FY 2024 %
Direct Care	\$80.6	31%
Court Services Units	74.9	29%
Local Assistance	52.3	20%
Administration	35.0	14%
<u>Community-Based Services</u>	<u>16.3</u>	<u>6%</u>
Total*	\$259.0	100.0%

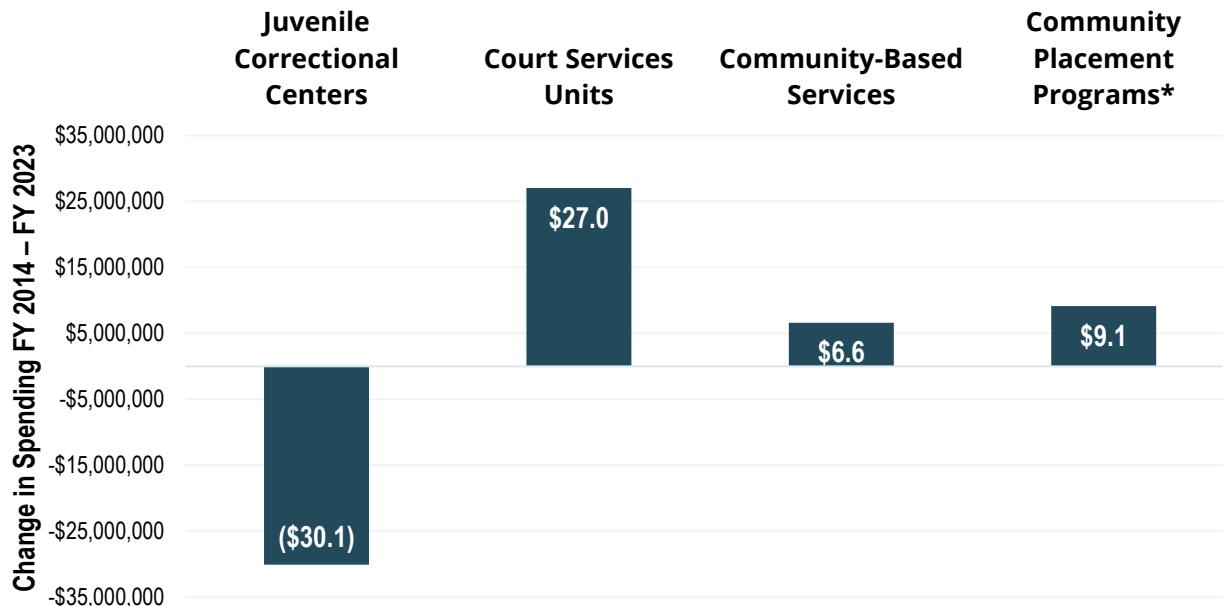
- Beginning in FY 2014, DJJ started a “Transformation” of the juvenile justice system with the goal of reducing use of juvenile correctional centers and expanding the continuum of local placements and services.
- Budget language directs DJJ to reallocate savings from reduced correctional center operations to support Transformation goals, including increasing local placement options and providing appropriate levels of services for juveniles.

Sources: DJJ, FY 2024 Data Resource Guide; DJJ, “Transformation Plan,” June 30, 2015; Ch. 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly.

*Total does not sum due to rounding.

DJJ Spending Trends have Generally Aligned with Transformation Goals, but Additional Data is Needed

Between FY 2014 and FY 2023, the reduction in juvenile correction center operational funding has correlated with an increase in other areas related to Transformation goals.



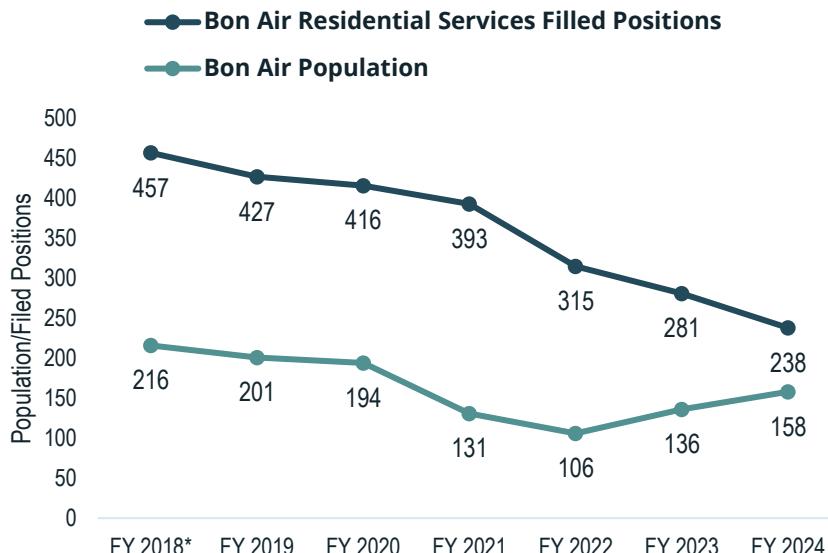
- DJJ reports that current costs exceed reallocated juvenile correctional center savings.
- Beginning in FY 2024, DJJ spending data by category is not comparable to previous years, making it more challenging to quantify Transformation savings and reallocation.
- As funding requests are considered, additional data is needed to quantify changes in budget drivers since Transformation.

Source: DJJ, FY 2014 and FY 2023 Data Resource Guides. *Community placement programs spending also includes detention reentry.

Staffing Continues to be an Issue at Bon Air

- The number of filled security positions at Bon Air has been declining since FY 2018, and DJJ reports having over a 30.0 percent vacancy rate.
- DJJ reports that they use vacancy savings for items such as overtime, premium pay, and bonuses, and that they return unused agency balances to the general fund.
- Beginning in FY 2026, the General Assembly increased DJJ security staff (residential specialist) starting salaries by \$2,231, which provides parity with the minimum starting salary for DOC correctional officers.

In FY 2023 and FY 2024, the number of filled Bon Air residential services positions declined while the Bon Air population increased.



*FY 2018 is the first year that Bon Air was the sole state juvenile correctional center in Virginia.

Sources: DJJ, Data Resource Guides FY 2016–FY 2024; DJJ, “DJJ Updates” to Commission on Youth, April 1, 2025;

Without Additional Staffing and Funding, Placements in Bon Air Will Be Unable to Expand as Planned

- Bon Air is operating at 89.4 percent of its current bed capacity, likely due in part to staffing limitations.
- Current renovation project would add 88 beds but is dependent on additional staffing and operational funding.

- If beds are not used for housing due to insufficient juvenile population or staffing levels, the buildings may be used for treatment or intake space.

Renovation Project Background

Juvenile justice system “Transformation” plan established goal of replacing large, aging juvenile correctional centers with smaller, regional treatment-oriented facilities.

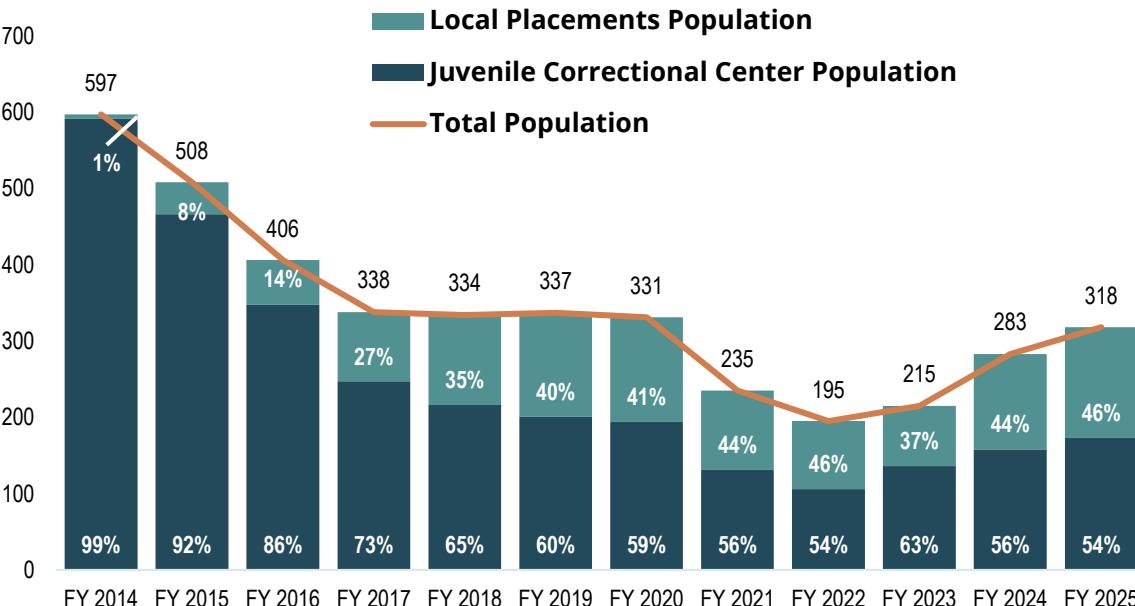
Capital project approved to construct a treatment-oriented facility on Bon Air campus while an additional location was identified.



Sources: DJJ, Monthly Population Report, October 2025; DJJ, Transformation Plan; June 30, 2016; JLARC, “Virginia’s Juvenile Justice System,” December 2021; Ch. 1283, 2020 Acts of Assembly; Ch. 2, 2024 Spec. Sess. 1 Acts of Assembly.

Local Placements of State-Responsible Youth have Increased Since Transformation Began

The average daily population (ADP) of state-responsible (direct care) youth in local placements has increased from 1.0 percent of the total direct care population in FY 2014 to 45.6 percent in FY 2025.



- Types of local placement for state-responsible youth have shifted in recent years.
- Between FY 2020 and FY 2025, the community placement program ADP decreased from 94 youth to 58 youth.
 - Community placement programs were established at local juvenile detention centers during Transformation to keep youth closer to home.
- Between FY 2023 and FY 2025, the local intake placement ADP increased from 15 youth to 55 youth.
 - Youth stay in intake placement while they await permanent placement at Bon Air or an alternative direct care option.

Sources: DJJ, Data Resource Guides FY 2014 – FY 2024; DJJ, Monthly Bed Population Report, June 2025.

2026 Session Outlook and Key Takeaways



2026 Session Outlook: Summary of Public Safety Requests by Agency

Requested Items 2026-28 Biennium (GF \$ in millions)	FY 2027	FY 2028	Biennial
DOC Correctional Officer Compensation Increases	\$188.0	\$188.0	\$376.0
DOC Inmate Medical Cost Increases	29.0	30.9	59.8
State Police (VSP) Facility Maintenance	20.0	20.0	40.0
VSP Trooper Salary Increase	14.7	14.7	29.4
VSP Vehicle Cost Increases	13.2	13.2	26.4
VSP Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) Transformation	11.0	11.0	22.0
DOC Body-Worn Cameras	8.2	5.4	13.6
DOC Career Progression Ladder for Security Staff	6.6	6.6	13.2
VSP Taser Devices	9.4	0.3	9.7
Dept. of Emergency Management (VDEM) Recovery and Mitigation Staffing	3.6	3.6	7.1
DJJ Electronic Health Records	6.0	0.5	6.4
Other Public Safety Agency Requests	<u>42.0</u>	<u>39.5</u>	<u>81.5</u>
Total	\$351.6	\$333.6	\$685.2

Source: Department of Planning and Budget, Agency Operating Requests, accessed November 4, 2025. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Over 60.0 Percent of Public Safety Agency Requests are Related to Increasing Public Safety Officer Compensation

Request 2026-28 Biennium (GF \$ in Millions)	Biennial Request	Recent Related General Assembly Actions
DOC: Increase Correctional Officer Compensation	\$376.0	FY 2023: Increased minimum correctional officer salaries from \$35,064 to \$42,000, adjusted senior security staff salaries accordingly, and provided compression adjustments based on tenure.
DOC: Expand Security Staff Career Progression Ladder	13.2	FY 2025: Established a career progression ladder to provide salary incentives for meeting certain objectives within each rank.
DOC: Establish Probation and Parole Career Ladder	3.5	FY 2023: Increased salaries for probation and parole officers by \$3,000.
VSP: Increase Trooper Salaries	29.4	FY 2023: Increased starting trooper salary from \$47,843 to \$51,500, increased all sworn positions accordingly, and provided compression adjustments based on rank and tenure.
VSP: Sworn Hiring Bonus	1.8	General Assembly provided designated funding for several bonuses for all public safety officers throughout FY 2021 and FY 2022, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 per officer.
DJJ: Increase Security Staff Salaries	5.3	FY 2026: Increased security staff salaries by \$2,231 across the board, establishing parity between DJJ and DOC entry level salary minimums.
Total Compensation Requests:	\$429.2	

Key Takeaways and 2026 Session Outlook

- Virginia's Offender Forecast Committee projects that the state-responsible adult and juvenile population will flatten over the six-year forecast.
 - Virginia's violent and property crime rates declined in 2024, and recent inmate and juvenile population trends appear to be stabilizing after significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For DOC, recent reports and agency requests highlight emerging needs, but questions remain about allocation of current resources.
 - DOC plans to revisit its established security position levels amidst the declining number of inmates and staff.
 - Additional monitoring and analysis of inmate medical spending and forecasting is needed.
 - DOC should consider JLARC's recommendations to maximize use of its educational budget.
- For DJJ, increased security staff are necessary to realize plans to expand bed capacity.
 - Reallocation authority has allowed DJJ to increase support for "Transformation" goals over the past decade, but additional information is needed to understand recent cost trends.
- Correctional officer staffing remains a challenge and the majority of budget requests from public safety agencies are related to increasing public safety officer compensation.