

ATC Closures Harm Public Safety, Inmate Rehabilitation

Illinois currently operates seven Adult Transition Centers to prepare offenders for their release into their communities by providing jobs, counseling and a gradual return to responsibility and freedom. This gradual return reduces recidivism, keeping communities safer and reducing the prison population.

Governor Quinn intends to close all but one of these centers, cutting available program beds from more than 1,200 down to some 250 and closing the only ATC for women inmates. Quinn will lay off 137 employees who currently provide counseling and supervision of ATC inmates.

The John Howard Association, a prison reform organization which opposes the ATC closures, has said Illinois needs more ATCs, not less, to reduce the risk of inmates re-offending.

The ATC Program

Offenders with less than two years left on their sentence and a record of good behavior in prison can apply to live in an ATC. Inmates move through a graduated level system earning more privileges and freedom including leaving the facility each day to work and for weekend furloughs. Inmates have access to opportunities in education, employment, vocational programs, drug counseling – those offered directly by the ATC, as well as those available from community based providers.

The ATCs are an opportunity for inmates to take responsibility for themselves and their families, such as working to pay off outstanding child support payments. Inmates must work and save money. ATC residents are also required to provide hours of community service to earn additional privileges. This benefits local non-profits. This structured transition to responsibility and community is what makes inmates more successful when they are released.

While in the ATCs offenders work for area employers such as restaurants and factories. Twenty percent of their pay goes back to DOC as a maintenance fee for their room and board – a total of \$1,169,000 annually which DOC has not accounted for in their projected savings if the ATCs are closed. Many businesses that employ ATC inmates are protesting the closures.

Quinn Alternative – less monitoring, less programming, more incarceration

Under the closure plan, roughly 1,000 ATC inmates will be assessed for Electronic Detention eligibility – a program where inmates are sent back home but monitored by an electronic bracelet that is supposed to control their movement. Inmates have to have less than a year left on their sentence, no conviction for violent offenses and other qualifications to be eligible for ED. Those eligible – about half the current population – will be released to the community with none of the job placement, training, counseling and other services offered at ATCs. Nor will these inmates have the structured transition offered at ATCs.

With Gov. Quinn also proposing deep cuts to the state's parole program, there will be very little monitoring of the hundreds of inmates on ED. The offenders on ED, as they are still serving a prison sentence, are under the same conditions as an inmate: no alcohol, no positive drug tests, and no unauthorized leaves. In the past inmates on ED had face-to-face contacts with parole agents three times a month, at a minimum. With Quinn proposing to cut parole in half, there will not be enough parole agents to provide that level of oversight.

Some 500 inmates will likely not be eligible for ED. The plan is to return them to our already overcrowded prison system. The ATC closures combined with other Quinn prison closures means DOC would be operating 54% over capacity.

Peoria ATC

- A wide array of community residents have come out in opposition to the closure of Peoria ATC, including the county workforce development office, which lauds its success in finding work for inmates and former residents who have since found financial success.
- Peoria ATC provides supervision, sanctions, reintegration programs and service to the inmates so they can be self-sufficient, law abiding citizens when they leave.
- Peoria ATC is located in downtown Peoria on the bus routes and amid restaurants, the Civic Center and several hotels. This makes it much easier for offenders to find jobs, and many local hotels and restaurants employ the residents.
- Peoria ATC is operating at above capacity, and the average age of the residents is 32.