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COMPTROLLER



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STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

August 22, 2005

Mr. Glenn S. Goord  
Commissioner  
New York State Department of Correctional Services  
Building # 2, State Campus  
1220 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12236

Re: IT Controls Over the Inmate  
Application Systems  
Report 2004-S-53

Dear Commissioner Goord:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we audited selected aspects of the security controls over the Department of Correctional Services' Inmate Application Systems (IAS). Our audit covered the period January 1, 2003 through January 31, 2005.

**A. Background**

The Department of Correctional Services (Department) of New York State (State) is responsible for the confinement and habilitation of approximately 65,000 inmates held at 70 State correctional facilities. To help accomplish these tasks, the Department has created a group of applications known as the Inmate Application Systems (IAS). Every person sentenced to a State prison since the early 1970s is listed on IAS, except for youthful offenders and individuals whose convictions have been set aside by a court. As of January 31, 2005, IAS had 13,215 authorized users.

The IAS comprises 24 individual subsystems that process comprehensive inmate profile information, including crime and sentence data, security designation and restrictions, test and medical data, housing locations, transfer history, disciplinary history, and "enemies data." The IAS computes legal dates, issues transfer orders, prints inmate folder documents, generates facility operating reports, and provides a broad range of management reporting. It is used to access data and print it on-line at the facility level.

**B. Audit Scope, Objectives and Methodology**

Our audit examined information technology security controls over IAS for the period of January 1, 2003 through January 31, 2005. One objective of our performance audit was to determine whether the Department had instituted security controls capable of protecting the integrity of IAS and its data. We also sought to determine whether the Department had developed adequate procedures for ensuring the continuous processing of critical IAS data after a disaster or other mishap.

To accomplish our objectives, we interviewed Department and correctional facility management and reviewed pertinent State and Department policies and procedures relating to information security. We also reviewed relevant information and reports related to information security and service continuity planning for IAS. In addition, we interviewed Department officials about their procedures for backing up critical agency data. Our review covered controls over organization and management, system software and hardware, and security related to IAS.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. Such standards require that we plan and perform our audit to adequately assess the Department operations included in our audit scope. Further, these standards require that we understand the Department's internal control structure and its compliance with those laws, rules, and regulations that are relevant to the operations included in our audit scope. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence that supports transactions recorded in the accounting and operating records and applying any other auditing procedures we consider necessary in the circumstances. An audit also includes assessing the estimates, judgments, and decisions made by agency management. We believe our audit provides a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

In addition to being the State Auditor, the Comptroller performs certain other constitutionally and statutorily mandated duties as the chief fiscal officer of New York State, several of which are performed by the Division of State Services. These include operating the State's accounting system; preparing the State's financial statements; and approving State contracts, refunds, and other payments. In addition, the Comptroller appoints members to certain boards, commissions, and public authorities, some of whom have minority voting rights. These duties may be considered management functions for purposes of evaluating organizational independence under Government Auditing Standards. In our opinion, these management functions do not affect our ability to conduct independent audits of program performance.

**C. Results of Audit**

Detailed results of our audit were provided to Department officials during the conduct of our audit. The details of our findings and recommendations are not included here due to the sensitivity of the information and the potential risk associated with the release of such information. As part of our audit, we identified certain areas in which the security organization, policies and controls needed to be improved. We presented this information to Department officials, and they stated that they have begun to make improvements in these areas.

**Recommendation**

*Implement the specific recommendations for strengthening the IT controls over IAS that were provided to the Department during the audit.*

A draft copy of this report was provided to Department officials for their review and comments. Their comments have been considered in preparing this report, and are included as Appendix A. Department officials generally agreed with our recommendations.

Within 90 days after final release of this report, as required by Section 170 of the Executive Law, the Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services shall report to the Governor, the State Comptroller, and the leaders of the Legislature and fiscal committees, advising what steps were taken to implement the recommendation contained herein, and where the recommendation was not implemented, the reason why.

Major contributors to this report were Brian Reilly, Mike Farrar, Mark Ren, Jim Edge, and Chrystean Keil.

Very truly yours,

William P. Challice  
Audit Director

cc: Robert Barnes, DOB



GLENN S. GOORD  
COMMISSIONER

STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES  
THE HARRIMAN STATE CAMPUS  
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RICHARD D. ROY  
ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER

July 26, 2005

Mr. William P. Challice  
Audit Director  
Office of the State Comptroller  
110 State Street  
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Mr. Challice,

This is in response to your audit of the Department's IT Controls over the Inmate Application Systems.

We generally agree with the recommendations made by the auditors and will take steps to address their findings and implement the recommendations made in the report.

We appreciate the useful service this review provided DOCS.

*THANK YOU.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Ronald Courington".

G. Ronald Courington  
Director of MIS

GRS:SJS:ck

cc: Robert Koberger, MIS  
Steve Gasorowski, MIS  
Sharon Shear, MIS  
Deborah Coons, Internal Controls