

VIVIAN E. WATTS

SUPPLEMENTAL CORRECTIONS RESUME

As Secretary of Transportation and Public Safety for the Commonwealth of Virginia from 1986-90, Vivian Watts was responsible for initiating a 45 percent increase in the bedspace of the state prison system and bringing all of these beds on-line within a four year period.

This \$230 million 5350 bed construction program was carried out on 13 sites, two of which were new prison locations. Use of prototype pre-cast components for cellblock construction and pre-engineered buildings for dormitories produced cost savings and significantly reduced construction time. From the date of legislative authorization, facility openings ranged from 10 months to 3 and 1/2 years for a new 2100-bed cellblock facility. Equally important, while lifetime staffing costs were reduced through modification of existing designs, basic similarities in layout will facilitate systemwide management and training, as well as, appropriate crisis response.

Mrs. Watts played a key role in the timely identification of changes in growth trends in inmate population. From initially questioning the validity of time series forecasting techniques to weekly tracking of year-to-date comparisons, she provided strong direction for projection modeling changes and the need for additional expedited construction. A sophisticated simulation model which tracks 122 variables was developed for population forecasting.

As an outgrowth of this construction and forecasting experience, Mrs. Watts directed the development of a 10-Year Master Plan for construction. The Plan included time lines for site identification, environmental review and permitting, budget authorization and the letting of construction contracts. In addition, the Plan contained regional location recommendations by type of facility, appropriate use of inmate labor, assumptions about effects of sentencing alternatives and a recommended balance between dormitory and cellblock construction based on translating simulated population forecasts to security level requirements.

In prison operations, due to improved training and central management direction, the Virginia Department of Corrections achieved the lowest escape record in its history and one of the lowest in the nation. In each of the four years, there were fewer than 40 escapes with no more than 2 in any year occurring from within a facility's perimeter. Most were related to furloughs or work detail violations. Virginia's 1986 average of 3/1000 compares to the national average of 26/1000 and the federal system's average of 4/1000. Management direction also led to the reduction of overtime by 50 percent.

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As cabinet secretary for the Parole Board, Mrs. Watts directed a major overhaul of the Board's administrative processes to expedite parole review. Through caseload management, computerization, telecommunication improvements and assessment of the optimal level of support staff, program changes were initiated to cut the average time for case review from 21 to no more than 10 days.

Correctional program initiatives included the institution of the Literacy Incentive Program (LIP or "No Read/No Release") which has become a national model. In addition, an integrated prison mental health program was established which included licensure of a 180-bed intensive care facility. Separation of Youth Services as an independent agency from the Department of Corrections was achieved. Secretary Watts' personal interest in the expansion of prison industries, led to acceptance by industry and labor representatives of the concept of competitive bidding for private sector running of prison shops and establishment of a Prison Industries Authority.

In corrections related, criminal justice programs, Secretary Watts had oversight for the State Police and served on the Supreme Court's Commission on the Future of the Judiciary. During her tenure, a computerized fingerprint identification capability was established with a statewide network of remote terminals for local law enforcement access. Sentencing guidelines, developed by her secretariat in cooperation with the judiciary, are now in use throughout the Commonwealth. Secretary Watts also headed a delegation of law enforcement and corrections officials in an on-site exchange program with Israel.

Finally, as Secretary, Mrs. Watts was directly involved in the development of efforts to increase legislative, media and public understanding of the magnitude of the corrections challenge. Her development of a variety of charts and concise presentations of the current factual status of commonly held perceptions helped expedite decision making. She initiated improved communications with sheriffs and local jails which led to identification of more efficient procedures for the movement of inmates and improved data base development. She actively served on the steering committee of Commission on Prison and Jail Overcrowding, which was formed in her last year as Secretary. The 55 recommendations made by this Commission represent a blueprint of the governmental, administrative and program changes and continuing commitments which are necessary to deal with increased incarceration rates.