



The Influence of Drugs in VADOC Facilities

VADOC RESEARCH UNIT

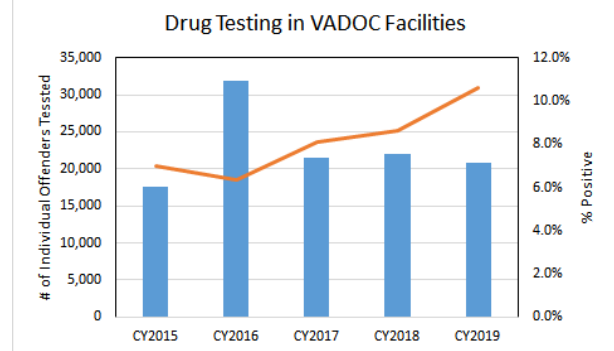
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Background

While much attention is placed on criminal behavior associated with addiction and drug abuse, the destructive influence of drugs does not end at sentencing. VADOC is actively engaged in addressing addiction and drug abuse after sentencing. This includes risk and needs assessments that help the agency direct offenders with needs to appropriate programming and treatment as well as security measures aimed to keep offenders and staff safe in VADOC facilities and districts. However; despite traditional security and treatment efforts, drugs continue to be introduced in to VADOC facilities resulting in offender overdoses and deaths. VADOC lost 12 offenders due to overdose deaths in its facilities since 2016 and hundreds more overdosed and were saved. As efforts to introduce illicit drugs in to VADOC facilities have heightened, security policies have been adjusted to try to counter these efforts and keep offenders in our care and staff safe. This summary report provides highlights of the influence of drugs in VADOC facilities from January 1, 2016 through December 13, 2019. It is important to note that this is an ongoing and escalating problem in prisons across the country. For example, in August 2018 27 corrections staff in Ohio were sickened due to exposure to a combination of heroin and fentanyl while treating an offender who had overdosed¹. In June 2019 in Virginia, eight offenders at Haynesville Correctional Center overdosed on the same day.

Drug Testing

Since peaking at 289,070 in CY2016², VADOC has administered an average of 201,421 drug tests per year to offenders incarcerated in its facilities (median=206,523). Since similarly peaking in CY2016 when 31,860 individual offenders were tested at least one time, VADOC has tested an average of 21,395 individual offenders at least one time each year (median=21,495). In CY2019, 2,207 individual offenders tested positive for illicit drugs (10.6%).



Drug Overdoses

There have been 238 drug overdose incidents reported among offenders in VADOC facilities since CY2016, averaging 60 such incidents per year (median=59), but this number varies from year to year. These 238 drug overdose incidents had the following Incident Natures³:

- 222 Emergency Medical Transport Due to a Suspected Use of Drugs/Alcohol (93%)
- 16 Suspected Drug/Alcohol Overdose (7%)

CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019*
41	68	49	80

*Through 12/13/2019

12 of these 238 drug overdose incidents resulted in the death of the offender.

Gang Members

As of December 13, 2019, there were 4,686 confirmed gang members incarcerated in VADOC facilities, comprising 16.0% of the total VADOC facility population of 29,374.

Offender Visitation

Between CY2015 and CY2019, 155,711 individual visitors made more than 1.2 *million* visits to offenders in VADOC facilities. During this time, these visitors made an average of 246,524 visits annually (median=235,741); however, the number of visits has declined, going from 277,371 in CY2015 to 215,797 in CY2019; possibly due to increased availability to other means of communication such as email. The vast majority do not result in strip searches. In the last twelve months (December 2018 – November 2019), there were 157 incidents (0.07% of visits) in which visitors have consented to a strip search⁴. Strip searches are only conducted after a primary detector has indicated a possibility of contraband such as body scanner, canine or intelligence information. Staff are subjected to the same procedures upon entry to the facility.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/fentanyl-exposure-sickened-ohio-prison-staff/2018/08/30/23fcbbec-ac82-11e8-b1da-ff7faa680710_story.html

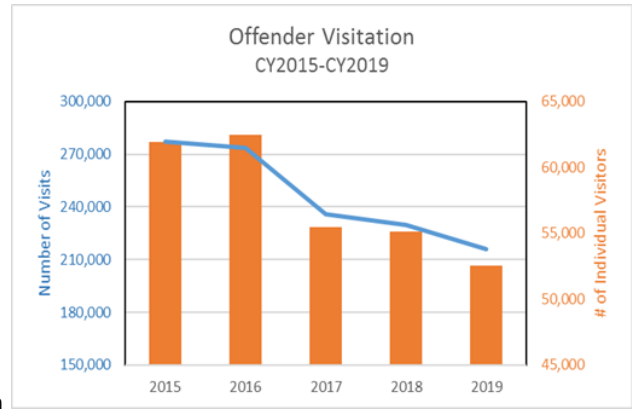
² In February 2016, VADOC tested EVERY offender in its facilities in order to gauge the prevalence of drug use instead of testing a random sample of offenders as detailed in DOP 841.5 Offender Alcohol and Other Drug Testing and Treatment Services

³ An emergency medical transport due to a confirmed or suspected drug or alcohol overdose is submitted as an Internal Incident Report (IIR). Due to IIRs being submitted by all staff who was involved or witnessed the incident are required to submit an IIR the natures may vary by the Reporting Staff thus the two IIR natures are not differentiated in this report. Effective March 2019, the incident nature "Suspected Drug/Alcohol Overdose" became an active Incident Report (IR) nature.

⁴ Incidents submitted with an Internal Incident Nature "Strip Search of an Employee or Visitor" were only counted as a strip search, although strip searches of visitors or employees may be submitted with different natures. This number does not necessarily reflect the total number of individuals that were strip searched as one incident may contain multiple visitors or employees strip-searched.

After an alert indicating possible drugs, visitors are typically asked if they had narcotics on them or if there was any reason for the alert. The following are common reasons visitors provide for the alert:

- Visitor is on prescription narcotics
- Admitted to being around drugs
- Admitted to using drugs



Drug Interdiction Efforts

While some procedures such as metal scanners, canine and body searches continue, VADOC has implemented additional procedures based on evidence of how drugs are introduced in to facilities. The following procedures aim to reduce/eliminate the introduction of drugs and other contraband into its facilities:

- VADOC has installed ADANI millimeter wave body scanners at ten facilities to detect contraband on persons wishing to enter one of these facilities; these body scanners are used in addition to the metal detectors and x-ray machines already in place
- All incoming general offender correspondence at Security Level 2 (SL-2) and higher facilities is photocopied; these photocopies are given to the offender in place of the original documents which may have drugs embedded in them (see [DOP 803.1 Offender Correspondence](#) for more information)
- Offenders at SL-2 and higher facilities are required to change into state-issued jumpsuits without pockets prior to visitation (see [DOP 851.1 Visiting Privileges](#) for more information)
- VADOC rotates narcotic detection canine teams among its facilities to detect drugs on persons wishing to enter a facility.
- The VADOC Operations Logistics Unit (OLU) conducts targeted drug interdictions at its facilities with local law enforcement and the Virginia State Police
- Effective in January 2020, the number of approved visitors on each offender's visitation list will be limited to 10 people (see [DOP 851.1 Visiting Privileges](#) for more information).

During CY2019 there have been 17 incidents where the agency intercepted a staff member attempting to bring drugs into a VADOC facility⁶.

Visitors Found with Drugs

In the last twelve months (December 2018 – November 2019), there have been 88 incidents where the agency intercepted a visitor attempting to bring drugs into a VADOC facility⁵:

- Almost two-thirds of these incidents have taken place in the last six months (53 of 88)
- More than one-half of these incidents occurred at facilities with a body scanner installed (47 of 88)
- Ten of the 88 drug seizure incidents reported the incident with a strip search of the visitor incident nature.
- More than one-half of the visitors were found with drugs on their person (46 of 88) or in their vehicle (48 of 88), 6 of which had drugs found on their person and in their vehicle.
- The majority of the drugs found were in result of the vehicle being searched (42 of 88) followed by a routine search consisting of a pat down or observation of visitor behaviors (19 of 88).
- Out of the 75 incident reports that identified a visitor caught with drugs, 39 visitors were strip-searched, 10 of which resulted in the seizure of drugs.
- 14 visitors handed over the drugs upon being questioned or interviewed by DOC staff. One visitor relinquished the drugs after visitation voluntarily.
- As a result of observing the visitation room, an additional 8 visitors were suspected to have smuggled in drugs and gave them to the offender.



On 2/2/19, a visitor to Buckingham CC attempted to bring drugs into the prison by hiding them in her genitalia. The visitor was escorted from the premises. The incident is under investigation.



On 1/19/19, a visitor to River North CC attempted to bring drugs into the prison by hiding them in her genitalia. On 1/27/19, a visitor to Augusta CC attempted to smuggle Suboxone strips into the facility, also hiding them in her genitalia. Both visitors were arrested.



Investigators received word that a visitor planned to smuggle drugs into Pocahontas State CC on 2/17. When questioned, the visitor admitted to possessing drugs intended for an offender and produced a package during a search. The visitor was arrested and taken to SWRJ-Tazewell.



⁵ Before September 2019, there was not a specific incident nature to identify a visitor was found with drugs therefore the number in this report may be lower. In order for the visitors that were caught bringing in contraband either had to be identified in VACORIS as a Participant or have an incident nature "Any activity which requires intervention of outside law enforcement (other than routine P&P arrests), "Possible felonies committed by volunteers, visitors, or offenders on DOC Grounds," or "Seizure of Suspected Drug: In Visitor Possession." The incidents were cross-referenced with information provided by the Operations and Logistics Unit" weekly Institutions Visitation Data Report and Drug Related Incidents. Incidents were then flagged using a drug index search and unduplicated by the location and visitor involved. Visitors found with other contraband that is legal (i.e. alcohol or tobacco) in Virginia or suspected to be passing drugs to the offender during visitation were not included in the total number of visitors found with drugs.

⁶The Special Investigation Unit provided the data on staff-related drug incidents.

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