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Colorado's new Department of Corrections executive director, Tom Clements, proposes nearly \$10 million in cuts to help the state balance its budget next year.

It is too early to tell exactly how the cuts will affect Southern Colorado prisons, but it is certain the cuts will be felt at every prison as well as the DOC headquarters.

According to the DOC section of Gov. John Hickenlooper's fiscal year 2011-12 budget balancing plan, the largest cut of \$3 million will be to academic and vocational programs, eliminating 41.5 jobs. The report suggests suspending GED programs, social science programs and the potential closure of career, technical education and vocational training programs.

Such a move will not be without a cost.

"These reductions may alter the culture within correctional facilities and their potential safety. It may also impact offenders' ability for successfully re-entry into society," according to the report.

The report cites a 2004 study that estimated an investment of \$1 million in correctional education would reduce future corrections costs by \$1.6 million.

Cuts would come in the form of the elimination of four teacher aides, 28 teachers, five library technicians and four correctional officers. Which prisons will be impacted has yet to be determined.

"We have to create a business plan for the state board of personnel by March 15. That will outline where the cuts will be made," DOC spokeswoman Katherine Sanguinetti said.

The education cuts also will affect inmate workers. The report indicates about 653 inmates will not have programs or jobs when the education cuts are made.

The next deepest cut Clements proposes, for a net savings of \$2.9 million, is the

closing of Fort Lyon Correctional Facility on Aug. 31.

Although that will mean the elimination of 148 jobs, "Because we are such a big agency with 7,000 employees, at any given time we will have about 500 openings due to retirement and turnover, so at this point, we will be able to offer jobs at other facilities at the same classification and pay range to all those employees," Sanguinetti said.

Fort Lyon has a relatively large number of offenders that require a high level of medical attention. The department proposes to move and house these high medical need offenders to La Vista Correctional Facility in Pueblo, the report reads.

One unit at La Vista, a women's prison, will be converted for use by 24 disabled male offenders.

Sanguinetti said an estimated 62 of Fort Lyon's special needs prisoners will go to the Denver Reception and Diagnostic Center to a new unit recently constructed.

Fifty-six clinical employees will move with the special needs offenders to their new prisons, Sanguinetti said.

The remaining 399 prisoners likely will be transferred to the state's three private prisons or other open prison beds throughout the state. By the end of the year, DOC will have enough new bed space to take 122 private prison inmates back.

By spending \$1.1 million in one-time capital costs to add beds at the Arrowhead and Four Mile prisons in Canon City as well as the Buena Vista, Delta, Rifle and Sterling prisons, the state says it can save an estimated \$1.5 million a year in private prison costs.

According to Hickenlooper's report, estimated cost for the state to house a prisoner is \$20.32 a day, while the cost to house an inmate at a private prison is \$52.69 a day.

Other cuts are proposed for the parole division of \$1.3 million.

"Those are mostly contract dollars for mental health treatment and community services for the re-entry and stabilization of newly released offenders," Sanguinetti said.

Another \$1.2 million will be cut from the therapeutic community budget, which will impact three proposed therapeutic communities. No cuts will be made to existing therapeutic community programs designed to treat drug and alcohol addicted offenders and sex offenders such as the program at Arrowhead in Canon City.

Another \$658,000 will be cut from prison operations and 14 positions will be terminated, primarily administrative positions. The majority of those jobs are vacant, Sanguinetti said.

The final cut of \$657,000 and 10 positions will be to the finance and administration areas, affecting mostly DOC headquarters jobs and one criminal investigator's job.

"These are challenging times and the DOC will continue to move forward, not only upholding public safety, but strengthening it," Clements said. "As good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars we will continue to examine every aspect of our operations to

ensure we are operating with optimal efficiency and effectiveness."

Clements has 31 years corrections experience, working most recently as director of prisons in Missouri where he earlier worked in parole, Sanguinetti said.

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