



CONCLUSION: Correctional officer staffing rates continued to decline while separations outpace hiring for nearly a decade. While recent compensation changes have reduced voluntary turnover for correctional officers, the avoided cost only accounts for a fraction of the overall expense for increasing compensation. As correctional officer pay is now comparable to other state law enforcement positions and hiring is on the rise, the Alabama Department of Corrections may have to explore other methods to continue to reduce turnover and increase hiring.

Background

Map of the United States showing percentage

Alabama has historically struggled to hire and retain correctional officers. To address this, the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) established a recruitment and retention program in 2019 that provided bonuses up to \$7,500. The program expired at the end of 2022, but eligible officers can still earn bonuses through 2025. Additionally, ADOC raised correctional officer salaries by 5%, created a correctional officer senior classification, and increased starting pay to over \$50,000 annually in 2023. By FY23's end, ADOC had paid nearly \$10 million in bonuses, with 660 employees still eligible for \$1.8 million more.

Key Findings

- » Correctional officers are less likely to resign after implementation of the compensation and classification changes.
- » ADOC has avoided between \$7.9 million and \$10 million in voluntary turnover cost since FY19.
- » ADOC's correctional officer turnover rates are better than other states.
- » ADOC's correctional officer turnover is consistently higher than other state law enforcement positions.
- » Compensation changes have not improved hiring during the review period.

Figure | From 2019 to 2023, the number of people who worked in state correctional systems **declined** by 12%, with **only two states** able to grow their number of FTEs.

Source: Annual Survey of Public Employment & Payroll, the Census Bureau

