



For Immediate Release  
August 11, 2010

New York City Department of Correction  
75-20 Astoria Boulevard  
East Elmhurst, NY 11370  
Dora B. Schriro, Commissioner

Contact:  
Sharman Stein, Deputy Commissioner  
718-546-0898

## PRESS RELEASE

### **New York City Department of Correction Announces Plan to Right-Size Jail System with Fewer Beds, New Jail**

#### ***New Classification System Creates Operating Efficiencies, Enhanced Safety***

New York City -- The New York City Department of Correction today announced a new facilities plan which will reduce the number of inmate beds on Rikers Island by approximately 3,000. Fifty deteriorated temporary housing units that are costly to maintain will be taken down, and in their place the Department will build a critically needed and efficient 1,500-bed jail on Rikers Island. The new jail will be energy efficient and cost effective, incorporate the latest jail management best practices, and feature a centralized admissions and discharge center. This represents the City's most significant capital investment in the correctional system in two decades.

The new plan also calls for the existing 759-bed Brooklyn and 467-bed Queens Houses of Detention to be fully utilized (but no expansion in either of those locations), and the Department will continue to utilize the 870-bed jail barge, which will be relocated to Rikers Island from the Bronx. The New York City Department of Design and Construction will soon issue an RFP for an architect to begin designing the new jail, which is expected to cost \$660 million. The funds for the new jail are within the capital funds allocated to the Department of Correction, and will not require any new City resources. This bed plan is considerably less expensive than previously proposed construction – a \$415 million savings to taxpayers.

In a related operational innovation, the Department will soon replace a decades-old system of classifying inmates' security risk with a new classification system including objective risk and needs assessment instruments which will enhance jail safety and security and discharge planning. This will enable the Department to more efficiently position correction officers and other personnel where they are most needed, and to supervise inmates commensurate with their custody classification, proactively managing inmates and enhancing staff and inmate safety.

Visit *NEW YORK'S BOLDEST* on the Web at: [www.nyc.gov/boldest](http://www.nyc.gov/boldest)

## **Right-sizing DOC**

There are approximately 13,000 inmates daily in DOC jails throughout the City. The majority of DOC inmates (75%) are detainees awaiting trial or sentencing; the remaining 25% are serving a sentence of one year or less (17%) or are State prisoners (7%) held pending transfer or adjudication of a parole violation or other local court matter. The average daily population has decreased over the past 20 years from a record high of about 21,400 inmates daily in 1992 to approximately 13,000 today, and projections suggest scant to slow growth over the next five years to a possible maximum average daily population of 14,000 inmates. To ensure there are sufficient beds for seasonal surges, routine maintenance and special categories of inmates, the DOC total capacity requirement is approximately 16,800 beds.

An earlier facilities plan had called for the building of two new facilities – a new jail in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx and doubling the capacity of the Brooklyn House at a total cost of \$1.1 billion. However, placing the new jail on Rikers allows for operational efficiencies, notably centralized intake and discharge, inmate property, and a new infirmary, given that Rikers Island is where most of the Department's other jails are located. It also costs significantly less – the City will spend \$415 million less than the prior plan, an important factor in the City's current economic situation. The savings will also allow for infrastructure upgrades throughout the system over the next ten years. These include upgrades to fire safety and ventilation systems in the jails, as well as the rehabilitation of facades, roofs and windows in several jails.

Commissioner Dora B. Schriro said, "This plan allows us to build critically needed capacity and support space faster and less expensively, with less uncertainty over land use issues and with lower construction and operating costs and maximal operational efficiencies. It is the highest and best use of existing facilities, and it conserves valuable City land for other purposes. At the same time, it provides the Department of Correction with the facilities it needs, its design and operation consistent with national best practices in the field of Corrections, to ensure staff and inmate safety and security and to enable us to serve the public in the most efficient and effective ways possible."

The new facility will be built in the northeastern part of the island with an anticipated completion in 2017. It will allow DOC to centralize intake and discharge procedures for all male inmates on Rikers Island. The custody classification instrument, now being fine-tuned, will be implemented later this year; objective needs assessment instruments will be added. When completed, DOC will be able to accurately assess inmates' security risk, proactively assign the population to housing and supervise them consistent with their custody classification, better able to meet their medical, mental health and substance abuse needs. The new facility will also incorporate best practices and efficient designs in jail construction, allowing for staff efficiencies, centralized support services and direct supervision of inmates. It will also provide housing for newly admitted inmates to facilitate the assessment process.

Under this new facilities plan, the capacity in the system will be reduced to 16,500 beds, down from approximately 19,400 currently. In addition to demolishing nearly 4,000 beds in 50 deteriorated, temporary housing units on Rikers Island (pre-fabricated, wood modular buildings and aluminum-framed spring structures with plastic and canvas covers built some 20-plus years ago when the inmate population was much higher), the plan also includes taking offline 1,200 beds in the currently unoccupied James A. Thomas Center (JATC), the original 1933 Rikers Island House of Detention for Men. DOC is considering other uses for that facility. Additionally, there will be 800 new beds coming online from a nearly completed addition to a Rikers Island jail.

*Visit NEW YORK'S BOLDEST on the Web at: [www.nyc.gov/boldest](http://www.nyc.gov/boldest)*