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Frakes Announces Bold New Recruitment and Retention Initiatives

October 2, 2017 (Lincoln, Neb.) – Today, Director Scott R. Frakes announced the implementation of bold, unprecedented strategies to address recruiting challenges at the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services' (NDCS) largest facilities, and the persistent retention challenges at the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution (TSCI).

"These initiatives represent an innovative approach to compensation that invests in our people at our facilities with the greatest needs," said Frakes. "Today, we are targeting available funds to address our agency's recruitment and retention challenges."

Frakes has been working to address recruitment and retention challenges during his tenure at NDCS, launching a variety of initiatives aimed at improving the security of facilities and recruiting quality talent for the agency. In his efforts to address recruitment and retention challenges, he has identified TSCI and the Nebraska State Penitentiary (NSP) as priority facilities for targeted initiatives.

Recruitment Initiative (TSCI and NSP):

Overtime, especially mandatory overtime, has been a serious challenge facing facility NDCS team members. This is a significant issue at TSCI and NSP. Recruiting new staff members for these facilities will reduce the need for mandatory overtime.

Effective immediately, new hires at TSCI and NSP, in any permanent classification, will receive a recruitment bonus. The first 100 new employees hired between October 2, 2017 and November 17, 2017, will receive a recruiting bonus of \$2,500, paid out quarterly in their first year of service.

Human Talent Director Erinn Criner said, "NSP and TSCI have the highest vacancy rate and this recruitment bonus will offer relief to the staff at both facilities by allowing us to fill the vacancies in their ranks."

Retention Initiative (TSCI only):

Beginning October 2, 2017, staff members at TSCI will receive a merit incentive based on their years of service that is tied directly to their performance. Since its opening in 2001, TSCI has faced significant staffing shortages.

“Maintaining normal operations at TSCI with vacancies approaching 30 percent is challenging,” said Director Frakes. “The vacancies are driven by the high rate of turnover. We are rewarding the commitment of our TSCI teammates and incentivizing becoming a part of the TSCI team.”

The merit incentive will be applicable only to staff members while they are assigned to TSCI. Staff members will receive the incentive based on their years of service and satisfactory performance.

The merit incentive begins at 2.5 percent for staff with one to three years of service, climbing to 10 percent for staff with more than 10 years of service.

Operationalizing Recruitment & Retention:

The costs for these initiatives will be managed, in large part, through overtime cost avoidance. For example, every vacancy the agency fills (and doesn't have to staff with overtime), saves \$13,000/year. Over the course of a year, staffing essential posts with overtime at TSCI costs nearly \$1,000,000 more per year than if the vacant positions were filled with full time employees. Process improvement efforts are reducing costs and providing the ability to reallocate funds to these initiatives.

Staffing Initiatives Background:

Nebraska is one of many states nationally facing challenges in staffing correctional facilities. Working with the Governor and the Legislature, Frakes and his team continue to innovate to address these challenges, launching several different initiatives:

- **Facility Security/Procedure Audits:** The agency has completed thorough security audits at all 10 facilities with corrective action plans to address deficiencies.
- **Additional Staffing:** During the 2017 legislative session Governor Ricketts worked with the Legislature to secure more than \$8 million over two years for additional protective services staff and security updates and program-related staff. Previously, during the 2015 legislative session, the Governor worked with the Legislature to secure an additional \$37 million over two years for the agency to improve operations, hire additional behavioral health staff, and expand security staffing.
- **Retention Bonuses:** In September 2016, NDCS provided one-time \$500 retention bonuses to staff members in high turnover/high vacancy positions.
- **Organizational Change:** In July 2016, NDCS launched a pilot program at NSP creating a new supervisory job classification for the protective services ranks. The supervisory sergeants provide direct-supervision and evaluation of line staff to allow lieutenants to

better manage their span of control and concentrate on operational issues during their shift.

- **Professional Partnership:** In May 2016, NDCS partnered with the Correctional Peace Officer's Foundation to support correctional team members.
- **Listening to Team Members:** Director Frakes has dedicated time to host dialogue sessions with staff from all levels within NDCS facilities. This initiative begins to address one of the top issues noted in the culture survey – progression pay/pay for performance.

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