



HLC Accreditation Evidence

Title: Larned Correctional Mental Health Facility Change

Office of Origin: Vice President of Instruction - BASICS

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By [The Associated Press](#)

Larned Correctional Mental Health Facility to become medium-security prison



As part of the transition to a prison, the 150 mental health inmates now at Larned would be moved to the El Dorado Correctional Facility. (File photo/The Capital-Journal)

The Larned Correctional Mental Health Facility is being converted to a medium-security prison this summer and the nearly 150 mental health inmates currently held there will be moved to the larger El Dorado Correctional Facility, the Kansas Department of Corrections said.

The plan announced this week quickly drew concerns from Larned officials and an organization that represents corrections officers, The Hutchinson News [reported](#).

The inmates to be moved to Larned Correctional would be ages 18 to 25 with less than three years of their sentences left to serve. The Larned facility, which houses inmates in single cells, could hold 300 medium-security inmates if they shared cells, said corrections department spokesman Todd Fertig. The transferred inmates would be those with the highest recidivism rate — younger men with no high school diploma and few job skills.

As of June 30, 2016, 3,421 inmates, or 35 percent of the state's prison population, lacked a high school diploma or GED, according to a 2016 study. Of that group, more than 1,500, or 45 percent, are scheduled to be released within the next five years.

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"If you're 18 and get a five-year sentence, two years in you may be eligible to change facilities to be part of that program," Fertig said. "It will take 18 months to two years to cycle through, learning skills and preparing for their release date."

The prison will partner with Barton Community College to offer inmate educational and vocational programs.

Fertig said Larned can no longer accommodate the increasing number of inmates needing mental health services.

Moving those inmates to the 1,500-plus-bed El Dorado prison will enable the state to add 50 to 60 more beds to its behavioral health program, which serves offenders "with severe and persistent mental illness," the department said.

The Sexual Predator Treatment Program at Larned won't be affected and the number of jobs at Larned also should not significantly change, Fertig said.

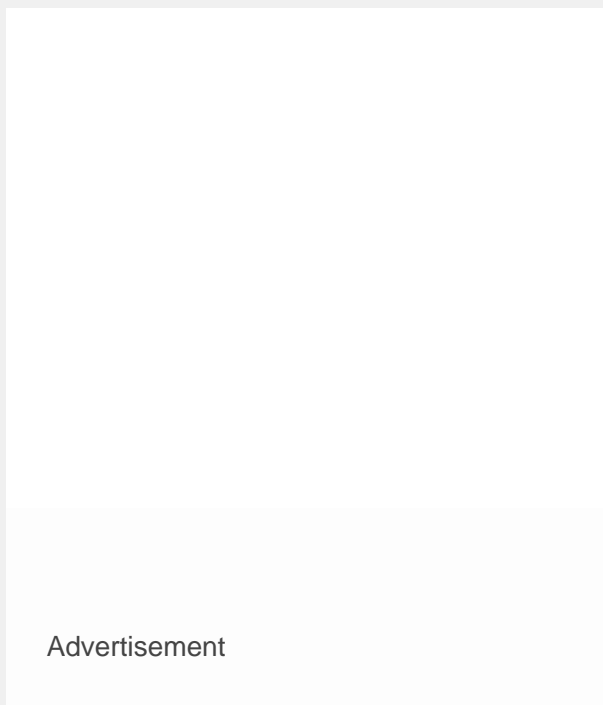
However, Larned Mayor William Nusser said city officials are concerned about the loss of better-paying jobs and problems of employees possibly transferring from Larned to El Dorado.

"If you lose 30 jobs, it affects a lot more than 30 people; it's 60 to 100," he said. "It means more houses on the market. The economic impact is concerning."

Kansas Organization of State Employees executive director Robert Choromanski said El Dorado staffing levels are inadequate, with 60 positions currently vacant. He said double bunking inmates in a maximum security facility makes the staff-to-

inmate ratio worse and that mandatory overtime staff puts inmates, staff and the public at risk.

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