

# Press-Republican

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## Inmate-on-staff assaults down for 2012

REBECCA WEBSTER

Press-Republican

PLATTSBURGH — Inmate-on-staff assaults in New York state prisons have decreased 34 percent for the first quarter of 2012 compared to the same time last year.

A Department of Corrections and Community Supervision fact sheet, updated twice a month, reported 101 assaults so far this year, compared to 153 by this time in 2011.

'A GREAT JOB'

DOCCS Director of Public Information Peter Cutler told the Press-Republican that he can't say what has caused the decrease, but historically, the numbers seem to have a cyclical quality to them.

"We are doing everything in our capability to make our prisons safer and more secure for both inmates and staff," he said.

"I think that there's no question that the security staff — who we've always said are the best security of any security staff of any prison in the country — are doing a great job."

Cutler said credit should be given to them.

Though he couldn't discuss security procedures, he said they are updated frequently.

"We're constantly reviewing security strategies and procedures, and we will always do that in order to create the safest environment."

'SMALL SNAPSHOT'

New York State Correction Officer and Police Benevolent Association President Donn Rowe said in statement that while the preliminary numbers are promising, they serve as only a small snapshot.

"Three months, unfortunately, does not mean that three years of growing violence has been curbed," he said.

He said NYSCOPBA's primary concern is to protect the best interests of the members, adding that their first responsibility is safety.

"There is still a critical need for the state to do a comprehensive study of the corrections system in light of severe budget cuts, dramatically reduced staff and a rate of unsafe incidents that rose steadily from 2009 through 2011."

## CO ACADEMIES

The state is expecting more than 1,000 correction officers to leave state service this year for reasons such as retirement, said New York State Budget Division spokesperson Morris Peters.

Peters confirmed that there is funding within the state budget for correction-officer academies that will "help maintain current staffing levels."

Fifteen to 18 correction officer trainee classes will be funded, he said.

Cutler said that a class of 73 trainees began March 26 at the Albany Training Academy, while three other classes — with a goal of 95 trainees for each — are set to begin over the next three months.

Peters said these are the first academies held in more than a year.

Email Rebecca Webster at: [rwebster@pressrepublican.com](mailto:rwebster@pressrepublican.com)