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California To Cut Back on Prison Dentists

September 26, 2021 By [Jim Du Molin](#) [Leave a Comment](#)



The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation currently employs 294 prison dentists and 2 [dental hygienists](#). The department plans to lay off at least 31 dentists.

The prison system plans to let some dentists go and replace them with a larger number of dental hygienists.

California prison dentists are paid just over \$15,000 per month, while hygienists receive less than \$5,000.

The two most highly-paid employees in the California Corrections system are both dentists; one made \$621,000 in 2009, and the other \$500,000. **Chief Dentists at California correctional facilities receive a base pay of between \$300,000 and \$330,000.** (Read about [the \\$621,000 prison dentist](#) and other compensation information at the Sacramento Bee's database of [California state worker salaries](#))

The story gathered lots of comments. Here are a few highlights:

Some people don't understand why the state should spend its money providing dental treatment to prisoners.

- "Prisoners? Taxpayer-paid dental care? Time to end that!"
- "This should have never been a problem needing to be corrected. **There is no need for nearly 10 dentists per prison in California.** That is about \$2,000,000 per year per prison, not including benefits. Put another way, it is well over \$50,000,000 (fifty million dollars) per year system-wide."
- "Better yet, we have inmates that were doctors on the streets. All we have to do is re-certify them, with the inmate getting twenty cents an hour. We would be saving big money and putting lazy people (inmates) back to work."
- "**They need to lay them all off. The state can use students and interns to do this work.** Call it on the job training and save the state MILLIONS of dollars."

Some are hostile to the idea of prisoners getting better dental care than average citizens.

- "A lot of working people can't afford dental care. Even if you have [dental insurance](#), at most dental offices, [dental hygienists](#) are doing all the routine cleaning. [Dentist](#) time is too valuable for the common person. However, **when you are a felon, you must have the best of care, and of course it's free.** Does anyone else have a problem with that or is it just me?"
- "**Who gives a flying crap if an inmate has dental care!?! There are decent law-abiding citizens who work and don't even have [dental insurance](#) for the BASIC dental needs. The inmates are given toothbrushes and toothpaste that's enough!!! Oh, by the way, for those of you who are so sympathetic to the needs of criminals who are incarcerated they can also have any of their self-confused IDENTITY issues taken care of also. ON YOUR DOLLARS!**"

There is disagreement over whether that compensation is generous or not.

- "Ahhh, but see, look at the benefits that a State [dental hygienist](#) will receive versus those who work in the private sector. The same holds true for Dentists and Doctors. No staff overhead, no office rental or lease, equipment furnished for free, excellent retirement and health benefits and top doctor wages on top of it. So **I am thinking that a lot of hygienists will be applying.**"
- "The problem with this is the fact that **no self-respecting dental hygienist will work for these low wages.** The state does not think things through. They believe their own hype that state workers are overpaid. They are underpaid. The [dental hygienist](#) slots will be hard to fill for \$4,783 – 10% = \$4,305. If this is the top step, they will probably start even lower than this. This is advanced dental assistant pay, not hygienist pay, you fools."

And of course, there is no shortage of opinions on how the state can save money.

- “Next on the list is the [prison] psychiatrists. There is no need for so many!”
- “UAPD is one of six unions that reached new labor agreements with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last summer. The deal, which shields members from furloughs and minimum wage in exchange for pay and benefits concessions, doesn’t include layoff protections.”
- “Just one of what must be thousands of brilliant cost-saving ideas that the State should have come up with, say... three years ago when the sh** hit the fan. Wait, then everybody wouldn’t have shared the pain like GAS [Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger] wanted. You’ve got to be kidding me. **Nobody thought that this was an extravagant cost prior to this week.**“
- “Finally people are opening their eyes to where the money is being wasted... We have hired so many medical staff at such high salaries, all just to give inmates better care than working class Californians, and more and more excuses for their misbehavior. **Get rid of all the medical staff**, keep the MTAs and send the inmates out for their medical care. It’s what is happening anyways, because the Doctors we have and pay huge money to don’t want to be the one to misdiagnose an inmate, so they just refer the inmate to the outside hospital for treatment. You don’t have to pay somebody 20 grand a month to, say, send an inmate to UCD or UCSF.”

It seems to me that this is a big story. We’re talking about nothing more and nothing less than *government involvement in health care*.

So what do you think? Is this a harbinger of what’s to come?

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About Jim Du Molin