

# Department of Corrections



## 2003 Annual Grievance Report

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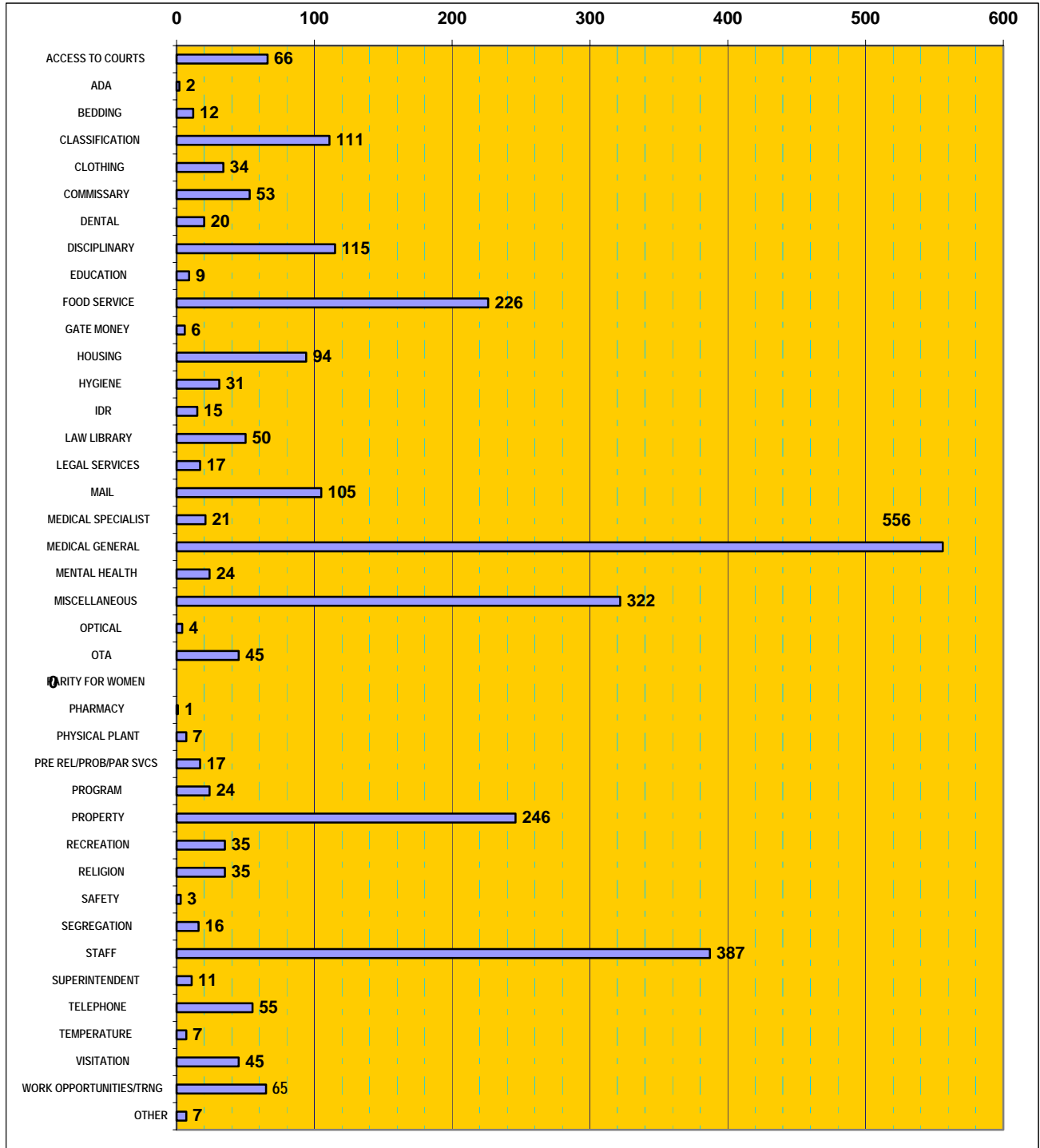
## Introduction

This report summarizes grievance activity within the Alaska Department of Correction during 2003. This brief introduction describes some pertinent aspects about the content and format of this report.

- The data represented in the following graphics was compiled from three sources: Direct DIO output, Institutional Standards Office Records, and Community Residential Centers (CRC's).
- At the end of 2003, the DOC Standards Office obtained interface capabilities with OTIS in order to query and retrieve the data for generating much of this and subsequent reports. Consequently, the need for institutional standards officers to produce data for these reports may no longer be necessary.
- By the time all of the data was retrieved and reviewed, the large number of grievances in OTIS with incomplete or inaccurate data restricted capabilities to timely provide additional statistical information. Future reports will include analysis of grievance dispositions as well as more in-depth analysis of areas provided in this year's report.
- No annual reports after 1995 were found since in this office. Therefore typical discussion of historical trends and tendencies will be noticeably absent from this report. The data in this report will provide a foundation for the kind of information collected for future annual reports.
- This format of this report is enhanced for digital review instead of the printed page. Links and bookmarks are included to easily transition between graphics and their discussion. Forward and Back arrows will also appear on the toolbar for linking.
- The report consists of four parts
  - Part One provides a graphic overview of the system-wide grievance activity.
  - Part Two provides brief discussion and analysis of this activity.
  - Part Three provides a conclusion which includes a summary and program goals and recommendations.
  - Part Four is an appendix containing tables of the data collected. These tables should be helpful for examining institutional level data not graphically displayed.

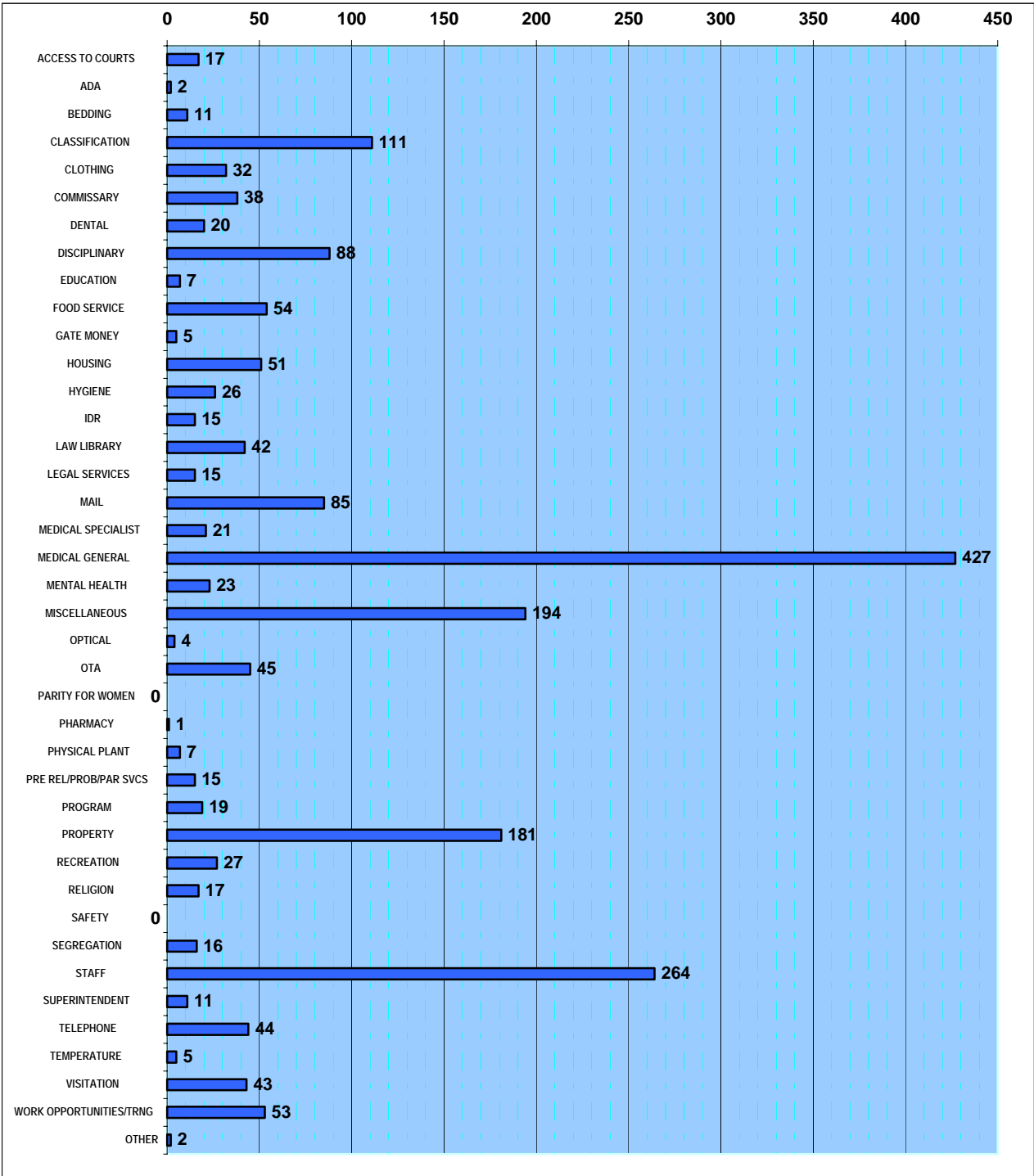
# Part One: Graphic Data

## Chart 1 -- Grievances by Subject—All Institutions



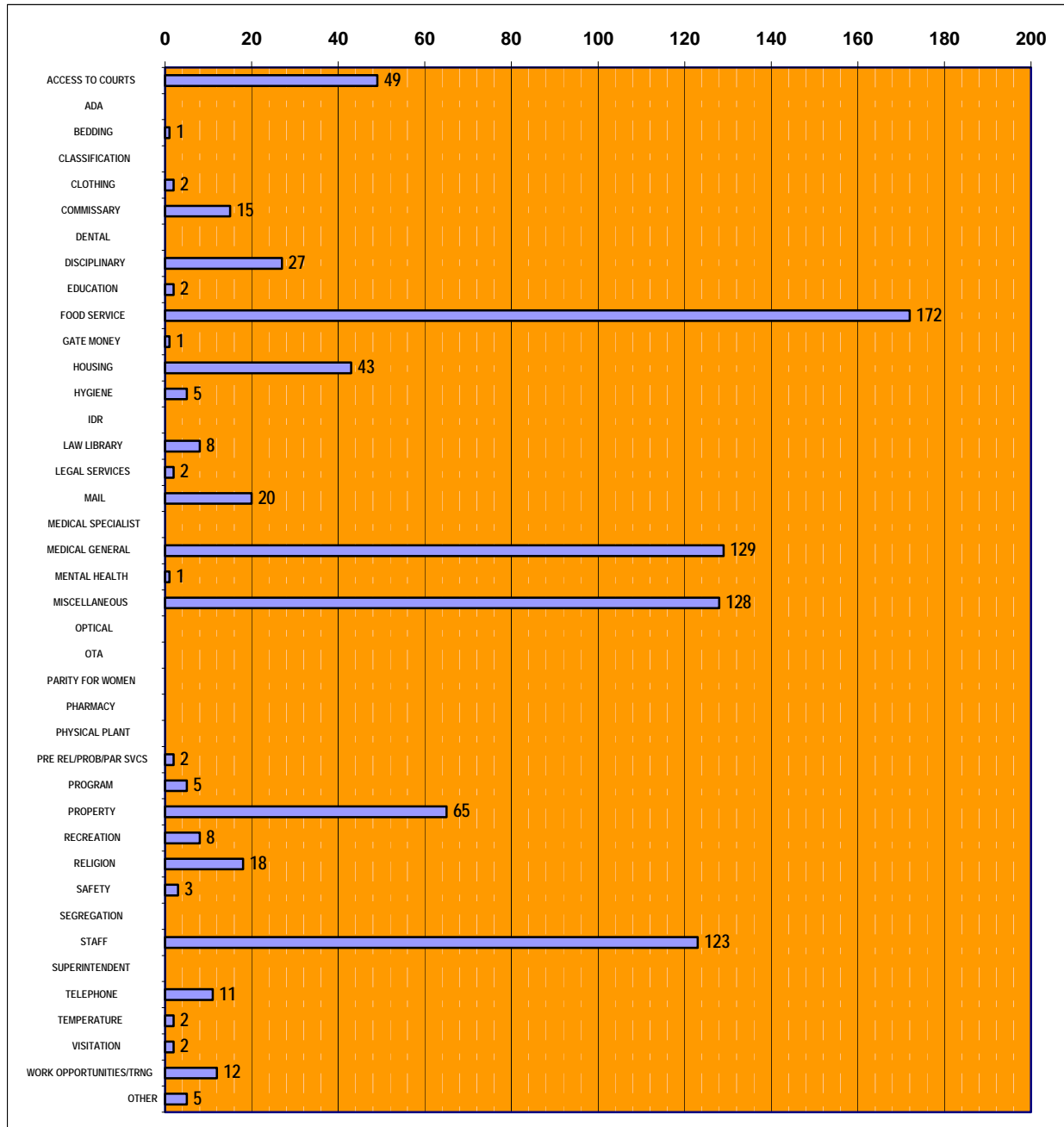
[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

**Chart 2 -- Grievances by Subject – Alaska Institutions**



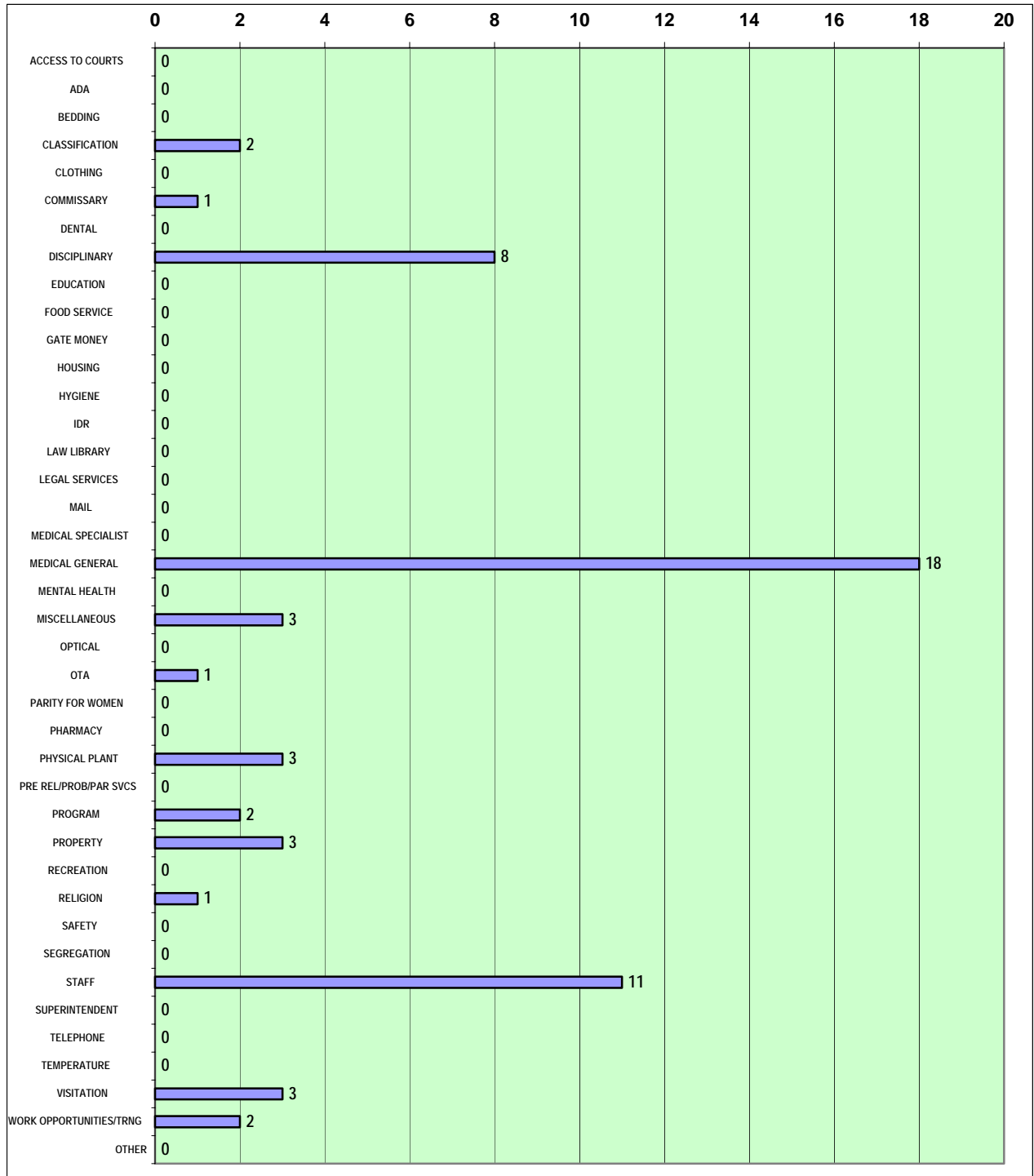
[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

**Chart 3 -- Grievances by Subject—Florence CC**



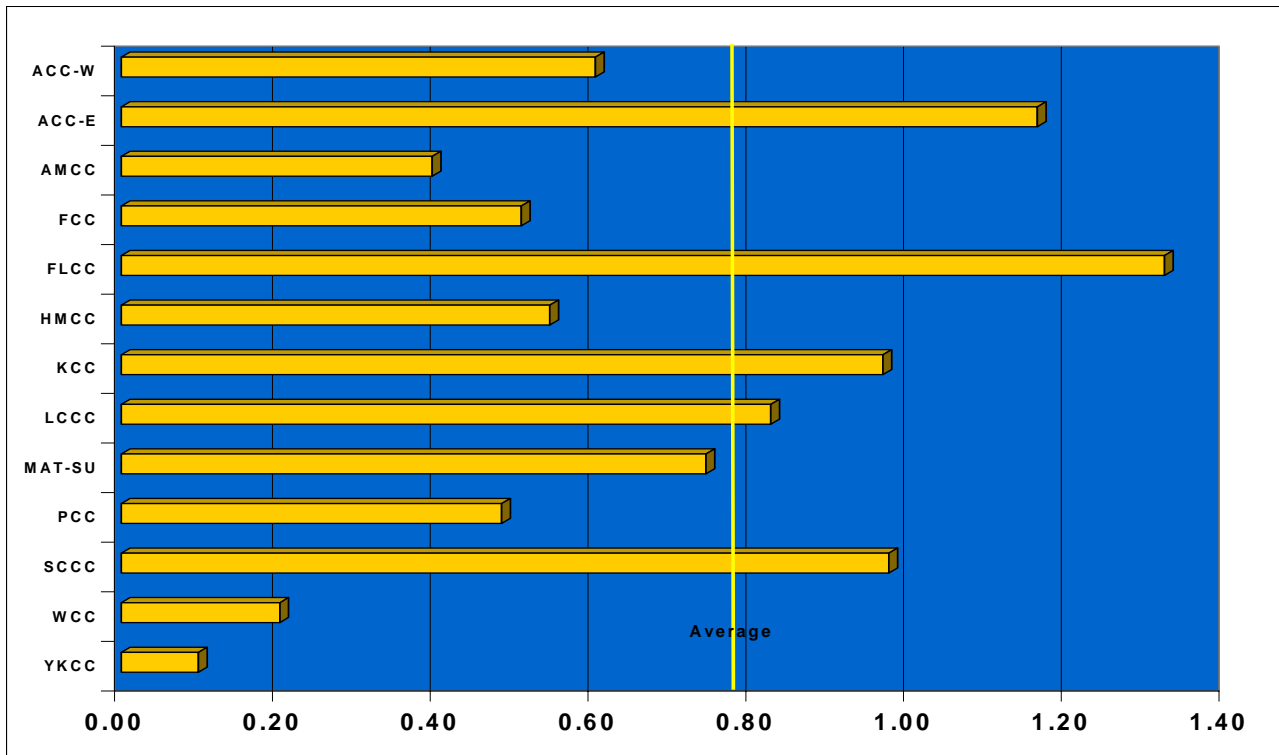
[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

**Chart 4 -- Grievances by Subject – Alaska CRC’s**



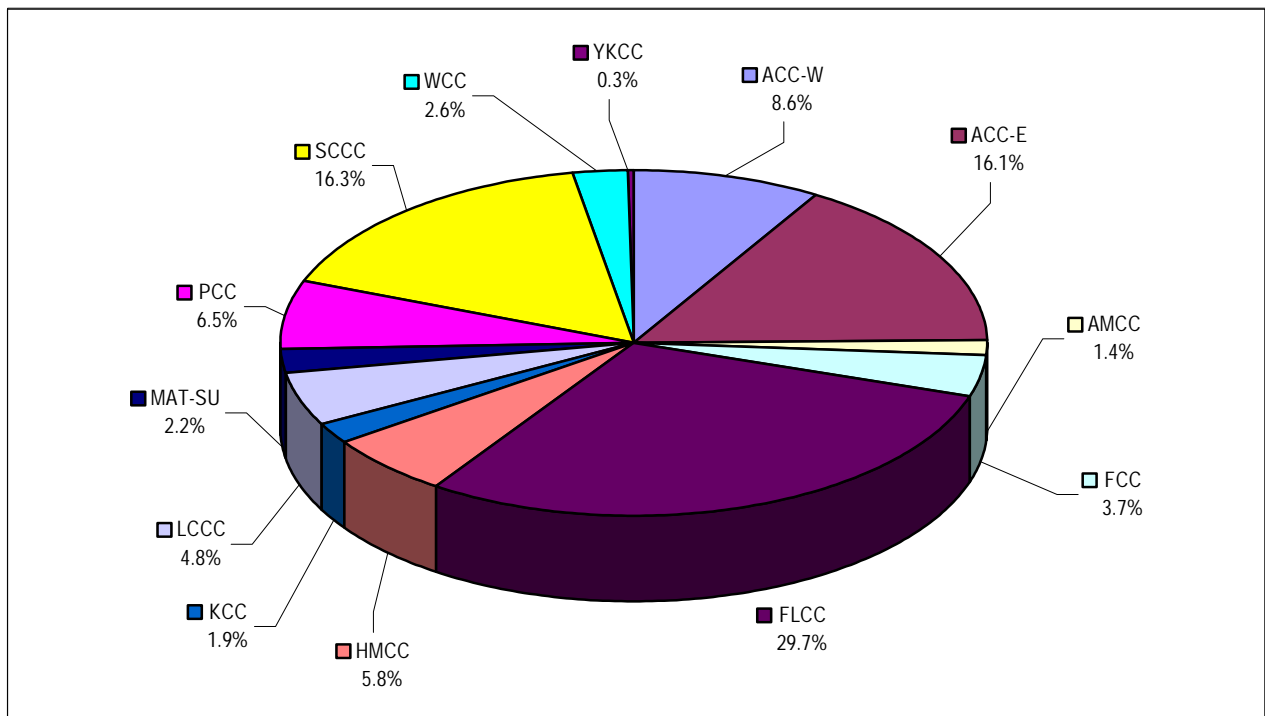
[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

**Chart 5 -- Grievances per Inmate by Facility Population**



[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

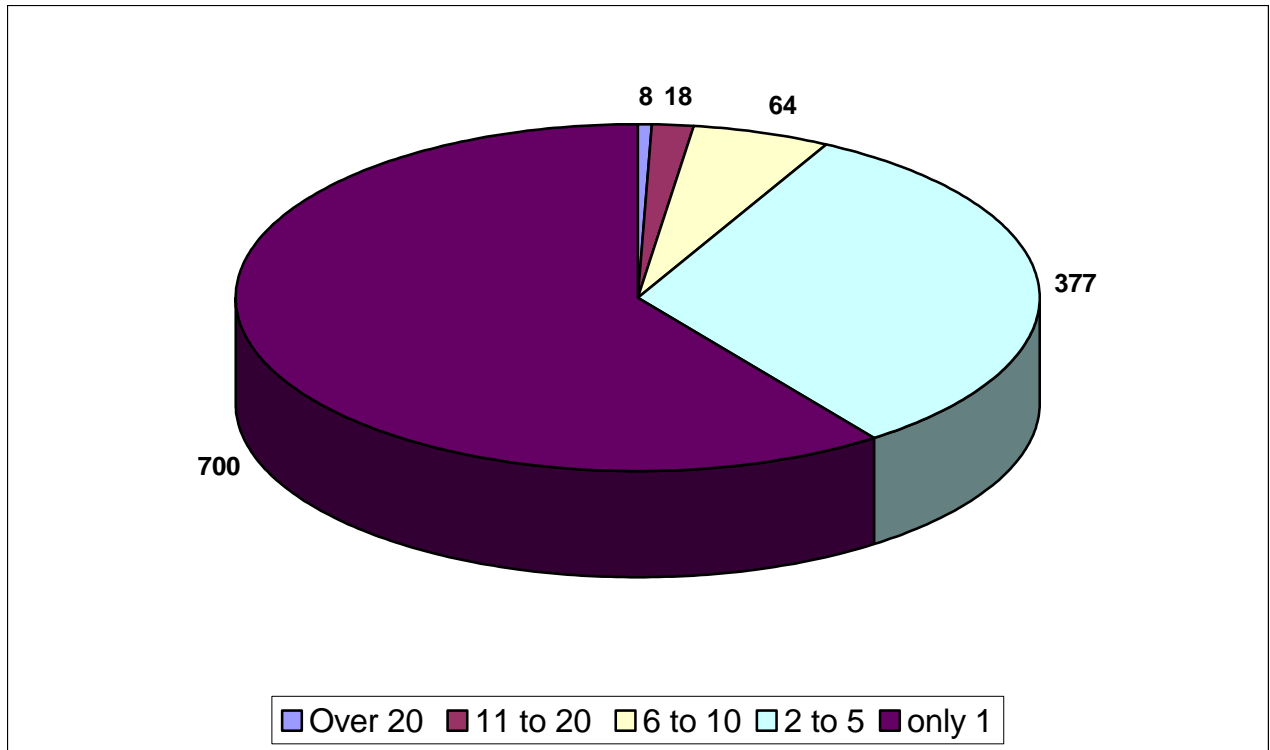
**Chart 6 -- Percent of Total Number of Grievances Filed by Each Institution**



[Click here for discussion on this chart](#)

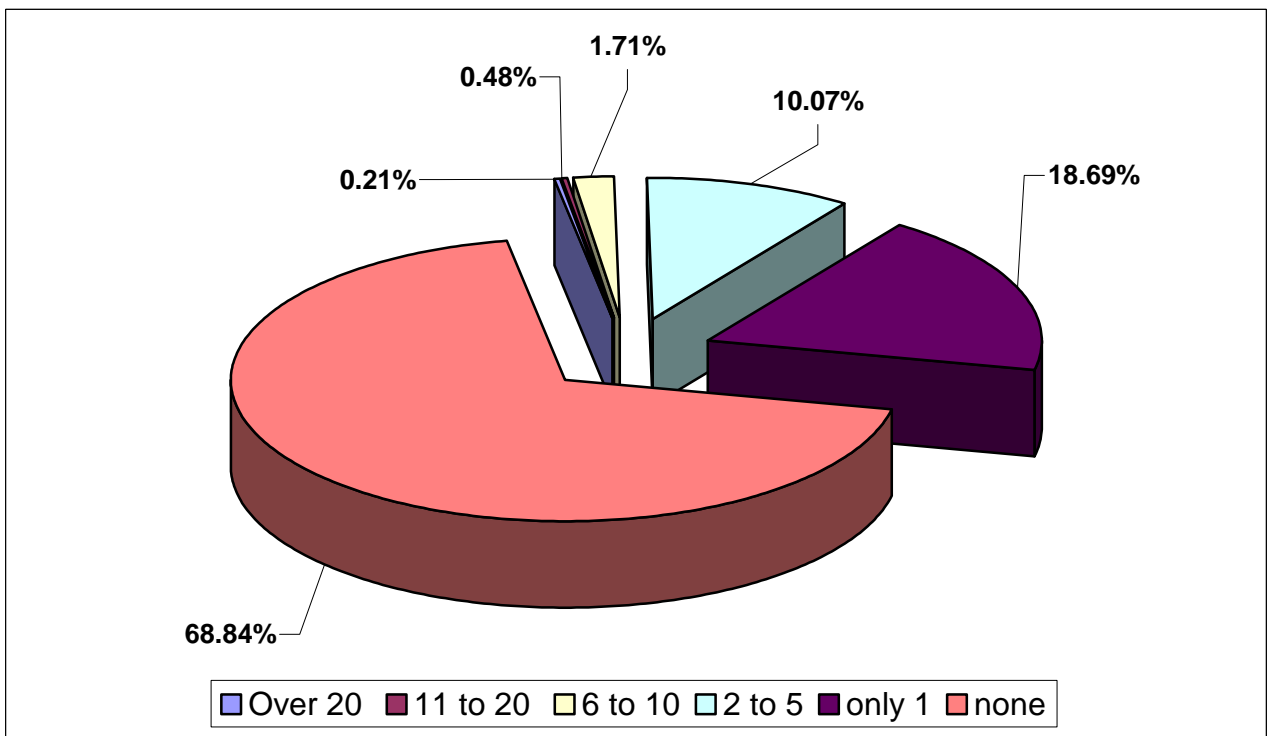


**Chart 7 -- Count of Inmates by Number of Grievances Filed in the Year**



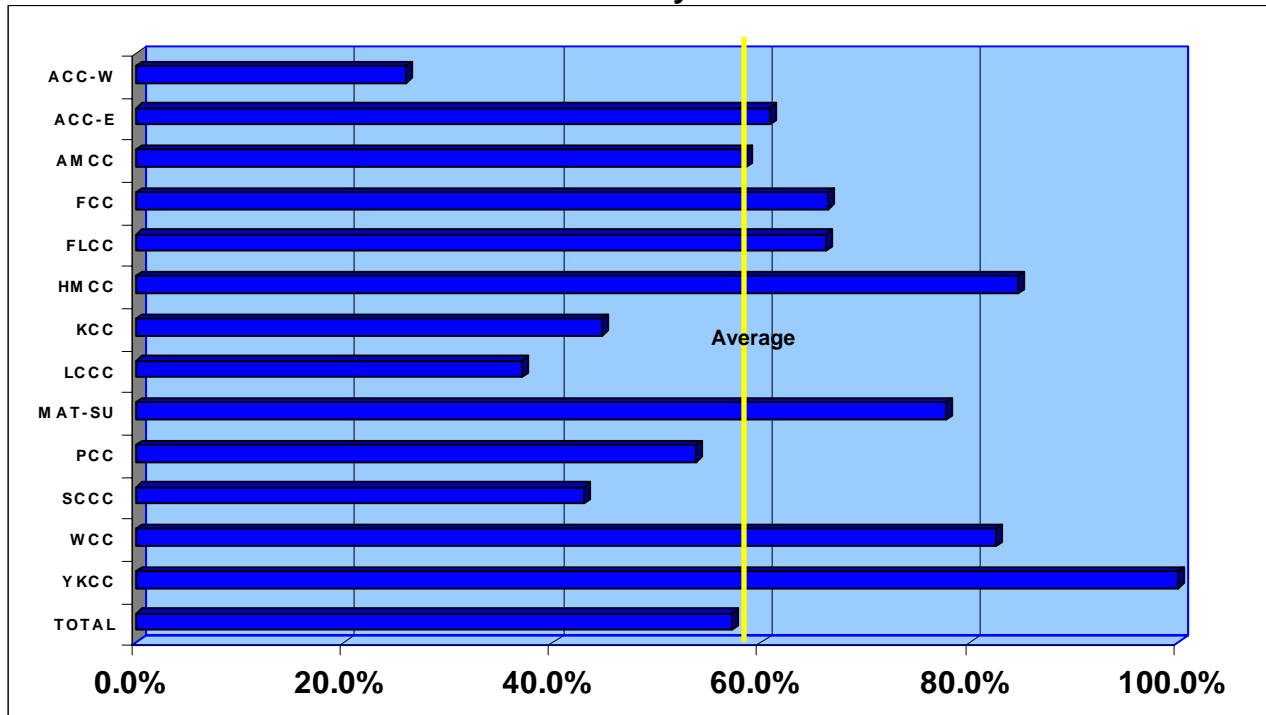
[Click here for discussion on these charts](#)

**Chart 8 -- Percent of Inmates by Number of Grievances Filed in the Year**



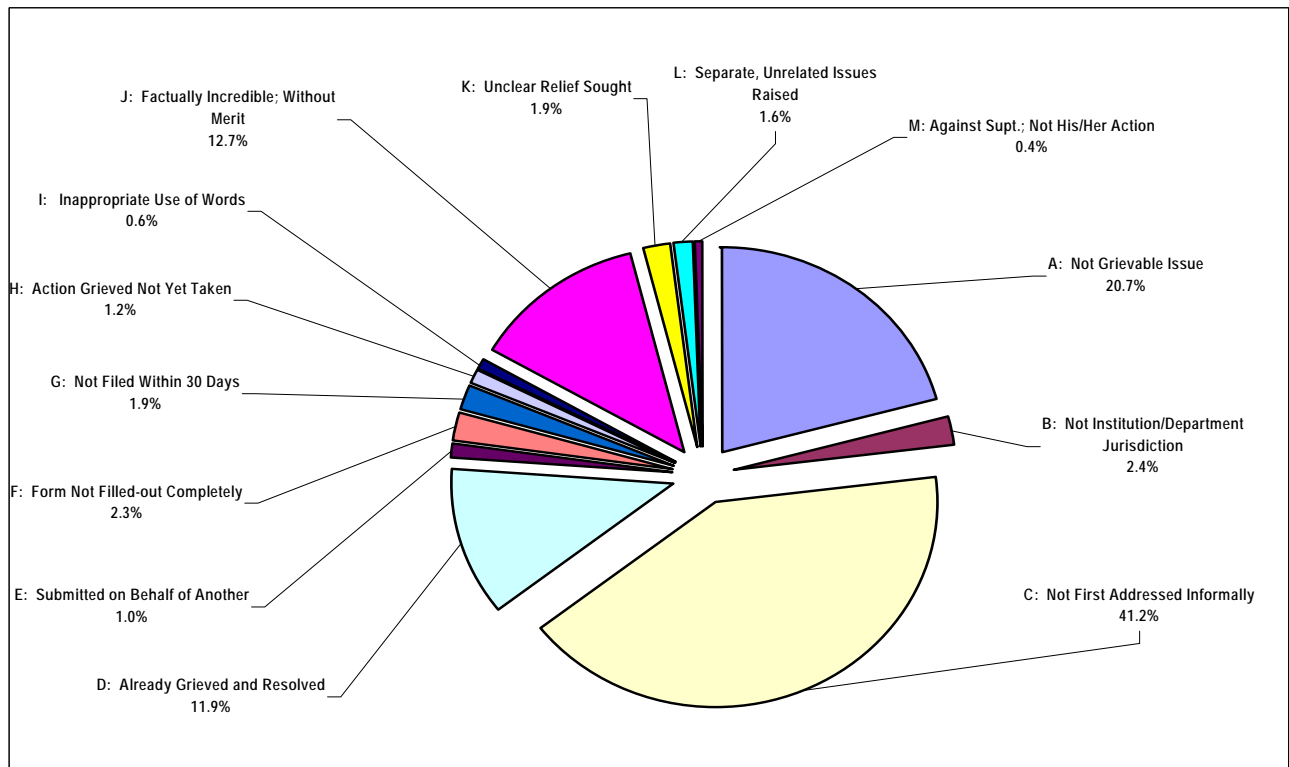
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**Chart 9 -- Percent of Grievances Screened by Institution**



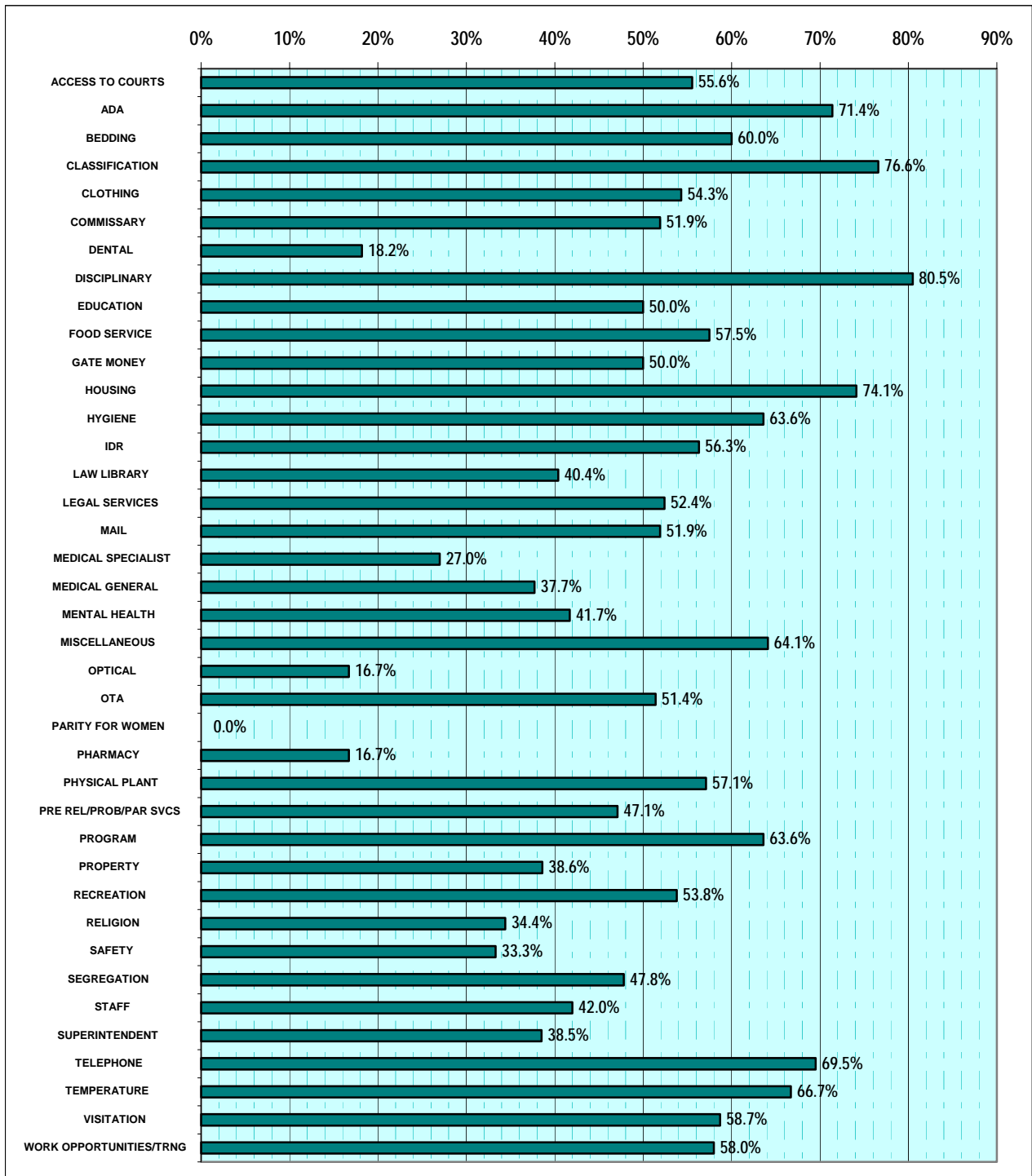
[Click here for discussion on these charts](#)

**Chart 10 -- Types of Screening Percentages**



[Click here for discussion on these charts](#)

**Chart 11 – Screening Percentages by Grievance Subject**



[Click here for discussion on these charts](#)

## **Part Two: Grievance Activity Narrative and Analysis**

### **Chart 1 Grievances by Subject—All Institutions**

All institutional grievances are cumulatively grouped according to subject area in this chart. The chart displays general medical and staff complaints as the foremost among inmates. Furthermore, when grievances from each medical category (medical general, medical specialist, dental, mental health, and optical) are combined, the total number of medical grievances is even more disproportionate where the number of medical complaints filed would exceed the next largest grievance category by more than 50%.

### **Chart 2 Grievances by Subject – Alaska Institutions**

Since the largest number of grievances come from the Florence, Arizona contract facility, Chart 2 was created to reflect the emphases of grievances filed only within the Alaska institutions. Despite the absence of grievance data from Florence, the top four areas of medical, staff, property, and miscellaneous grievances remain the same in this chart as in Chart 1.

### **Chart 3 Grievances by Subject—Florence CC**

The areas of greatest concern to inmates in the Florence Correctional Center are displayed in this chart. Even though inmates at the facility collectively submitted 90 food services grievances in August, the figures indicate a considerable dissatisfaction with food quality. However, after this concern over food service, the next four most common areas of concern reflect the same rankings found with Alaska institutions (medical, staff, property, and miscellaneous grievances).

### **Chart 4 Grievances by Subject – Alaska CRC's**

As might be expected, Chart 4 shows significantly less grievances are filed in Community Residential Centers. Nonetheless, when CRC prisoners file grievances, the prominence of medical and staff complaints is consistent with the pattern seen with other institutions.

### **Chart 5 Grievances per Inmate by Facility Population**

This chart attempts to proportionately display grievance activity relative to the size of the facility. Since significantly more inmates are housed in a facility over the course of the year than its capacity, the figures in this chart are based upon a representative ratio of grievances per inmate rather than accounting for every single person housed within a facility during the year. Thus in order to derive a grievance per inmate ratio, the total number of grievances filed in each facility is divided by the total inmate population at the facility.

This analytical approach was used in order to evaluate more equitably the grievance volume at each facility. For example, an examination of the grievance ratio within a facility might be insightful when administrators assign multiple duties to Institutional Standards Officers.

Overall, facilities average less than one grievance per inmate per year. However, larger facilities that have higher grievance per inmate averages experience a significantly larger grievance workload. Although it is believed that facilities housing long-term inmates generate the most grievance activity, the higher volume of grievances filed at some facilities does not support this premise. Other factors such as institutional problems or a few highly litigious inmates can contribute to these numbers.

#### **Chart 6 Percent of Total Number of Grievances Filed by Each Institution**

In contrast to the previous examination of grievances relevant to the size of an institution, Chart 6 depicts the percentage which each facility contributed to the total number of grievances during 2003.

#### **Chart 7 Count of Inmates by Number of Grievances Filed in the Year**

This chart focuses on inmates who filed grievances during the year to see how many grievances each inmate filed. Data reveals that the 60% of these inmates filed only one grievance during the year. In contrast, 8 inmates filed over 20 grievances during the year which accounted for 10% of all grievances (these inmates filed 62, 53, 39, 30, 25, 24, and 23 (2) grievances respectively).

#### **Chart 8 Percent of Inmates by Number of Grievances Filed in the Year**

This chart displays the percent of grievance activity based upon the total number of inmates in the institutions. As previously mentioned, the actual count of all people who were incarcerated in each institution during the year far exceeds the facility's maximum population. Thus, the figure for determining the percent of inmates who file grievances is representative and based on facility capacities. Nonetheless, in spite of the large number of grievances filed during the year, this chart shows that the vast majority of inmates never filed a single grievance.

#### **Chart 9 Percent of Grievances Screened by Institution**

Chart 9 shows the percent of grievances which each facility screens. Overall, 57% of all grievances filed in institutions are screened. The data for this chart was compared with Chart 5, [Grievances per Inmate by Facility Population](#), to determine whether screening increases or decreases the number of grievances filed. No correlation was found.

#### **Chart 10 Types of Screening Percentages**

Although a grievance may be screened for several reasons, the primary screening reason as entered into OTIS is shown in this chart. Due to a large discrepancy between the data which the Florence facility reported and those retrieved through OTIS, the percentages displayed represent but do not reflect all of the screenings completed.

A significant observation can be made regarding this chart. The two most common screening reasons (which account for over 60% of all screened grievances) are also arguably the two reasons for screening which are the easiest to reduce with better communication between the staff and inmates.

### **Chart 11 Screening Percentages by Grievance Subject**

The final chart identifies the percentages of screenings according to subject area to determine if one kind of grievance is screened more often than another kind. Two patterns emerge from this data. First, classification and disciplinary grievances, most often screened (not grievable issues), could be reduced with better-informed inmates. Second, medical screenings are relatively low when compared with other grievances.

# Conclusion

## Summary

This report establishes a baseline level for comparison and a foundation for further discussion. Although no similar recent reports have been found for analyzing trends and tendencies, sufficient data was obtained to provide a good picture of the grievance process within Alaska institutions. These observations are summarized here.

- Overall, the number of inmates filing grievances indicates that the vast majority of prisoners do not use the process to resolve disputes or issues pertaining to their confinement.
- A few inmates generate a disproportionate amount of the grievance workload. Specifically, 8 inmates filed 10% of the grievances while 26 inmates filed about 20% of the grievances.
- These statistics indicates that many inmates utilize the grievance process as a last resort, when all else fails. In contrast, a few inmates utilize the grievance process as an initial response to a condition or a situation. In the latter case, instruction would be most beneficial for inmates to learn how to better remedy a problem.
- Medical Grievances are the biggest concern in most institutions. Analysis of any correlation between the costs of care and services or staffing and the number of medical grievances was beyond the scope of this study and was not performed.
- The percent of grievances being screened is too high. This number is too high even without considering the merits of the decision of a standard's officer to screen a grievance. In other words, even though a standards officer makes a good decision to screen a grievance, more could be done to reduce the volume of those grievances and minimize the workload on standards officers.

## Goals

This examination of grievance activity would be incomplete without addressing its implications on how current practice could be improved. The analysis of grievance data suggests ways to improve the grievance system in the following three areas.

- Data Collection and Analysis
  - Reduce the number of grievances identified as “miscellaneous”. This decriptor which was used over 300 times fails to describe an inmate’s core concern.
  - Expand analysis of grievance data to include more analysis on the institutional level. This report has primarily focused on the collective examination of grievances statewide.
  - Transition to report generation directly from OTIS. Capabilities are now in place to retrieve all of the data needed to generate this report without institutions having to submit data individually. However, in order for this to happen,

grievance records in OTIS need to be kept current, complete, and accurate. For example, some Institutional Standards Officers need to develop a better system for tracking grievance entries in OTIS to ensure that the grievance date and disposition fields are accurately completed.

- Grievance Processing

- Reduce the number of screened grievances. Since grievances screened as “not a grievable issue” and “not first addressed informally” account for nearly 1/3 of all grievances received; the number of grievances filed can be realistically and significantly reduced by teaching inmates about the grievance process.
- Reduce the number of complaints against staff. I carefully address this subject, as I do not want to minimize the challenging role of a correctional officer working in a dangerous environment with difficult people. Nor do I want to minimize the challenges each officer faces to performing his or her job. Although many grievances against staff are found to be without merit, officers need to continually improve their intellectual, analytical, interpersonal, and emotional skills in order to be better equipped to combat the chronic challenges each day brings.
- Explore, adopt, and assimilate strategies and methods that work. For example, some Standards Officers have adopted an interpersonal and interactive approach with inmates to discuss their problems prior to filing a grievance. Where both Palmer CC and Wildwood CC staff report having applied these principles, the resulting ratio of grievances filed reflect the benefits of this practice (see Chart 5, [Grievances per Inmate by Facility Population](#)). Wildwood staff reported that two-thirds less grievances were filed in 2003 than in 2002. Although interaction may be easier in smaller facilities, large ones can also benefit by vigilantly targeting new and innovative approaches with the inmates who most frequently demand so much attention.

- Education and Training

- Improve training opportunities for standards officers to better equip them as valuable resources within each facility.
- Broaden the continuing education of standards officers to address more analytical, interpersonal, attitudinal content which reinforces our professional standards of conduct.
- Explore options for improving written communication with inmates regarding the grievance process and problem resolution. These may include
  - Revising Policy #808.03 to clarify general filing and screening procedures in order to provide a more understandable explanation of the grievance process. This may include use of a grievance process chart again instead of the Four Steps of a Grievance Handout (form 808.03e).
  - Revising the Inmate Handbook in order to simplify and clarify dispute and grievance procedures.



# Appendix

**Table 1 Grievance Subjects by Institution**

GRIEVANCE SUBJECT	ACC-W	ACC-E	AMCC	FCC	FLCC	HMCC	KCC	LCCC	MAT-SU	PCC	SCCC	WCC	YKCC	TOTAL
ACCESS TO COURTS	1	5			49						11			66
ADA	1	1												2
BEDDING	2	5			1			1			3			12
CLASSIFICATION	18	18	7			14	2	6	1	10	29	5	1	111
CLOTHING	3	24		2	2			1		2				34
COMMISSARY	2	10	1	8	15	1	1	3	3	5	3	1		53
DENTAL	3	6	1					3	1	5		1		20
DISCIPLINARY	12	13	1	4	27	9	4	2	6	8	21	3	5	115
EDUCATION		1			2					1	5			9
FOOD SERVICE	4	20		3	172	4	2	1		6	14			226
GATE MONEY	1				1			1			3			6
HOUSING	3	14		9	43	6	1	4	2	5	5	2		94
HYGIENE	2	7	1		5	2	2	3		3	3	3		31
IDR		1							1		13			15
LAW LIBRARY	15	11	1		8			1		3	10	1		50
LEGAL SERVICES	2	4		1	2					2	4	2		17
MAIL	7	17	1	2	20	5	2	3	5	4	35	4		105
MEDICAL SPECIALIST	6	8						2	1			4		21
MEDICAL GENERAL	65	110	11	30	129	36	1	40	17	41	64	12		556
MENTAL HEALTH	4	6			1	2			1	4	6			24
MISCELLANEOUS	13	36		3	128	13		14	9	25	81			322
OPTICAL	1	1										2		4
OTA		10		5		1		8		5	10	6		45
PARITY FOR WOMEN														0
PHARMACY		1												1
PHYSICAL PLANT	1	1		2			1			1		1		7
PRE REL/PROB/PAR SVCS		6			2		1			1	3	4		17
PROGRAM	3	6		1	5	1	2			2	4			24
PROPERTY	23	30	2	3	65	21	1	6	2	24	64	5		246
RECREATION	5	4	3		8	2	2	2	1	1	5	2		35
RELIGION	4	3		3	18	1	2			2		2		35
SAFETY					3									3
SEGREGATION	2	4				3			3	3			1	16
STAFF	35	53	5	21	123	31	19	31	3	12	42	10	2	387
SUPERINTENDENT		1						6	4					11
TELEPHONE	2	13	1		11	8	5	1	3	3	8			55
TEMPERATURE			1		2		1	1		1		1		7
VISITATION	3	8	1	4	2	8		1	4	2	11	1		45
WORK OPPORTUNITIES/TRNG	7	10	2	6	12	1	1	1		7	16	2		65
OTHER			2		5									7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2899</b>
<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	
POPULATION (EMERGENCY CAP)	416	403	104	211	651	311	58	170	85	390	486	368	92	3745
GRIEVANCES PER INMATE	0.60	1.16	0.39	0.51	1.32	0.54	0.97	0.82	0.74	0.48	0.97	0.20	0.10	0.77

**Table 2 Grievances Screened by Institutions**

A: Not Grievable Issue	28	42	7	38		24	5	10	9	41	22	12	7	245
B: Not Institution/Department Jurisdiction		15		1		1	1	1	1	4	7			31
C: Not First Addressed Informally	20	154	11	17		88	5	15	13	24	114	26		487
D: Already Grieved and Resolved	4	12	1	4		8	3	18	1	1	19	10		81
E: Submitted on Behalf of Another	1	1		2		3	2			1		1		11
F: Form Not Filled-out Completely	3					3	1	1	1		8	3		20
G: Not Filed Within 30 Days	3	1	3	1		2					8	4		22
H: Action Grieved Not Yet Taken		2		1			1			4	3			11
I: Inappropriate Use of Words		1				1			1	1		1		5
J: Factually Incredible; Without Merit	2	51		2		10	5	4	21	17	11		2	125
K: Unclear Relief Sought		3	2	3		3	2		1	4	7	2		27
L: Separate, Unrelated Issues Raised	3	3						3	1	3	3	2		18
M: Against Supt.; Not His/Her Action	1			2						1	1			5
<b>Total Screened</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1658</b>
<b>TOTAL GRIEVANCES FILED</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2899</b>
Percent of Grievances Screened	26.0%	60.9%	58.5%	66.4%	66.2%	84.6%	44.6%	37.1%	77.8%	53.7%	42.9%	82.4%	100.0%	57.2%

**Table 3 Grievances Filed by Individual Inmates**

Grievances Filed in Year	Number of Grievants	Total Grievances	Percent of All Grievances	Percent of Inmates
Over 20	8	279	10.1%	0.2%
11 to 20	18	243	8.8%	0.5%
6 to 10	64	503	18.3%	1.7%
2 to 5	377	1029	37.4%	10.1%
only 1	700	700	25.4%	18.7%
none	2578	0	0.0%	68.8%

**Table 4 Grievance Subjects by CRC**

GRIEVANCE SUBJECT	Aulla	Cordova	Glacier Manor	Glenwood	Midtown	Northstar	Parkview	Seaside	Tundra	TOTAL
ACCESS TO COURTS										0
ADA										0
BEDDING										0
CLASSIFICATION							2			2
CLOTHING										0
COMMISSARY			1							1
DENTAL										0
DISCIPLINARY				8						8
EDUCATION										0
FOOD SERVICE										0
GATE MONEY										0
HOUSING										0
HYGIENE										0
IDR										0
LAW LIBRARY										0
LEGAL SERVICES										0
MAIL										0
MEDICAL SPECIALIST										0
MEDICAL GENERAL		7		7			4			18
MENTAL HEALTH										0
MISCELLANEOUS				3						3
OPTICAL										0
OTA			1							1
PARITY FOR WOMEN										0
PHARMACY										0
PHYSICAL PLANT				3						3
PRE REL/PROB/PAR SVCS										0
PROGRAM				2						2
PROPERTY		1		2						3
RECREATION										0
RELIGION				1						1
SAFETY										0
SEGREGATION										0
STAFF	2		1	10						11
SUPERINTENDENT										0
TELEPHONE										0
TEMPERATURE										0
VISITATION				3						3
WORK OPPORTUNITIES/TRNG				2						2
OTHER										0
TOTALS	2	8	3	41	0	0	6	0	0	58
PERCENT OF TOTAL	3.4%	13.8%	5.2%	70.7%	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
POPULATION (EMERGENCY CAP)	6	167	75	88	32	122	112	48	85	735
GRIEVANCES PER INMATE	0.33	0.05	0.04	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.08