

Sheriff Koutoujian, Middlesex County

1. How would you describe your corrections philosophy?

I believe there is a window of opportunity to address the factors that led to an individual's incarceration. I have focused my efforts on preparing this population to return to their communities better than when they entered the Middlesex House of Correction.

2. What are the three experiences or qualities that you believe most qualify you for being Sheriff of Middlesex County?

- I have held the position of Sheriff of Middlesex County for the past five years.
- An overwhelming percentage of those serving sentences at the Middlesex House of Correction suffer from mental health and substance use issues. My experience in the Legislature where I served in leadership including as Chairman of the Health Care Committee, the Public Health Committee and the Financial Services Committee has been an invaluable resource in this position.
- During my first term, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office gained accreditation from the American Correctional Association, a recognition that is bestowed upon the "best of the best" in the field of corrections. This was a major undertaking and an important recognition for the office.

3. Do you believe the current Middlesex County House of Correction (HOC) and jail are sufficient for the needs of the county? If not, why not? How would you recommend changing or expanding the existing facilities? Would you recommend building new facilities?

Yes.

As buildings are aging some structural improvements may be necessary in order to maintain constitutionally required standards of living.

4. Your views on transparency: If elected/re-elected, will you issue annual reports that include information on public accreditation findings, Prison Rape Elimination Act audits, suicides, and lawsuits against the Sheriff's Department (whether filed by prisoners, employees, attorneys or family members)?

After my first year at the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, I published an inaugural year in review which is available on the Middlesex Sheriff's Office website. I am also in the midst of drafting a first term review, which we plan to release at the end of my first term.

Last summer, for the first time in the history of the Middlesex Sheriff's Office we were accredited by the American Correctional Association, receiving 100% on 400 mandatory and non-mandatory criteria. We have also begun the accreditation process for the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office website also contains PREA audits and all in custody deaths are reported to the US Department of Justice.

6. Impact of legislation or statewide administrative policies:

- a. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in fewer people sentenced to incarceration in the Middlesex County HOC? If so, please give examples.

Yes. I am a founding member of Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration, a national organization comprised of leaders dedicated to this mission.

<http://lawenforcementleaders.org>

I also served as a member of the bipartisan Council of State Governments Justice Center Working Group, which was formed by Governor Baker, Senate President Rosenberg and Speaker DeLeo to make recommendations on ways to improve our criminal justice laws to lower incarceration rates.

<https://csgjusticecenter.org>

I have frequently expressed support for initiatives that would lower the incarceration rate in Massachusetts and across the country both at the Massachusetts State House and in Washington, DC.

- b. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in fewer people held pre-trial in the Middlesex County jail? If so, please give examples.

Yes.

I believe strongly in pre-arraignment diversion for those suffering from mental illness and pre-trial diversion for low risk offenders suffering from substance use disorders.

I am also a proponent of using a validated risk assessment tool, which has proven to lower pre-trial incarceration rates in many other jurisdictions.

- c. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in more people sentenced to incarceration in the Middlesex County HOC? If so, please give examples.

No.

- d. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in more people held pre-trial in the Middlesex County jail? If so, please give examples.

No.

5. Do you think it is appropriate to confine people who have not been convicted of any offense for drug or alcohol treatment at a HOC, instead of being sent to a community-based healthcare facility? Why or why not?

No. Please see above

8. Your views on the basics of incarceration:

- a. How do you think pre-trial and sentenced prisoners should primarily spend their time? Aggressive programming. I believe we must use the window of opportunity to address the factors that led to people's criminal behavior.

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office offers programs to target what led to individual's crime in an effort to better prepare them for when they return home.

- b. What educational opportunities currently exist in the Middlesex County HOC? At the jail? Are there waiting lists to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing those opportunities?

There are a wide variety of educational opportunities available at the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, from HiSET testing to vocational certifications and training opportunities.

We are also actively engaged with local community colleges as well to develop initiatives to meet the educational needs of offenders looking to obtain college credits. There are no waiting lists to participate in these programs, and I believe they should be increased.

- c. What employment/job training opportunities exist in the Middlesex County HOC? At the jail? Are there waiting lists to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing those opportunities?

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office has robust vocational and job training opportunities developed for CORI friendly industries. These programs include certifications in culinary arts, environmentally friendly custodial work and digital printing.

There are no waiting lists to participate in these programs, and I believe they should be increased.

- d. What mental health/substance use disorder services exist in the Middlesex County HOC? At the jail? Are there waiting lists to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing those services?

Given the exceptionally high rates of inmates suffering from mental health and substance use issues at the House of Correction, everyone who enters the facility receives a medical screening. From that day on, case managers and medical staff continually monitor each individual to constantly assess each person's progress. Medical staff is on call 24 hours a day to address the needs of those in custody. The Middlesex Sheriff's Office offers numerous services to address the issues of mental health and substance use.

We have achieved recognition as a national mentoring site by the Bureau of Justice Assistance for their Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) program.

We were chosen by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to be a lead presenter at the White House during a national conference to discuss our Medication Assisted Treatment and Directed Opioid Recovery (MATADOR) Program, which focuses on individualized treatment plans for participants utilizing Vivitrol.

We utilize evidence based cognitive behavioral therapy throughout our substance use programming.

There are no waiting lists to participate in these programs, and I believe they should be increased.

Recently, we were invited by President Obama's Office of Public Engagement to participate in a panel discussion at the White House led by the Center for American Progress on the issue of mental health in places of incarceration.

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office has a regional Evaluation and Stabilization Unit (ESU), which serves those most in need of mental health treatment.

There are no waiting lists to participate in these programs, and I believe they should be increased.

- e. What personal growth programs (parenting, anti-violence, etc.) exist in the Middlesex County HOC? At the jail? Are there waiting lists to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing these opportunities?

During my tenure as Sheriff we have expanded many of these types of programs including parenting classes with curriculums set by Cornell University, family literacy, as well as anti-violence programs for those convicted of crimes involving domestic violence.

There are no waiting lists to participate in these programs, and I believe they should be increased.

9. What are your views on isolating prisoners (sometimes called segregation or solitary confinement) as punishment for violating HOC/jail rules?

The Middlesex Sheriff's Office does not utilize solitary confinement or isolation. The restrictive housing unit protocol has strict policies in place which include being evaluated daily by staff, constant assessments by the Superintendent to determine their ability to leave the unit, daily access to caseworkers and medical professionals and recreation time. All programs and services available to inmates in general population are available to those in restrictive housing.

Our philosophy is to move those in this unit back into general population as quickly as possible.

10. Your views on re-entry and recidivism:

- a. If elected/re-elected, how would you ensure that prisoners leaving in the Middlesex County HOC have the best chance for successfully returning to their communities?

By addressing the factors that led to their incarceration.

For the majority of these individuals, their crime was fueled by an addiction to drugs or alcohol. During my tenure, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office has dramatically expanded its approach to drug treatment.

Examples include:

- Expanding vendor services for the drug treatment pod;
- Enrolling inmates in MassHealth pre-release to ensure continuity of care;
- Implementing a medication assisted treatment program with a treatment recovery navigator who remains in contact with participants for six months post release; and

- Establishing a speaker's series that focuses on recovery and the real life impacts of addiction and the power of recovery.

b. What is the current rate of recidivism for prisoners leaving in the Middlesex County HOC? What would you do to reduce that rate?

28.5%

While I am extremely proud of the efficacious programming we provide to those individuals in our care, custody and control, we only have them for a limited period of time. I believe that society can significantly reduce recidivism by providing more substantial support for those leaving us and reentering their communities.

11. While we understand that women are not currently held in the Middlesex County system, we are interested in your views on incarcerated women:

a. Should gender-specific medical care and education be provided?

Yes.

b. Should women purchase their own feminine hygiene products or should the HOC/jail provide them?

I believe these products should be provided by the HOC/jail.

c. Should the HOC/jail promote or facilitate meaningful contact with a woman's children? If so, how?

I believe that HOC/jail should promote meaningful contact with children. Women are five times more likely to be the primary caregiver of their children than men. As such, the impact of incarceration on these families is much more significant.

Despite the fact that the Middlesex Sheriff's Office does not house incarcerated women we have worked aggressively with MCI-Framingham to provide increased opportunities for this population, never offered before including casework services, opportunities to participate in our Electronic Monitoring Program and targeted counseling for those who have been the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

d. Are you familiar with the 2014 legislation on pregnant and post-partum prisoners (M.G.L. chapter 127, section 118)?

Yes.

e. Do you support House bill, H.3679, "An Act to Ensure Compliance with the Anti-Shackling Law for Pregnant Incarcerated Women"?

Yes.

12. What do you think should be the policy on videotaping strip searches of prisoners?

Every effort should be made to maintain dignity and privacy while conducting any search.

Additionally, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office was successfully audited for federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) compliance, which reviewed policies regarding strip searches.

13. Has a complaint or lawsuit ever been filed against you for excessive force, a civil rights violation, discrimination, or abuse of your authority? If so, please provide details and the outcome of the complaint/lawsuit.

As with any correctional facility Middlesex Sheriff's Office has pending litigation.