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## Agency News

# South Texas ISF closes, Kegans State Jail repurposed to ISF

Given recent declines in the offender population, projections indicating stable population numbers during the next five fiscal years and legislative requests to reduce expenditures, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, in consultation with the Texas Legislature, decided to close the South Texas Intermediate Sanction Facility, a privately operated facility in downtown Houston. Effective December 21, 2016, the 450 parole violators housed at the South Texas ISF were relocated to the nearby Joe Kegans State Jail.

The opportunity to close a facility is largely due to successful diversion initiatives and treatment programs put into place by legislative leadership and the Office of the Governor. These reforms have resulted in fewer nonviolent offenders being incarcerated, allowing TDCJ to gradually reduce the number of secure-housing facilities it operates. This trend began when the Central Unit in Fort Bend County was closed in 2011, followed by the termination of TDCJ operations at both the Dawson State Jail in Dallas and the Mineral Wells Pre-Parole Transfer Facility in 2013. The plan to close the South Texas ISF and repurpose Kegans SJ was submitted to

the legislature when TDCJ was asked to submit an initial budget proposal for the fiscal years 2018-19 biennium which showed the impact of a 4 percent budget reduction.

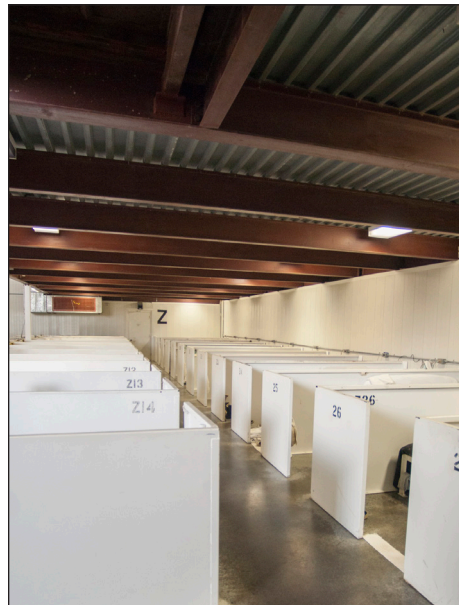
The Kegans State Jail, located less than a mile away from the South Texas Intermediate Sanction Facility, was established in 1997 and is operated by TDCJ's Correctional Institutions Division. Kegans has been accredited by the American Correctional Association since 2008. It employs 155 TDCJ staff members, including 129 security employees. As a

state jail, Kegans could hold a maximum of 667 male offenders; as an ISF it can house a maximum of 657.

This closure and repurposing of facilities required careful planning to maintain sufficient capacity for the offender population, which is critical for unit security. As with all offender transfers, the safety of the public, agency staff and offenders had to be ensured and the delivery of essential daily services had to be provided for before offenders could be moved.

The transition from state jail to ISF was a complex procedure, but went very smoothly. CID's Deputy Director for Support Operations Leonard Echessa praised the effort, saying, "The transition from the South Texas ISF to the Joe Kegans Unit was seamless due to the magnificent efforts of all the men and women of this great agency."

TDCJ's Correctional Institutions, Parole, Information Technology, Manufacturing and Logistics, Private Facilities and other agency divisions worked with the Windham School District and contract treatment staff to successfully repurpose the Kegans facility.



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In its new role as an ISF, the Kegans facility required additional space for the increased treatment staff and rehabilitation programs. TDCJ's Facilities Division retrofit areas of the Kegans Unit to provide them with work space and the Correctional Institutions Division worked with the Rehabilitation Programs Division, Chaplaincy and the Windham School District to convert dayrooms into offender treatment and education areas.

The Correctional Institutions Division's Classification and Records department oversaw the transition from a state jail intake process to that of an ISF, and Kegans staff coordinated with the Parole Division and CID's Offender Transportation department to ensure ISF offenders are picked up from their counties on schedule. The Information Technology Division worked with Facilities to reprogram staff telephones and obtain voice biometrics for offenders coming from the South Texas ISF.

Region III Director John Werner acknowledged agency staff for meeting the challenges which arose when transferring offenders from the closing facility. "The entire event was flawless," he said. "Everyone pulled their resources together in a concerted effort to move all of the offenders. The good communication and team work was what made it all happen."

Upon the closure of the South Texas ISF, the TDCJ Human Resources Division actively recruited qualified men and women who had been working for the vendor to fill existing vacancies in the other TDCJ facilities. The facility and the land upon which it resides are owned by the State of Texas and will be sold to provide additional revenue to the state. ●