

South Dakota Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force

June Meeting Follow-Up
Conversation
*2025 Prison Releases: Analysis of
Incomplete Programming*

August 19, 2026

Sara Friedman, Program Director



Justice
Center



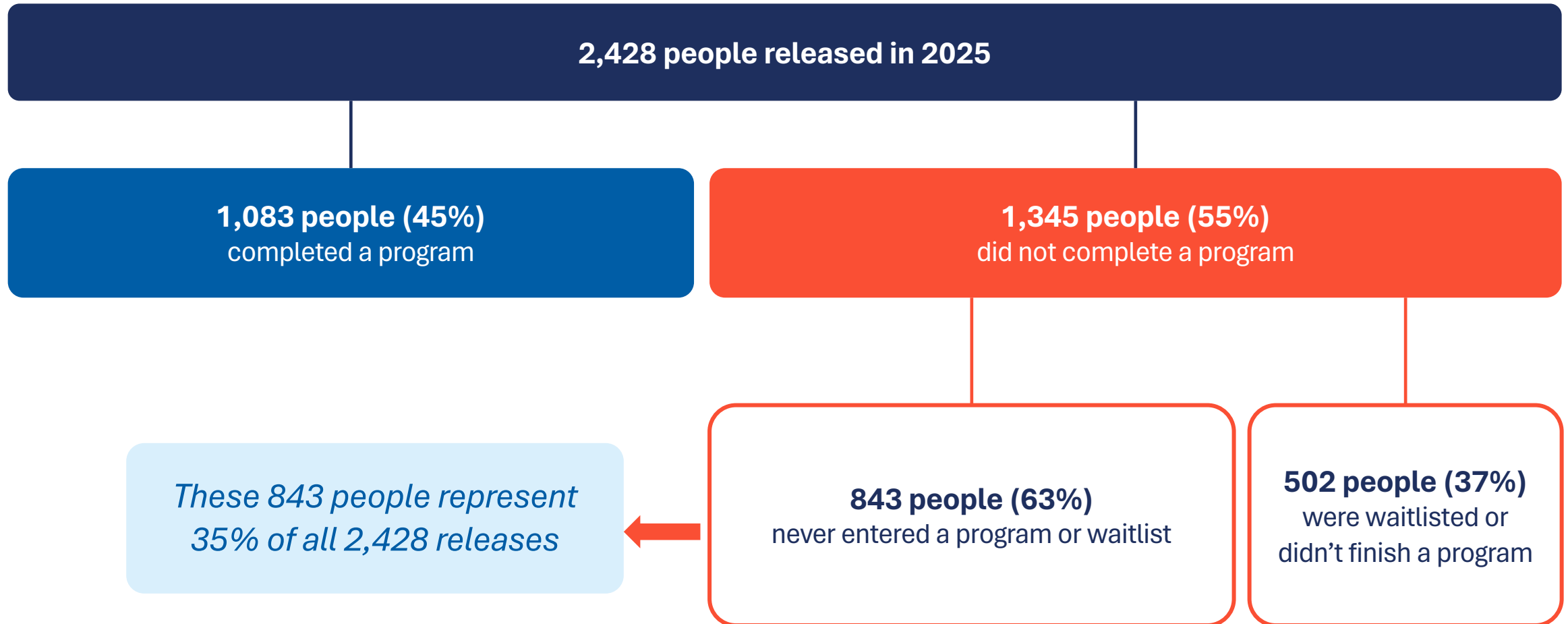
The question CRTF members raised in June:

“Why didn’t 55% of 2025 releases complete a program?”

The following data analysis focuses on DOC-facilitated programs only.

- The data available for this analysis covers programs facilitated by DOC staff, including educational, vocational, evidence-based, and behavioral health programs.
- The data does not include participation in work release, Pheasantland Industries, facility work assignments, or volunteer and religious programs.

The big picture: More than half of the 2,428 people released in 2025 did not complete a program.



Source: Analysis of South Dakota Department of Corrections data conducted by The Council of State Governments Justice Center, July 2026.

Deep dive: The 843 people with no program or waitlist history were mostly incarcerated on short stays.

6.5

months

Typical (median) time
in custody

46%

nearly half

Stayed 6 months or
less in custody

80%

4 out of 5

Stayed one year or
less

24%

low risk

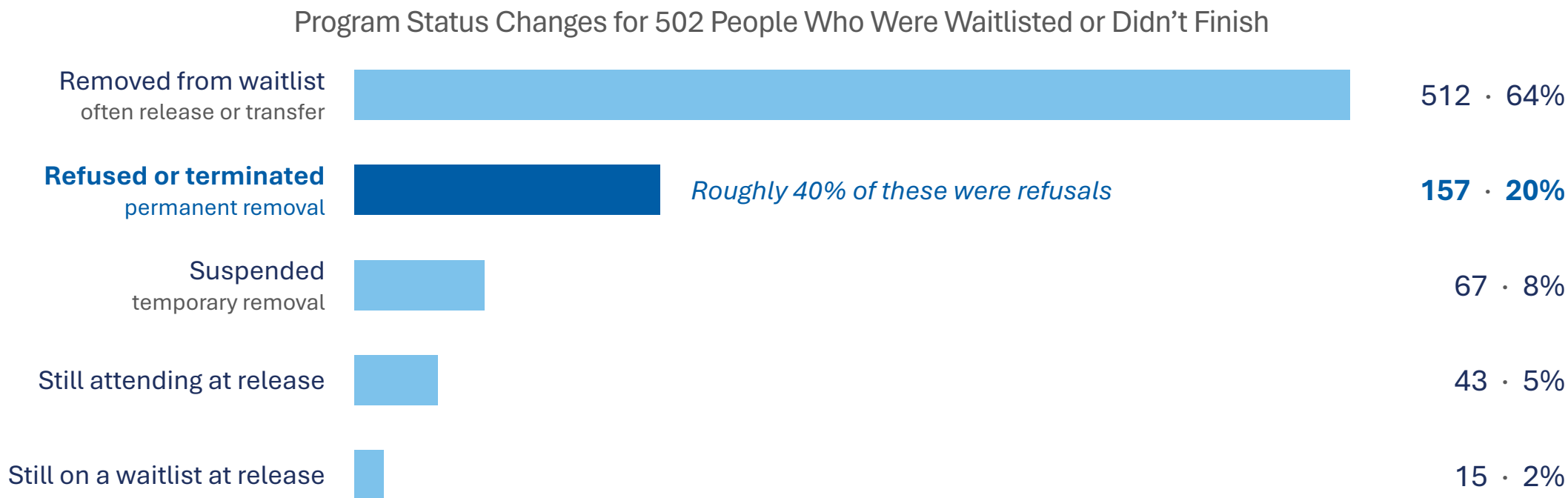
Assessed as low or
low/moderate risk*

* People with low or low/moderate risk and needs should have a lower priority for program slots.

Source: Analysis of South Dakota Department of Corrections data conducted by The Council of State Governments Justice Center, July 2026.

Deep dive: For the 502 people who had some program contact but didn't finish, 1 in 5 program status changes were due to refusal or termination.

Among the 502 people who were waitlisted or didn't finish, **794** program status changes were recorded—many individuals had multiple reasons they did not start or complete a program.



Notes: Refusals are recorded two ways in the data system, so exact counts can't be isolated. Waitlist-removal reasons aren't tracked; staff comments most often cite release or parole, transfers, or entry errors. Percentages are rounded and are shares of the 794 status changes.

Source: Analysis of South Dakota Department of Corrections data conducted by The Council of State Governments Justice Center, July 2026.

Thank You!

For more information, please contact Sara Friedman at sfriedman@csg.org.

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