

**OCO Monitoring Visit to Cedar Creek Corrections Center**  
**Conducted by LaQuesha Turner- Western Division Early Resolution Ombuds and Race**  
**Equity Specialist and Shayna Clayton- OCO Intern**

**Background**

- The Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) received numerous concerns regarding the Department of Correction's (DOC) response to COVID-19. Additionally, OCO received several requests to enter DOC facilities and perform monitoring visits. For the above reasons, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, OCO Western Division Early Resolution Ombuds and Race Equity Specialist LaQuesha Turner accompanied by OCO Intern Shayna Clayton, conducted a monitoring visit at Cedar Creek Corrections Center (CCCC). The purpose of the visit was to observe CCCC's response to COVID-19.

**Executive Summary/ Key Findings**

- Throughout the monitoring visit, OCO observed several positive interactions between staff and the incarcerated individuals. Twice during our visit, the monitoring team was approached by several incarcerated individuals informing them of helpful staff members in Olympic and T-Line units. Although the overall atmosphere was cohesive between staff and the population there were several times OCO staff was approached with the fears concerning COVID-19 and requesting further communication or assistance.
- The facility appeared clean and orderly. Porters were observed cleaning throughout the facility with Hepastat 256, germicide and diluted bleach solution. The incarcerated population had working knowledge of chemicals and their use. They were able to tell the monitoring team how to replenish their supplies, by simply informing staff.
- OCO staff observed 100% compliance with DOC staff wearing face coverings (fabric cloth coverings, surgical masks, etc.) and a nearly 90% compliance with the incarcerated population wearing face coverings (DOC provided surgical masks and bandanas). Those who were not wearing mask (Cascade B-Unit) had them around their neck or on their person.
  - Incarcerated persons were asked why they didn't have their mask on by OCO staff. They expressed wide spread confusion on when they had to wear mask due to signs and expressed hopelessness, believing that had already been exposed. This is due to the confines of the facility and the transfers that had previously taken place into Cascade B-unit which is the receiving unit at CCCC.
- OCO has received several complaints in regards to Jpay prior to our visit. The monitoring team was able to witness first hand the complications and frustration, from staff and the population regarding the failure to provide adequate service. From OCO's understanding

the Lieutenant is taking the initiative to facilitate a conversation between Jpay and the incarcerated persons to address their concerns.

- Social distancing in bunk rooms can prove difficult due to facility layout. Every unit visited has decreased in capacity. This was due to utilizing other areas of the facility creating two new units, T-line and Alpine unit. As a result, most units have empty beds housing anywhere from 1-6 per room when the average was 8 depending on the location within the facility.
- DOC staff have tried to keep morale high among the incarcerated population by providing various activities and programming when able to comply with CDC guidelines. This includes providing every newly created unit and bunk room with a television to limit the amount of people in the day rooms. Cards and multiple board games have been provided in the day room for all to use. OCO was able to witness groups meet during our visit while adhering to social distancing recommendations. The Construction Trades Apprenticeship Program (CTAP), has been allowed to resume during the state quarantine. This program allows for outside building activities, clearly demonstrating CDC safety precautions while connecting those in the program to an outside job source. OCO observed the building of a tiny shelter going to those experiencing homelessness in Seattle.
- The monitoring team inquired if there have been any disciplinary actions related to guidelines concerning Covid-19. The incarcerated population informed the team of at least three write-ups for not wearing a mask that were later dismissed. They expressed fear of possibly receiving a write-up if they did not want to go to work, due to concerns of contracting the illness. This was relayed to Superintendent Alfred Smack who relayed no one would be infracted for fear of going to work.
- Although mainline moved quickly, there was minimal social distancing that occurred in the line and the food service area due to the size confines of the kitchen. During OCO's visit, the monitoring team observed 100% PPE compliance in the building and incarcerated persons taking the initiative to eat in the outdoor dining area where they were able to affectively social distance.
- OCO observed specific areas of opportunity within the facility, mainly within Cascade B unit. OCO encountered a majority of the concerns with lack of social distancing, mask, laundry concerns, hand soap and paper towels. Other areas of opportunity include social distancing at mainline, commissary and at the kiosk.

### **Statutory Authority**

- Per RCW 43.06C.050, OCO has "reasonable access" to all state correctional facilities in order to monitor compliance with respect to the rights and safety of incarcerated individuals.

## Observations

### Entrance

- At the main entrance of CCCC, OCO staff was greeted by a DOC staff member wearing the proper PPE behind a protective screen. The monitoring team was asked a series of screening questions. After answering no to all questions, the team's temperature was taken by DOC staff. The temperatures were logged and shared with facility admittance staff before badges could be received or scanned. OCO viewed the log book and noted several entries from staff. The temperature taker had on gloves and cleaned the thermometer in-between checks. OCO observed COVID-19 posted DOC memos, health-safety information posters, and reminders to staff and incarcerated population throughout the entrance. DOC staff and the incarcerated population were observed wearing proper PPE in main entrance and outside corridors. (Appendix, Photos A and B)

### Newly Designated Timberline Unit

- Timberline ("T-line") is a newly formed unit that was previously for recreation. There is no active quarantine in the unit. This unit had ample space for social distancing and was created to thin out the population in Cascade unit. OCO observed multiple Covid-19 posters, memos and signs throughout the unit. Every bunk room had cleaning supplies available. OCO observed 100% compliance in housing social distancing. There were rooms where beds were staggered and as an extra precaution, a wall barrier was built out of wood. Each unit had a shelf built to hold a television to deter from everyone gathering in the common area during leisure time. There are no phone services in this building so they share phones with Cascade B Unit. A majority of incarcerated persons were at mainline or participating in CTAP during OCO's visit to this unit. The monitoring team observed 100% mask compliance when visiting CTAP programming. There were markings and signs outside encouraging social distancing. The population expressed excitement over being able to participate in programming during this stressful time. A majority of them expressed regret that other units could not social distance in the same manner and that we needed to see Cascade B- Tier for clarification. They mentioned wanting more releases to further thin out the population for their own safety. Lack of communication was noted as a main concern. There was a disappointment with Jpay and the services being rendered by them. One incarcerated person noted, "this is unacceptable DOC needs to sue them for not providing a service we're forced to pay for." (Appendix, Photos C-J)

### Newly Designated Alpine Unit

- Alpine is a newly formed unit to house men from Olympic Unit. There was no active quarantine in the unit. Alpine was previously the library/ education building as expressed by an incarcerated person. OCO observed multiple Covid-19 posters, memos and signs throughout the facility. This unit was able to implement 100% housing social distancing. OCO observed a porter cleaning with the approved Hepastat 256. He was asked questions

about how long to leave the Hepastat on and how often cleaning commenced. He stated, “10 minutes for the Hepastat, and we work four to six hour shifts and when I leave another guy comes on and we do this hourly, sometimes more often in high touch areas.” The housing unit consisted of staggered bedding with shelves or chairs in-between sleeping areas. Some books were removed to accommodate for personal items. The monitoring team was told about positive staff interactions but discontent over lack of communication about when visiting would re-open. (Appendix, Photos K-M)

### **Olympic Unit**

- Inside the unit, both COVID-19 and OCO posters were visible. There was 100% compliance with mask by the staff and population. There was no active quarantine in the unit. OCO observed a dispenser for germicide and Hepastat 256. There was laundry being collected and most men were headed to mainline. Olympic unit appeared clean and orderly. OCO encountered multiple positive staff and incarcerated person interactions. The monitoring team was approached by incarcerated individuals about staff that they saw as being extremely helpful during this time when family contact is sparse. The OCO team personally witnessed one of these interactions between a counselor that was mentioned by an incarcerated person. There were safety barriers for phone use and a day room redesigned for social distancing; however, no barriers existed for the kiosks. The OCO team witnessed three incarcerated persons using the kiosk with no protection between them. The team observed someone having a visit and it was glitching, substantiating the concerns brought forth by the population. OCO visited housing units A & B. In the housing units the team observed several empty beds, due to part of the population being moved to Alpine Unit. Some individual housing units previously used for those with the flu were able to effectively socially distance. In housing units where beds weren't six feet apart, the team was informed they sleep foot to head. There were several concerns about Jpay and communication via the way of rumor. There are fears there was a confirmed positive at the facility. (Appendix, Photos N-R)

### **Cascade Unit**

- Inside the unit, both COVID-19 and OCO posters were visible. Cleaning solutions were found throughout the facility. The OCO team confirmed with a porter what type of disinfectant was used and it was bleach solution. Germicide was also available but not in common areas. We were told this was due to some of the population hoarding it. There was 100% DOC staff compliance with mask and 90% compliance with face mask by the population. Social distancing was not observed in Cascade B unit but was at the ping pong table. This is a dorm-like unit for all incoming incarcerated persons with a day room in the middle. The team observed card games and social gatherings all throughout the unit. They expressed not wanting to be forced to separate to T-line and hopelessness about protection from Covid-19. One person stated. “We give up, there's no way it's not already here. They were bringing guys in that might have had it, and it's impossible for

us to socially distance. The sign says we don't have to wear masks unless we leave the bunk area." OCO staff captured a picture of the sign in question; they are throughout the facility. Concerns witnessed by OCO include: lack of soap and paper towels in the unit B bathroom, lack of mask, lack of social distancing, multiple concerns from the population about negative comments made to them by a staff member, disappointment with Jpay and concerns that some haven't had bedding changed in over a month. The general feeling from the incarcerated population in B-unit was fear, stress, and concern for their families. (Appendix, Photos S-W)

### **Kitchen/ Mainline**

- OCO observed movement to mainline for lunch. The monitoring team observed several incarcerated persons taking their meals outside to eat at the farm table, where they were able to effectively social distance. The line was fast-paced into the cafeteria and with receiving food. There was no real wait to speak of. OCO witnessed 100% of the population wearing a mask but no social distancing in the line. Social distancing proved difficult in the kitchen and service line. OCO observed 100% compliance with PPE throughout the kitchen. OCO observed a porter cleaning the dining area. The most Spanish language signs existed in the kitchen. We saw several incarcerated persons cleaning the kitchen, maintaining six feet to the best of their ability. (Appendix, Photos X-CC)

### **Medical Clinic**

- Cedar Creek's medical building is small. In the event that someone was to become symptomatic, they would be sent to another facility pending test results. The OCO team even observed the lab picking up tests in the parking lot. There was 100% compliance with PPE by staff and incarcerated persons, COVID-19 signs, indoor lobby social distancing. There was hand sanitizer available. Staff informed OCO that they are monitoring sick call and medical appointments to ensure proper social distancing. (Appendix, Photos DD-GG)

### **Yard/Recreation Areas**

- The yard had very few people in it during OCO's observation. Two people can be seen outside playing "horse" (a non-contact basketball game). There were several signs about the closing of weight deck and the suspension of basketball. These closures were a major complaint from the population. (Appendix, HH-JJ)

### **Tier Rep Meetings**

- OCO staff were able to observe the Tier Rep meeting between the CUS in Olympic and Cascade Units. They shared concerns about wanting to start visitation due to missing

their families, possible legal assistance being obtained to go after J-pay, wanting to know when they could phase down in restrictions and would it be like the state currently is, the need for more tentative communication, fear associate with COVID-19, and struggles with adjusting to the new normal. Following this meeting OCO had a private meeting with the tier reps where OCO discussed and elaborated on some of their concerns. All these concerns were discussed with Superintendent Alfred Smack before OCO's departure.

## Appendix A

### Photos



**Photo A**

**Description:** Incarcerated persons working outside of facility in proper PPE.



**Photo B**

**Description:** DOC staff observed wearing face coverings stationed behind screen. The green log book can be seen here.



**Photo C**

**Description:** Entrance to T Line-Unit. This main room is used as a day room for watching Tv.



**Photo D**

**Description:** T line bunk room





**Photo E**

**Description:** T Line bedroom with sink and running water.



**Photo F**

**Description:** Example of the wooden barrier built to further protect the incarcerated persons from Covid-19 transmission.



**Photo G**

**Description:** Hepastat 256 observed in bedrooms.



**Photo H**

**Description:** Incarcerated individuals observed social distancing during outside programming.



**Photo I**

**Description:** Incarcerated persons observed building shelter through CTAP program.



**Photo J**

**Description:** construction material shelter and outdoor class room. Markings measure almost 8 ft in distance allowing for nine persons at a time in the class.





**Photo K**

**Description:** Porter found cleaning in Alpine Unit. He was able to demonstrate working knowledge of all three chemicals used at the facility, and scheduled cleaning times.



**Photo L**

**Description:** Former programming unit turned into a housing unit. Beds have been staggered with chairs and tables in-between.



**Photo M**

**Description:** Former programming unit turned into a housing unit. Beds have been staggered with chairs and tables in-between.



**Photo N & O**

**Description:** These are the bedrooms observed in Olympic Unit. These units are normally for those who are sick with the flu and the dog program. The Dog Program continues and the rooms are used to allow for more social distancing.



**Photo P**

**Description of P & Q :** We observed OCO hotline number at the phone booths. All three boots have a protection divider. The kiosk had no such dividers.

**Photo Q**



**Photo R**

**Description:** Cleaing solution found readily available at officers station.







**Photo S**

**Description:** This is picture of a rec room inside the Cascade Unit. You can see the population enjoying ping pong and watching TV while practicing social distancing.



**Photo T**

**Description:** This is Cascade B Tier. Upon walking in we didn't observe social distancing and limited mask use.



**Photo U**

**Description:** This sign caused confusion within B Tier due to the perception that the incarcerated had to wear the mask outside, but not in their dorm.



**Photo V**

**Description:** The bunk room seen here has storage in-between bunks to provide for more social distancing while in the sleeping area. Top bunks are not all occupied throughout the tier.





**Photo W**

**Description:** This was one of the paper towel dispensers in B-tier we came across that had no paper towels in them. The population reported that they have rarely had them.



**Photo X**

**Description:** Upon walking up on the cafeteria and kitchen building we observed part of the population opting to eat outside to maintain social distancing.



**Photo Y**

**Description:** This was the line observed entering the cafeteria for lunch. It moved quickly; most were in and out under two min.



**Photo Z**

**Description:** OCO observed continuous cleaning of the cafeteria throughout our review.



**Photo AA**

**Description:** This is the food service line where they would walk through to receive meals.



**Photo BB**

**Description:** Social distancing in the kitchen can prove difficult due to facility structure. All incarcerated persons and staff were observed in proper PPE and maintained as much distance as possible.





**Photo CC**

**Description:** Social distancing in the kitchen can prove difficult due to facility structure. All incarcerated persons and staff were observed in proper PPE and maintained as much distance as possible.



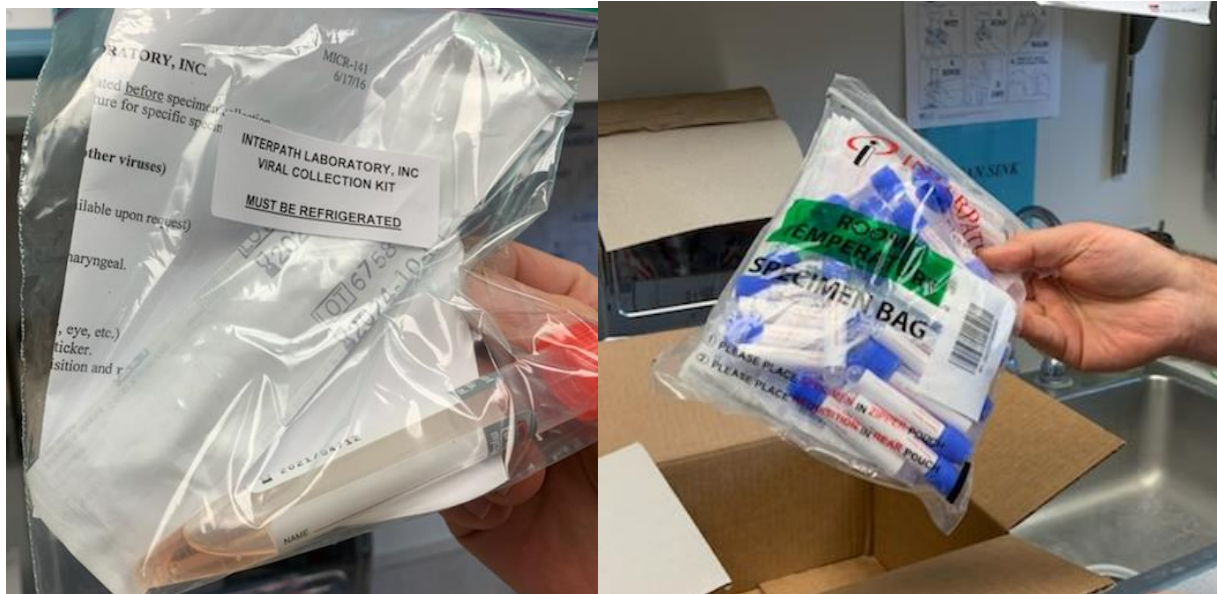
**Photo DD**

**Description :** Hand sanitizer in the medical unit. This was available for the population upon entry and departure.



**Photo EE**

**Description:** Two incarcerated persons in the waiting room socially distancing.



**Photos FF and GG**

**Description:** COVID-19 test kits. Although no one can be housed here if found to have symptoms, staff stated the test is completed here before they transfer.



**Photo HH**

**Description:** The main yard. Incarcerated persons are playing “horse,” a two-person, non-contact game. Others are walking and social distancing outdoors.



**Photo II & JJ**

**Description:** These are signs found in the rec room and other areas now closed to reduce the spread of the virus.







STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1110

June 4, 2020

Joanna Carns  
Office of Corrections Ombuds  
PO Box 43113  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to the 'OCO Monitoring Visit to Cedar Creek Corrections Center' completed by the Office of Corrections Ombuds.

The Department of Corrections takes the health and safety of the incarcerated population and staff in the Washington Correctional Facilities very seriously. The agency appreciates the opportunity to have your staff tour the Cedar Creek Corrections Center and evaluate the facilities implementation of the protocols and procedures put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The information provided by the OCO was useful to ensure the Department of Corrections is doing everything it can to ensure an incarcerated individuals health and safety while incarcerated, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cedar Creek Corrections Center recognizes the importance of protective screens between phones and JPay kiosks. The facility superintendent has created a plan with the facility plant manager to urgently implement installation of protective screens between the JPay kiosks in the Olympia housing unit. The facility will continue to remind the population and staff of the importance of social distancing and wearing face coverings wherever possible in the facility.

We appreciate your team's understanding of the unique implementation across facilities and the addition of policies and procedures being put in place to protect our populations. We will continue to proactively implement precautionary measures as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. Moving forward, Washington Department of Corrections will continue to collaborate with the Office of the Corrections Ombuds on any future quality assurance visits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Sinclair", is written over a horizontal line.

Steve Sinclair, Secretary  
Washington Department of Corrections

*"Working Together for SAFER Communities"*