



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

December 14, 2020

Joanna Carns
Office of Corrections Ombuds
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to respond to the OCO Report on the ‘the monitoring visit that the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) conducted to the Monroe Correctional Complex on October 30, 2020’ completed by the Office of Corrections Ombuds.

Recommendation	Response
<p>A concern is that staff bunch up on the breezeway. They stated that there is a double standard applied to incarcerated individuals by staff that they do not apply to themselves. They stated that the administration does not take it seriously and when they report that staff are not wearing masks, they are told it’s “just human nature,” but if they do not wear masks, they are threatened with infractions.</p>	<p>Staff are expected to socially distance and wear face mask just as the incarcerated population. When we are made aware of a staff member who fails to comply with PPE and social distancing protocols, they are reminded to do so. In some cases, with repeat offenders, corrective action is taken against the staff member. HQ has assisted the administration in supporting corrective and disciplinary actions when staff are found to not be in compliance</p> <p>We are doing several things to ensure staff are complying with these expectations. We communicate the expectations frequently through memos, verbal reminders, and posters/signage throughout the facility; there are quality assurance teams who visit the facility monthly to observe the facilities response to COVID-19 and report back to the administration on its compliance; and recently an internal quality assurance team was implemented that monitors COVID-19 precautionary measure compliance and reports back to</p>



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	<p>administration with findings and suggestions.</p> <p>In addition, with the additional direction from HQ, the MCC management team has gone out and spoken with supervisors on all shifts reiterating the expectation of appropriate PPE use and social distancing as well as holding individuals accountable for those who fail to do so.</p>
<p>The tier reps relayed that the heat was out in some units. It had just recently been fixed on A side, but the heat was now out on B side and it was freezing at night. OCO later visited B side to confirm (see below discussion) and confirmed that it was quite cold. They stated that they also could not exchange blankets in B unit.</p>	<p>The heat for the living units was turned back on on October 12, 2020, following the summer months when the heat is turned down. The heat is provided with steam and does take time to reach all of the units. In addition, because the units are comprised of thick concrete, it takes a longer time than normal to heat the concrete and thus heat the units. It should also be noted that MCC-TRU is one of, if not the only, facility in Washington State with the ability for the incarcerated individuals to open their cell windows. Open windows also plays a part in the time it takes to reheat the units in full.. The facility acknowledges that you had noticed the temperatures seemed to feel lower and did ensure that temperatures were set to the normal operating temperature. Since that time, no complaints have been received.</p> <p>In regards to the unit not exchanging blankets, at the time of your visit, the units had recently handed out extra blankets due to the unit temperatures that were noted as colder due to the system taking time to properly reheat and did not have extras to provide for exchange. Since that time, the</p>



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	<p>unit now has plenty of blankets for exchange for the incarcerated population.</p>
<p>OCO stopped by B unit to confirm the above concern regarding heat. OCO first noted that incarcerated individuals were not practicing social distancing and were congregating in areas similar to pre-COVID times. <u>Noting that there are two landing areas where people could populate, OCO suggests DOC consider placing a television in the upper landing area to space people out more.</u> OCO confirmed that the back cells were frigid and also noted the poor conditions in the showers with missing tiles (picture in Appendix). OCO also noted that it did not see cleaning chemicals easily available.</p>	<p>Heat question answered above. We can look at adding a TV upstairs but that will require running cable to the area. It should be noted that we have provided TVs to the entire population to use in their cells.</p> <p>There are tiles missing from the showers, the facility has been aware and will not dispute this fact. Work orders have been submitted to repair the tiles and the unit CUS will be following up with maintenance to see what the time lines are for repair. Due to COVID-19 and other projects being prioritized, maintenance teams have been working diligently to ensure that amenities were in place for the population during the COVID-19 pandemic and some routine projects have been put on hold.</p> <p>Cleaning supplies are not left on the tiers. Individuals are trained for using cleaning products and the products are to be supervised by unit staff for safety and security reasons. If an individual needs cleaning supplies they can go to the cage area next to the Sergeants office, and those supplies can be checked out. Early in the pandemic response the facility tried leaving cleaning supplies on the tiers but unfortunately they would be taken and not returned.</p>
<p>OCO observed mass movement as individuals left an outdoor recreation area and noted that both staff and incarcerated individuals were not practicing social distancing (picture in Appendix).</p>	<p>We continue to work on the issue with the incarcerated population regarding social distancing. We have changed the movement schedule to reduce individuals competing for recreation equipment. We</p>



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	<p>continue to look for ways to encourage social distancing.</p> <p>Staff are expected to socially distance the same as the incarcerated population. When we are made aware of a staff member who fails to comply with social distancing protocols, they are reminded to do so, and if the behavior continues, corrective action will be taken.</p>
<p>The only concern that OCO observed regarding MSU was that unlike TRU, OCO did not see any roving porter continuously cleaning.</p>	<p>Each unit porter schedule is different, however extra porters have been hired at each facility, in every unit, to do extra cleaning throughout the day. When OCO walked through MSU, the units were released for lunch, therefore porters were not readily available for cleaning.</p>

Staff in all capacities are working extremely hard to keep the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus from our facilities, and limited to, and treated within, the one minimum security unit in which it does exist. The Department's work is conducted with an understanding that each day may present a different challenge and our teams are dedicated to performing their jobs and fulfilling our mission to the best of our ability.

The Department of Corrections continues to appropriately align its practices to reflect the guidance of the CDC and Department of Health (DOH) to ensure the health and safety of the incarcerated population and staff in the Washington correctional facilities. The department will continue being part of the solution, adjusting protocols and precautionary measures being taken accordingly during this uncharted time.

Sincerely,

Eric Jackson, Superintendent
Monroe Correctional Complex