



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
P.O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101

June 5, 2025

Elisabeth Kingsbury, Director  
Office of the Corrections Ombuds  
128 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW  
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Director Kingsbury:

Last month we received a report from the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) entitled “Use of Force & Restrictive Housing Policy Violations at Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW).” The report details OCO findings relating to the treatment of four individuals in Department of Corrections (DOC or Department) care and custody at WCCW, along with recommendations to address the findings.

At the outset, please accept my appreciation for the work you and your staff do, including the work that went into the underlying investigation in this matter and detailed report. As I have expressed to DOC staff, your office makes our agency better, by helping ensure that we live up to our values of operating safe and humane correctional facilities.

Working in correctional settings can be difficult. We have thousands of dedicated employees who show up every day at facilities across the state ready to help incarcerated people better themselves. On good days the work can be rewarding. On bad days it can be dangerous.

We expect our employees to act professionally and in compliance with policy under all circumstances. Your report describes behavior that plainly does not meet this expectation.

It is important to me that the allegations in your report are investigated thoroughly. I therefore have directed DOC’s Women’s Prison Division (WPD) leadership to fully investigate the allegations set forth in the OCO report.

In addition, we have taken the following steps to date:

**Pending Investigations:**

On May 1, 2025, through standard operational incident review processes and before receiving the OCO report, three staff were placed on home assignments pending investigations for a recent use of force incident detailed in the report. The Department also initiated critical incident review

(CIR) for this incident. That review is ongoing.

After receiving and reviewing the OCO report, WPD Leadership initiated additional investigations and an expansive fact-finding review regarding the allegations in the report. Two additional staff have been reassigned pending investigation based on other operational reviews related to concerns in the report.

**Training:**

The WPD Assistant Secretary initiated mentorship and staff training at WCCW with experienced staff and leadership from other facilities, deployed our Department Incident Management Team (DIMIT) to WCCW to assist with use of force training and best practices, and reviewed the incidents noted in the OCO report and others at the facility to identify opportunities for refining and implementing regular on-site use of force training for staff.

**Medical Seclusion:**

This issue was promptly elevated when brought to WPD leadership. A multidisciplinary leadership team reviewed the use of medical seclusion and directed removal of this as an operational practice. Health Services and WPD leadership have clarified with staff and WCCW executive management that this is not a DOC approved practice. Written direction has been sent to staff to clarify appropriate cell front rounding and direct staff to immediately stop the use of medical seclusion in facilities.

**Setting Expectations:**

Multiple levels of leadership at headquarters and at WCCW are re-affirming expectations for uses of force and deployment of oleoresin capsicum (OC). These expectations for WCCW include proper use of OC, appropriate use of force, documenting uses of force, and setting timelines for completing use of force packets within 21 days. Staff will be held accountable for not meeting these expectations going forward.

I have also directed my leadership team to review the following policies for any necessary agency-wide updates considering the concerns identified in the OCO report:

- 320.255 Restrictive Housing
- 320.265 Close Observation Areas
- 400.100 Incident and Significant Event Reporting
- 400.420 Post Orders/Operations
- 410.200 Use of Force
- 420.250 Use of Restraints
- 420.255 Use of Restraint Chair and Multiple Restraint Bed
- 420.370 Security Inspections

## **Recommendations**

Below are the Department's responses to the OCO recommendations identified in the report.<sup>1</sup> As you will see, we will be implementing all recommendations.

### **Recommendation #1: The DOC should implement a timeline for the superintendent's review of DOC 410.200 Use of Force.**

DOC currently is reviewing the agency's Use of Force (UOF) policy. In the meantime, we have set an expected time frame for UOF packets at WCCW to ensure they are completed and reviewed in a timely manner. The expectation is that UOF packets now have a 21-day requirement for completion at WCCW, including review by the superintendent. Extensions must be approved by the WPD Assistant Secretary.

DOC also has set expectations for an appropriate designee process at WCCW to ensure that enough people are trained in the UOF packet process to assist with timely completion and review.

### **Recommendation #2: Provide immediate training for WCCW staff on the proper use of OC spray, restraint application, respirators, and decontamination stations per DOC 410.200 Use of Force.**

The Department's Incident Management Team (DIMIT) is being deployed in June to WCCW to begin retraining all staff on response tactics. The DIMIT is a nationally respected team trained to manage incidents following the FEMA guidelines for Incident Command System training. This team has assisted during critical incidents in other states and has most recently provided support and training to the staff at the Department of Children and Youth Services' Green Hill School (GHS). DIMIT members are DOC experts and trainers in the proper use of force, including use of OC.

In addition, beginning the second week of June, approximately 50 staff from WCCW will be deployed to Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC) to receive immediate training from a team of respected correctional professionals. This training will consist of working on team tactics, verbal skills, preparedness to assure the safety of all involved. The training will also include job shadowing staff at Sky River Treatment Center in real time so that WCCW staff can experience the verbal tactics used to gain compliance of individuals with mental health challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the WCCW superintendent mentioned in the report has accepted a position in a different state, and we have appointed new leadership to WCCW. This new superintendent is setting expectations, training staff to meet expectations, and is focused on ensuring gender responsivity and trauma-informed principles are being utilized within WCCW. When our response to your recommendations references a superintendent, we will be referencing WCCW's newly appointed superintendent.

**Recommendation #3: The DOC should regularly audit use of force incidents at the Headquarters level.**

The WPD has initiated a headquarters WCCW UOF review team that will randomly review UOF incidents at WCCW, with an emphasis on reviewing uses of OC, force used in the close observation, treatment and evaluation, and/or restrictive housing units.

**Recommendation #4: The DOC should deploy more resources to WCCW to assist with facility staff training.**

WCCW's new superintendent has set expectations for facility staff to attend training at the Monroe Correctional Complex, as well as asked for emergency response and operational audits to be conducted this year to identify any additional concerns.

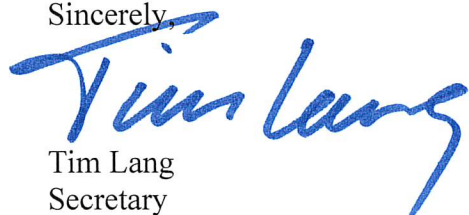
The DIMIT team is being deployed in June to WCCW to provide on-site training and assistance. They will review incidents with the staff and walk through step by step with them, with a focus on team supervision during a planned or spontaneous use of force, how to talk to individuals to deescalate and gain compliance without force, using facility resources, and leadership training for duty officers and those who are doing reviews. This team, also referenced in recommendation two, is made up of DOC members from across the state, and they have been deployed to assist and train staff on-site in real time.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to review and respond to the WCCW report. It is unacceptable to provide anything less than a safe and humane environment in our state's prisons. We owe this to the individuals in our care and custody and our staff.

Moving forward, the Department will be intensely focused on ensuring WCCW staff receive appropriate training, are clear on DOC expectations for the humane treatment of people in our care and custody, and are held accountable, when necessary, for not adhering to policy, procedure, and expectations.

I am committed to collaborating with your office as we work to ensure safe and humane correctional facilities.

Sincerely,



Tim Lang  
Secretary