



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

March 12, 2021

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 Investigation Report on the ‘use of force on a Black man at Stafford Creek Corrections Center’ completed by the Office of Corrections Ombuds.

Recommendation	Response
DOC should consider initiating a further administrative investigation into the actions of staff who do not follow directives, such as an IAP, particularly when harm to individuals has resulted. OCO does not believe that reviewing the information with them is a sufficient deterrent to prevent future transgressions. Further, their failure to follow their own directives has resulted in discipline for the incarcerated person, but for none of the staff.	<p>Events, such as these are reviewed to identify areas of opportunities for staff training and policy adjustments. When it comes to allegations of not enough action in particular areas, the department conducted a thorough review and identified those areas that required improvement, developed a corrective action plan, and conducted a debrief and training with involved employees, with the belief that these efforts will prevent future similar actions involving these staff.</p> <p>The Department takes lessons learned from situations and incorporates them into curriculum when teaching de-escalation and use of force best practices across the system.</p>
DOC should consider reviewing its use of force training and tactics, including ensuring that all staff understand the serious potential consequences associated with striking tertiary targets.	<p>The department policy and training emphasize the potential risks of striking tertiary targets. Policy and training define tertiary targets, the risks involved, and provide limited exceptions for appropriate use.</p> <p>The department will place greater emphasis on this topic in use of force training after the annual curriculum review in calendar year 2021.</p>
DOC should implement a department wide policy that all handheld video equipment be	Although post orders, on-shift training, and on-the-job training (OJT) require employees



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<p>checked for functionality at the beginning of every shift.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DOC should also consider the potential benefits of utilizing body cameras.	<p>to ensure all assigned equipment is present and in working order DOC agrees to reemphasize this expected practice to employees with responsibility specific to cameras.</p> <p>DOC has determined body cameras are cost prohibitive without additional budget allocations.</p>
<p>DOC should retrain all custody staff department wide on the means by which individuals are to be removed from their cells in non-emergent situations and mandate that a supervisor be present to direct the incident.</p>	<p>When employees are met with resistant/aggressive behavior and ongoing de-escalation techniques fail to resolve the situation, unless an emergent need to intervene is present, employees shall call for supervisory presence before taking any additional action. The Assistant Secretary for Prisons will message this expectation/reminder to all prison employees in a written directive.</p> <p>The department shares the belief that conflict avoidance, de-escalation tactics and trauma informed methods are preferred method of engaging with those in its custody and preventing protentional use of force situations. As such, the department agrees additional emphasis on these skills should be created and/or enhanced for employees in multiple training and learning environments.</p>
<p>DOC should make every effort to ensure that the new 30-day administrative segregation hold time is adhered to and that extensions are not overused to extend this timeframe.</p>	<p>The department agrees with this recommendation.</p>

The information provided by the OCO was useful to ensure the Department of Corrections is doing everything it can to ensure an incarcerated person’s time in the agency’s facilities is a fair and safe space for all incarcerated individuals. The Department takes seriously allegations of racial injustice and will address any substantiated allegations with appropriate measures.

We also appreciate your team’s understanding of the unique processes across facilities and the addition of policies and procedures being put in place to address them. We are working towards

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proactivity and improving quality assurance processes throughout the department. Moving forward, Washington Department of Corrections will continue to collaborate with the Office of the Corrections Ombuds to implement additional policies, procedures, and security measures to continue to improve the facility operations.

Sincerely,

on behalf of
Steve Sinclair, Secretary
Washington Department of Corrections