



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

The mission of the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) is to provide opportunities for people impacted by incarceration to raise issues and resolve conflicts. The OCO works to reduce harm in the Washington corrections system by negotiating outcomes, recommending positive changes, and reporting individual and systemic concerns.



Annual Report prepared by:

Madison Vinson, JD
Elisabeth Kingsbury, JD

Assistant Corrections Ombuds – Policy
Acting Director

Data compiled by:

Sara Appleton
Heather Bates

Quality Assurance & Training Manager
Administrative Services Manager

The OCO values continuous improvement and the trust of the people incarcerated in the Washington DOC facilities and all our stakeholders. Please reach out if we can be of assistance.

To submit an online complaint, click [here](https://oco.wa.gov/submit-complaint) or go to: <https://oco.wa.gov/submit-complaint>

To subscribe to our OCO notification listserv and news bulletins click [here](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAGOV/subscriber/new?topic_id=WAGOV_158) or go to:
https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAGOV/subscriber/new?topic_id=WAGOV_158

Questions and/or comments about this report can be sent to:

Office of the Corrections Ombuds
PO Box 40009
Olympia, Washington 98504
OCOCorrespondence@gov.wa.gov

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Vision, Mission, Values	5
Core Statutory Duties	6
Budget and Expenditures	6
Intake: Confidential Hotline, Mail, Webform	7
Top Ten Investigative Case Factors	8
Most Frequently Reported Institution of Incident	9
Investigation Highlights	10
Custody Concerns	10
Health Services Concerns	12
Reentry Center Concerns	13
Unexpected Fatality Reviews (UFRs)	14
Monitoring Visits	15
Publications	17
Monthly Newsletters	17
Monthly Outcome Reports	17
Solitary Confinement: Part II	18
Spotlight: Urgent Care at Stafford Creek	19
Spotlight: Dental Care Delays	19
Use of Force & Restrictive Housing Policy Violations at WCCW	20
Unresolved OCO Recommendations	21
Our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Work	25
Community Engagement	26
Quarterly Meetings	26
Stakeholder Input	27
Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee	29
Looking Ahead	30
Implementation of Community Feedback	30
Improved Community Engagement	30
Solitary Confinement Part III	30
Food Systems Research Team Report on Therapeutic Diets	30
OCO Process Changes & Updates	31
Our Staff	32
Appendix A: Survey Results	
Appendix B: DOC Response	

Executive Summary

In Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025), the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) opened 3,767 cases representing complaints from, or about, 2089 incarcerated individuals. During this time, we **resolved 3,785 complaints** and **answered 4,773 calls**, or an average of nearly 400 calls for assistance each month through the OCO hotline.

Complaints related to **DOC staff conduct** were the most frequently received type of concern in FY 2025. **Healthcare (medical, mental health, substance use disorder, disability, dental)** and **classification** concerns were the second and third most common types of complaint received in FY 2025.

The OCO **provided assistance, information, or technical assistance in 2,235 cases** – nearly 60 percent of cases closed during FY 2025. During this same time period, the **OCO released**:

- two annual reports (OCO & UFR)
- two systemic reports
- two spotlight reports
- analysis for five proposed DOC policy revisions
- four newsletters
- twelve monthly outcome reports

Additionally, the OCO conducted eight quarterly meetings: **four quarterly meetings in prison facilities** and **four in the community**.

In recent months, the OCO team has undertaken a thorough review of our operations to ensure that all activities align with the core functions of the office. As a result, we have **renewed our focus on individual and systemic investigations, monitoring, reporting, and policy analysis**. Additionally, informed by community feedback, we have implemented several improvements to the structure and format of our quarterly meetings – important first steps in **strengthening and broadening the OCO's engagement with community**.

As we move forward into FY 2026, the OCO team is eager to continue **enhancing our monitoring and reporting practices** as well as **meaningful collaboration with stakeholders**. We also look forward to implementing the directives set forth in Governor Ferguson's Executive Order 25-06 regarding **improved customer experience and service delivery** in state government.

Independent corrections oversight is essential to promoting transparency, accountability, and lasting systemic reform. Through impartial evaluation and informed recommendations, **oversight fosters safer, more humane, and more effective correctional practices systemwide**. The OCO team takes great pride in carrying out this mission.

Thank you for continuing to support the Office of the Corrections Ombuds and our work to **safeguard the health, safety, welfare, and rights of people incarcerated** in the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Vision

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds envisions a more humane and transparent Washington corrections system.

Mission

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds is on a mission to provide opportunities for people impacted by incarceration to raise issues and resolve conflicts. We work to reduce harm in the Washington corrections system by negotiating outcomes, recommending positive change, and reporting individual and systemic concerns.

Values

Integrity: We believe in honesty, transparency, and authenticity.

Respect: We are a compassionate, kind, and consistent organization. We value our collective humanity and dignity.

Collaboration: We work together to deliver objective communications and negotiations to positively impact the community we serve.

Equity: We recognize the importance of diversity and lived experience. We aim to provide equitable services to all people impacted by incarceration.

Courage: We are bold and persistent problem solvers. We work to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of incarcerated individuals. We remain optimistic that our work empowers and makes a difference.



OCO staff answering questions at the July 2024 Quarterly Meeting at Airway Heights Corrections Center.

Core Statutory Duties

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds is an independent and impartial public office within the Governor's Office. The Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) serves the state of Washington by helping to resolve issues involving people incarcerated in the Department of Corrections facilities. Through our casework and published reports, we work to promote a positive change in corrections.

The following duties and responsibilities of the Ombuds are set forth in state law¹:

- Maintain a statewide toll-free confidential hotline.
- Provide information and technical assistance to incarcerated individuals and stakeholders.
- Receive, investigate, and resolve complaints.
- Monitor and provide system oversight related to the health, safety, welfare, and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals.
- Monitor and provide legislative and policy developments affecting correctional facilities.
- Submit an annual report by November 1 of each year.
- Submit an annual report to the legislature on the status of the implementation of unexpected fatality review recommendations.
- Convene the Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee and submit periodic reports to the legislature.

Budget and Expenditures

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds Fiscal Year 2025 budget and expenditures:

Category	Allotment FY25	Expenditure FY25	Underspend (Overspend)
001 – General Fund: Salaries & Expenses – FY25			
A/ Salaries & Wages	1,046,811	976,395	70,416
B/ Employee Benefits	360,024	352,267	7,757
C/ Professional Service Contracts	9,959	50,563	(40,604)
E/ Goods & Services	382,450	359,363	23,087
G/ Travel	50,000	44,983	5,017
J/ Capital Outlays	-	360	(360)
N/ Grants & Benefits	6,065	1,119	4,946
Total	1,855,309	1,785,050	70,259
001 – General Fund: HB2084 Construction – FY25			
	501,961	479,696	22,265
Total Office of the Corrections Ombuds	2,357,270	2,264,746	92,524

¹RCW 43.06C and RCW 72.09.770

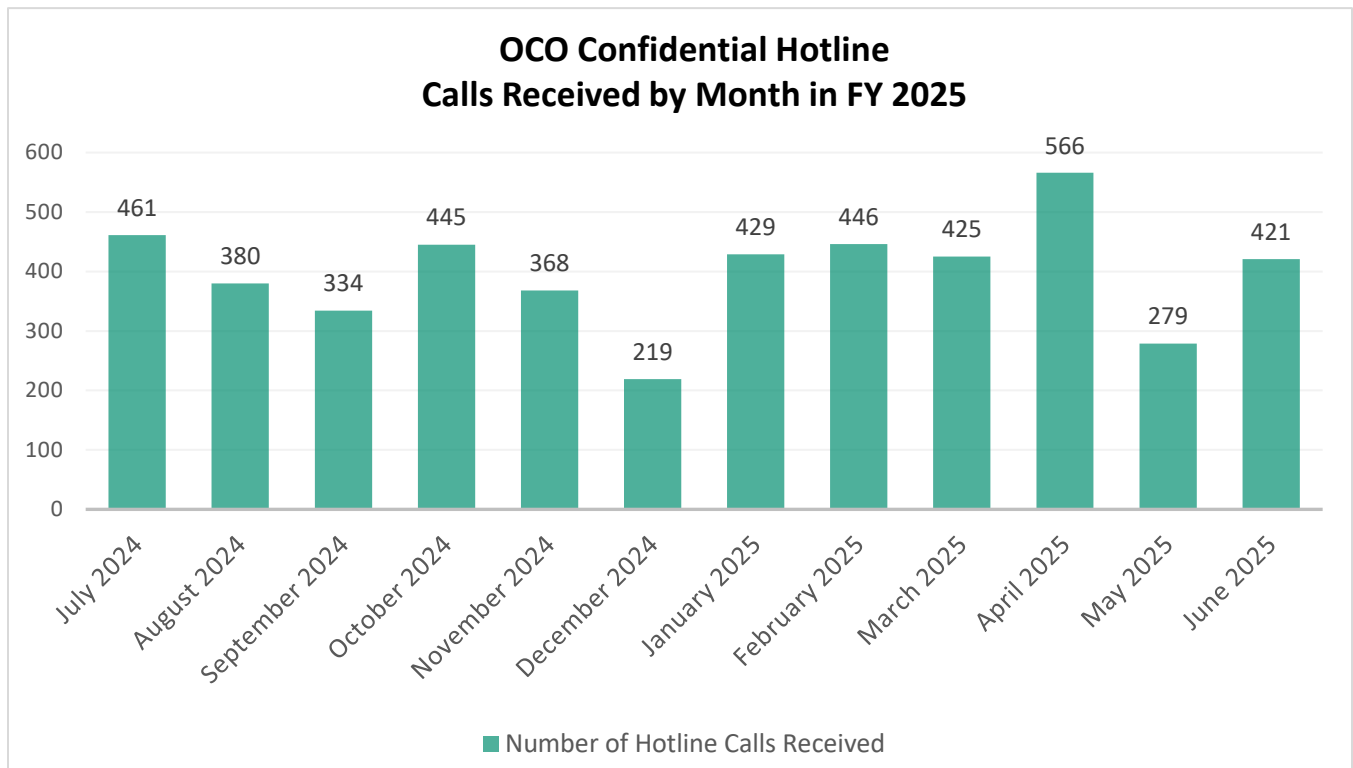
Intake: Confidential Hotline, Mail, Webform



The OCO receives complaints from incarcerated individuals, family and loved ones, DOC staff, and other governmental offices. Every complaint results in an investigation. OCO staff also initiate investigations based on observations or information received.

In FY 2025, approximately 60 percent of new complaints received by the OCO were received on the OCO hotline. During this reporting period, the **OCO answered 4,773 hotline calls**, averaging 398 calls per month. Complaints received by mail accounted for approximately 19 percent of new complaints; webform complaints accounted for roughly 17 percent.

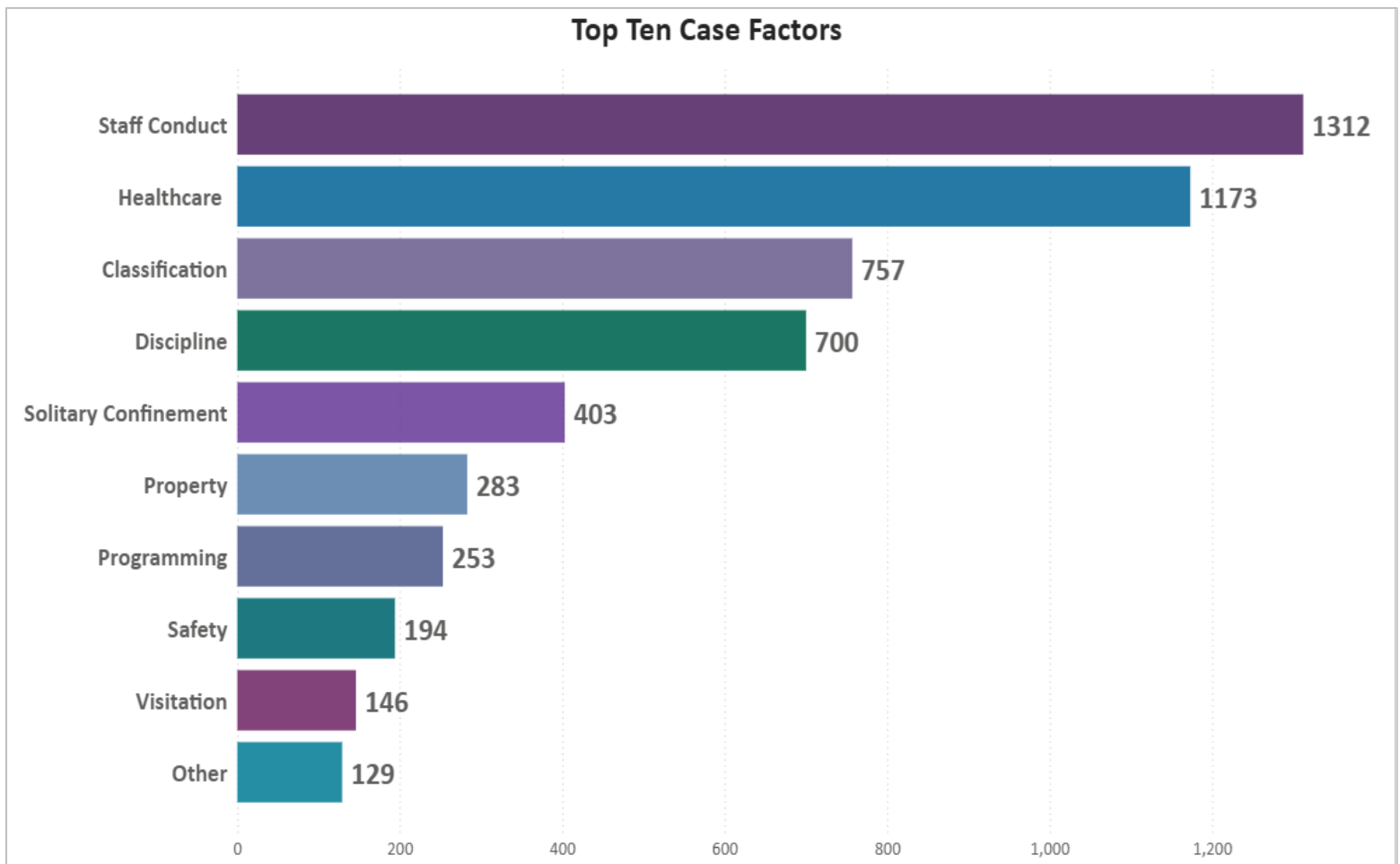
Phones at Cedar Creek Corrections Center.



Top Ten Investigative Case Factors

The top ten most frequently reported topics of investigative cases in FY 2025 were:

1. Staff Conduct
2. Healthcare (including medical, mental health, substance use disorder, disability, dental)
3. Classification (often safety-related)
4. Discipline (infractions and behavior observation entries)
5. Solitary Confinement (including duration, reason for placement and conditions)
6. Property
7. Programming
8. Safety
9. Visitation
10. Other



Most Frequently Reported Institution of Incident

The OCO received the most complaints from the following ten DOC facilities in FY 2025.²

DOC Institution of Incident ³	Cases Opened	Cases Closed
Airway Heights Corrections Center	548	604
Monroe Correctional Complex	544	622
Washington State Penitentiary	535	581
Washington Corrections Center	450	472
Stafford Creek Corrections Center	446	462
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center	352	357
Washington Corrections Center for Women	221	226
Clallam Bay Corrections Center	192	192
Olympic Corrections Center	51	66
Cedar Creek Corrections Center	36	51

Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women and Reentry Centers were the sources of the fewest complaints received in FY 2025.



OCO staff at Airway Heights Corrections Center prior to the July 2024 Quarterly Meeting.

² The opened and closed case figures in this table include: 1) cases opened in the prior fiscal year; 2) cases closed as duplicates; and 3) cases reopened for secondary review and then closed again.

³ "Institution of incident" refers to the facility where the complainant was housed at the time of incident. This sometimes differs from current facility if the complaint is filed after the complainant transfers or releases.

Investigation Highlights

The following are examples of investigative cases in which the OCO staff provided assistance or information to incarcerated individuals in prisons throughout the state of Washington.

Custody Concerns

Removal from Maximum Custody

- Individual relayed concerns about placement in solitary confinement due to an infraction he received for an act he did not commit.
- The OCO reviewed the infraction materials and had questions regarding the guilty finding. The OCO contacted facility leadership and asked for reconsideration. The DOC reviewed the case and agreed to dismiss the infraction. The OCO then asked DOC Headquarters to remove the individual from the MAX program to which he had been assigned. DOC agreed, and the individual was removed from MAX custody.

Changes to Use of Force Protocol

- Individual reported concerns about DOC using force on him. Specifically, the person reported the use of the restraint bed for an extended period, the lack of a privacy cloth during the use of force incident, and DOC placing a spit hood on the person and leaving the hood on after the person was placed into a cell.
- The OCO reviewed all the records related to the use of force and spoke to DOC about these concerns. OCO verified that this person was held on the restraint bed for an extended period. DOC received the required extension documentation. The OCO verified that this person received medical attention and follow-up care after this incident. Because of this incident, DOC purchased new upgraded privacy cloths that are currently in use and can be placed on an individual and secured with Velcro to avoid utilizing a towel. At OCO request, a debrief was conducted with unit staff regarding spit hood usage and was discussed during the Supervising Use of Force Training. The OCO informed the individual that this office continues to have conversations regarding Use of Force concerns with DOC.

Approval of Tarot Cards

- Person reported that he was told he could order tarot cards from approved vendors outside of Union Supply, but when he ordered tarot cards, they were rejected by property. Person said they were not reviewed by the religious coordinator and he was not given the opportunity to appeal.
- The OCO contacted DOC Headquarters about this situation and reached out to the facility about the process. After OCO outreach, DOC Headquarters directed mailrooms and religious coordinators statewide to change the process for tarot cards. Previously, Union Supply was the only allowed vendor for tarot cards (other than via donation). Tarot cards can now be purchased and received as publications via allowable vendors and publishers as noted in DOC 450.100. Tarot cards will not be forwarded or rejected by the mailroom but will be sent to the religious coordinator for approval.

On-site De-escalation

- While conducting an onsite monitoring visit, facility staff requested that the OCO help negotiate with an individual who had covered her windows in the close observation area (COA). The individual in crisis was requesting the OCO.
- The OCO sat cell front with the individual for an hour while she discussed her concerns. She then agreed to uncover her window and camera.

Mattress Maintenance

- Person reported concerns about mold/mildew on their bed and mattress. The person also reported a concern about their resolution request appeal.
- The OCO spoke with facility leadership and DOC headquarters staff about the concern of mold/mildew on people's mattresses and beds. After speaking with facility leadership and headquarters about the concern, the facility created a new mattress maintenance protocol to keep people's mattresses and beds clean of mold/mildew. Incarcerated people were instructed to frequently flip their mattresses and clean them often using warm soapy water. If mold/mildew cannot be cleaned off, people were encouraged to kite the Superintendent about the issue and a new mattress will be provided.

Removal from Solitary Confinement

- Person reported concerns about staff conduct, infractions, and housing placement.
- The OCO elevated the concerns through facility and headquarters leadership. After OCO outreach, the person was approved and moved from solitary confinement. The person was provided a single cell for post-op recovery. The OCO also investigated the staff conduct concerns and elevated them to facility leadership and confirmed after OCO outreach that facility leadership addressed the misconduct.

Assistance Establishing LGBTQ Group

- Individuals reported the LGBTQ group that used to meet had not been able to gather since before the pandemic. Other groups had resumed meetings but they had not been able to.
- The OCO scheduled a meeting at the facility and invited individuals to sign up to attend. Over 40 incarcerated individuals expressed interest in a regular LGBTQ meeting. The OCO continued to work toward the group having regular meetings and finding a volunteer sponsor.

Health Services Concerns

Access to Assistive Reading Device

- Individual relayed concerns regarding not being able to read or write and needing assistance with this.
- The OCO contacted DOC about this concern. At OCO's request, assistance for reading and writing for this individual was brought before the accommodation review committee (ARC). After the ARC meeting, the OCO confirmed that the individual was approved for a C-Reader pen that when dragged over words reads the text aloud.

Alterations to Medication Administration

- Person reported that several patients did not receive medication due to a facility lockdown. The person also requested that the OCO review his removal from treatment.
- The OCO substantiated the reported issue with medication administration and contacted DOC Health Services leadership to discuss what led to this problem. OCO staff contacted facility leadership and recommended changing how daily medication schedules are communicated to custody to prevent missed medications in the future. The DOC agreed to implement this recommendation.

Assistance Seeking Accommodations

- Person shared concerns regarding being forced to take a program despite not being provided with needed accommodations.
- The OCO reached out to DOC staff who shared they will work with this individual and provide them with resources to request the accommodations they need to be successful within the program. DOC staff also shared that they will be providing the whole class with information on how to request accommodations after OCO outreach.

Medical Equipment Access in IMU

- Person reported that he never received the initial medical intake he was supposed to have upon arrival to the Intensive Management Unit (IMU). Person described experiencing severe symptoms from an infection. Person said he had not received care for his infection and was not allowed to have the Durable Medical Equipment (DME) that had been provided to him at another facility to ease the symptoms. Person expressed concern about staff conduct when he filed medical and mental health emergencies. Person said that staff were dismissive and told him that his symptoms were not an emergency.
- The OCO provided assistance by ensuring that this individual received medical attention and his DME. On the day the office received this complaint, the OCO reached out to unit and medical staff, who provided a wellness check and scheduled him to receive medical care for his infection. The OCO consistently followed up with staff on this issue to ensure that this individual received medical care. The OCO found that there were discrepancies between what staff said and documented regarding whether his DME was allowed in the IMU. After OCO outreach, this individual was given his DME. The OCO spoke with facility leadership

about the discrepancy and miscommunication about this DME and confirmed that this DME is allowed in the IMU. Facility leadership spoke with staff to inform them that this DME is allowed. Leadership also edited this individual's Behavior Observation Entries (BOEs) on the issue to reflect that.

Medication Access

- Person reported concerns about changes in access to medication since transferring to DOC custody.
- The OCO elevated this concern to DOC health services leadership. After outreach, the patient was scheduled for a medication management appointment with a provider. The OCO also confirmed DOC completed the Release of Information and received records from the county jail related to the medications. This office also provided information to the patient about next steps.



Phones at Washington Corrections Center for Women.

Access to Gender Affirming Care

- Person reported concerns about delayed appointments and access to hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and gender affirming care services.
- The OCO elevated these concerns through DOC Health Services leadership. After OCO outreach, DOC agreed to schedule the patient to discuss HRT options with a provider and appointments with the Gender Affirming Care specialists. This office tracked the appointments, confirmed the appointments were scheduled, and confirmed they occurred. The OCO also provided information about the DOC Transgender Toolkit.

Reentry Center Concerns

Reentry Center Monitoring

- An external person reported that her brother was not being fed and the facility only offers fruit and breakfast sandwiches.
- The OCO conducted an unannounced monitoring visit of the kitchen, yard, and living units. The DOC reported staffing issues with only two cooks employed when there should be at least three; the OCO confirmed that DOC was actively recruiting for this vacant position. Upon entering the kitchen, the OCO observed hot food being prepared for residents. OCO

staff observed fruit, cereal, oatmeal, and cake available to residents. The OCO also noted two gallons of milk, fruit cups, breakfast sandwiches, and pre-made lunches in paper bags in the refrigerator available to residents. The OCO substantiated some concerns related to hot meals being served consistently and food running out. However, these problems are related to staffing, which the Department is actively working to resolve.

Reentry Center Services

- Person reported attempting to access reentry services but being denied. The person was told by staff that they should qualify for services.
- The OCO staff contacted DOC Health Services staff regarding the reason for denial. OCO staff contacted the program administrator to verify that the person's follow up request was reviewed in a timely manner after additional information was acquired by DOC.

Improvement Regarding Transfer Delays

- Person reported concerns about transferring to a reentry center.
- The OCO spoke with DOC staff who found a problem with DOC's application of transfer rules for people with conviction enhancements, which was delaying the transfer. The person who reported the complaint was transferred to a reentry center shortly after OCO's involvement. Additionally, this finding will assist others with similar circumstances in transferring to reentry centers upon becoming eligible.



Unexpected Fatality Reviews (UFRs)

The OCO publishes an independent UFR Annual Report which assesses DOC's implementation of corrective actions plans that result from UFR Committee recommendations. Detailed information about recommendations and systemic changes related to UFR Committee reviews is available on the OCO website and will be included in the forthcoming 2025 UFR Annual Report.

Driving to Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women for a monitoring visit in February 2025.

Monitoring Visits

On-site facility visits are critical to the work of the OCO. Being present at prisons and reentry centers allows OCO staff to observe conditions, staff conduct, and build trust with the incarcerated population. Individual complaints inform and steer the OCO's monitoring visits. Cell-front conversations for people housed in solitary confinement or close observation areas (suicide/crisis watch) are a key component to most facility visits. Additionally, OCO staff occasionally participate in group activities and help to facilitate discussions with incarcerated people and DOC staff. At other times, OCO staff hold "open hours" – a time when incarcerated people are able to ask questions and seek advice directly from OCO staff members. OCO staff often meet with facility leadership while on-site to try to resolve concerns.

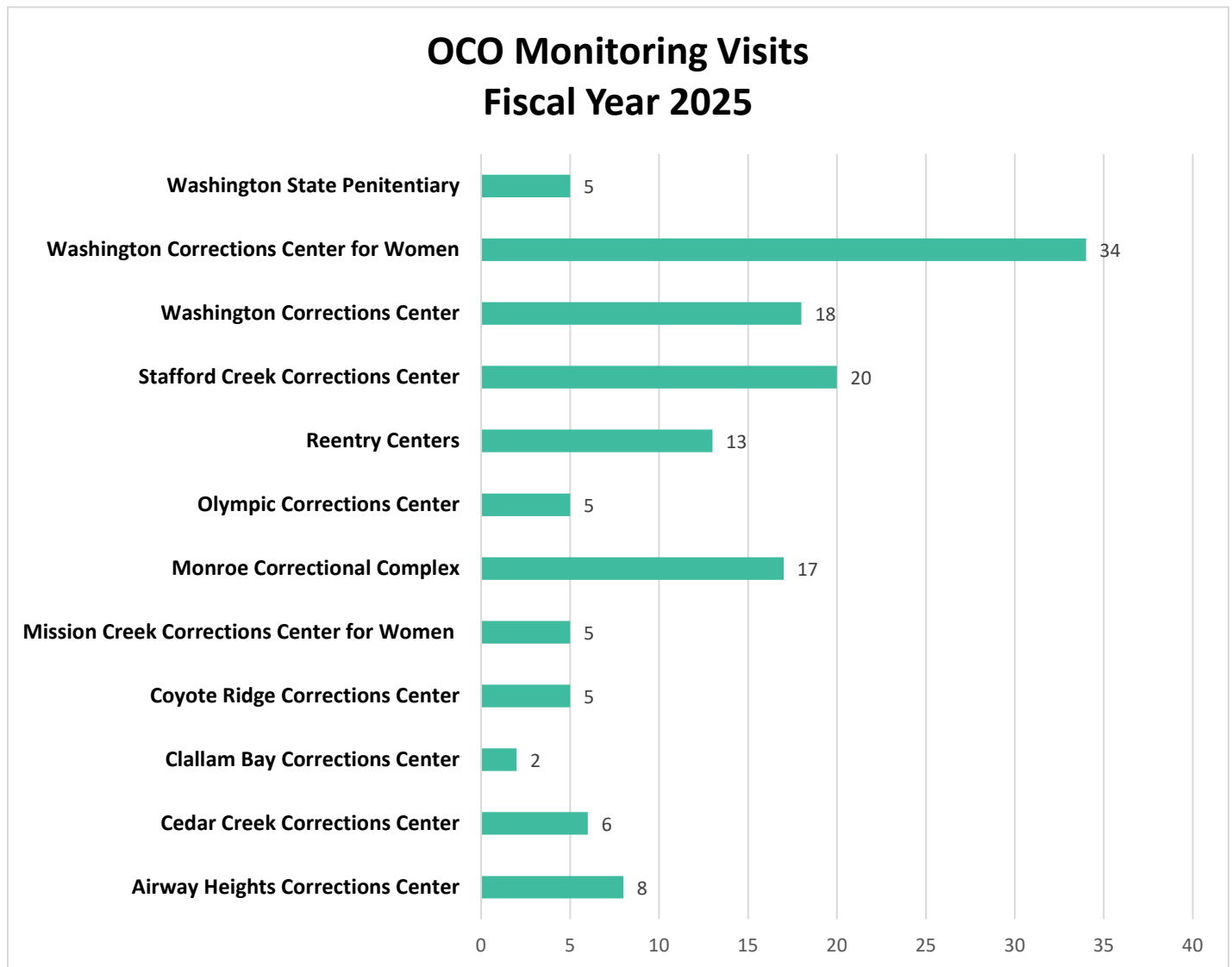


OCO staff at Olympic Corrections Center Quarterly Meeting (above); a gift to the office from an artist incarcerated at Monroe Correctional Complex (left); inspecting the kitchen at Washington Corrections Center (below).



In Fiscal Year 2025, the OCO staff completed **138 visits to facilities and reentry centers**. This means that **on average, OCO conducted in-person monitoring visits nearly three times per week**.

In December 2024, all state agencies were directed to freeze expenditures for travel due to the state budget deficit. Overnight travel for OCO staff was temporarily halted at that time. Although the statewide travel freeze still remains in effect, OCO staff resumed travel in May 2025 for monitoring purposes as on-site monitoring is a core function of the agency.



Publications

The OCO continues to improve our investigation process with the goal of increasing positive outcomes for the incarcerated people we serve. During the Fiscal Year 2025 reporting period, the OCO issued the following publications⁴:

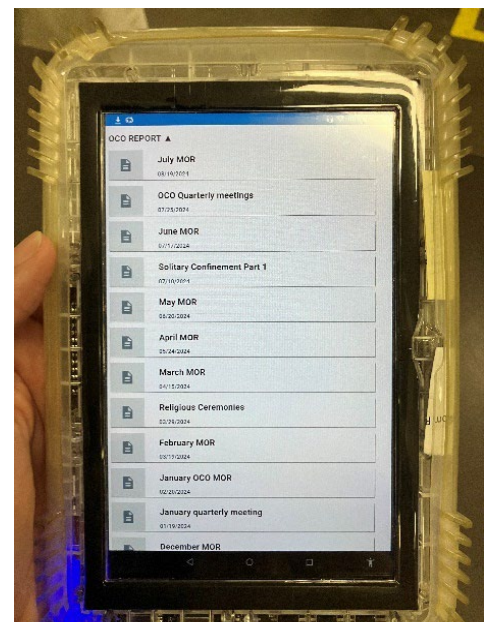
- Annual Report
- Unexpected Fatality Review Annual Report
- Four Newsletters
- Twelve Monthly Outcome Reports
- Two Special Investigative Reports
 - Solitary Confinement: Part II
 - Use of Force & Restrictive Housing Policy Violations at WCCW
- Two Spotlights
 - Urgent Care at Stafford Creek
 - Addressing Dental Care Delays
- Policy Comments for revisions to the following policies:
 - DOC 420.380 Drug and Alcohol Testing
 - DOC 470.300 Intelligence and Investigations
 - DOC 550.100 Resolution Program
 - DOC 630.580 Healthcare Reentry Services
 - DOC 890.600 Bloodborne Pathogen Protection and Exposure Response

Newsletters

The OCO publishes a periodic newsletter that is posted to the tablets in the FYI App for incarcerated individuals to gain more information about the OCO's work. The newsletters provide information about facility visits, recent OCO documents uploaded to tablets, and casework highlights. Other announcements have included DOC policies pending review and how to provide feedback on them as well as proposed legislation that impacts the incarcerated population.

Monthly Outcome Reports

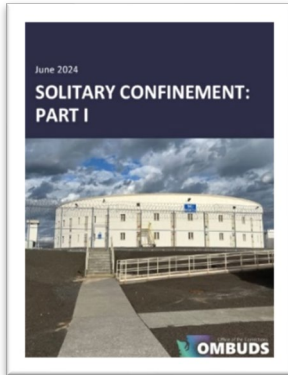
The OCO investigates complaints regarding any actions or inactions of the DOC that adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of incarcerated individuals. RCW 43.06C.040(2)(k) directs the OCO to issue a public decision about each complaint when closing an investigation. All cases



OCO reports on a Securus tablet.

⁴ All publications are available at the OCO website [here](#) and at <https://oco.wa.gov/data-publications-reports/reports/investigative-reports-with-doc-response>

opened by the OCO are considered investigations for the purposes of the statute. Monthly Outcome Reports⁵ are published every month with a public decision for every case closed in that month. Additionally, the OCO works with DOC to make sure that all reports are immediately available on the Securus tablets in the FYI App and in all DOC-operated Law Libraries.



Solitary Confinement: Part I

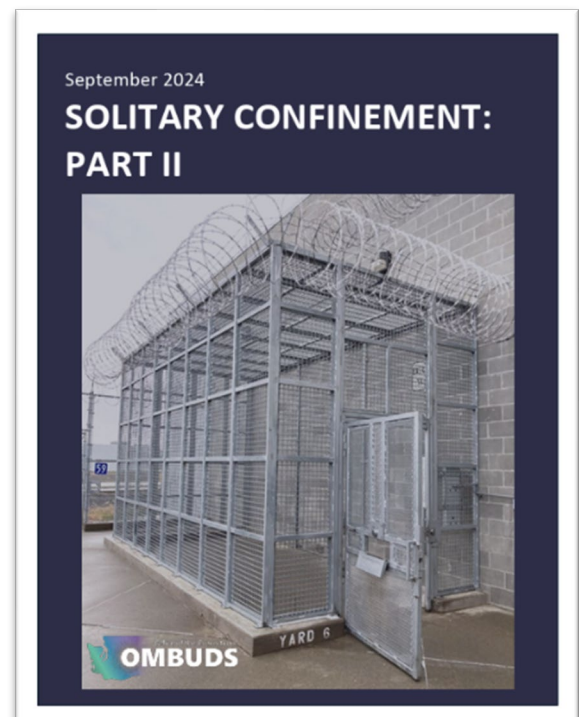
The OCO published Solitary Confinement: Part I on June 30, 2024, at the close of FY 2024, as required by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5187 (2023-2024), Sec. 117 (7). In that report, the OCO Solitary Confinement Research Team found that over 3000 individuals had been placed in solitary confinement or another form of restrictive housing more than 120 days in total or more than 45 consecutive days in Fiscal Year 2023 and over 170 attempted suicides and 14 individuals died by suicide while in solitary confinement over the past 10 years.

Solitary Confinement: Part II

While fulfilling the requirements of ESSB 5187, the Solitary Confinement Research Team identified that the findings related to solitary confinement were so vast that they warranted a multi-part report series. As a result, the second part of the three-part report series was published in September 2024. Part II highlighted the voices and experiences of a sample of 13 individuals who had spent extensive time in solitary confinement while incarcerated in the state of Washington.

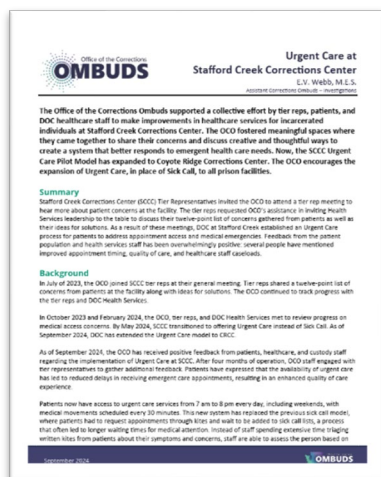
This report also provided key terms, photographs, and further context for public understanding of solitary confinement in Washington State prisons. The goal was to provide greater transparency around the conditions and experiences of people living in solitary. Recognizing the importance of lived experience, the OCO-SCRT incorporated interviews into the research plan to complement the quantitative findings of Part I. A thematic analysis of the interviews conducted identified five key themes:

- **Theme 1:** Sensory deprivation, idleness, and lack of social engagement in solitary confinement contribute to decompensation and long-term impacts on mental health.



⁵ All Monthly Outcomes Reports (MORs) are available on the OCO website [here](#).

- **Theme 2:** In addition to being socially isolated, people are often denied access to quality-of-life items.
- **Theme 3:** Many devices and tactics used by WADOC to gain compliance are dehumanizing and traumatizing.
- **Theme 4:** Interactions with WADOC staff are the primary types of social engagement in solitary confinement.
- **Theme 5:** Inconsistent communication and application of rules causes indeterminant stays in solitary and subjective use of restraint devices and sanctions.



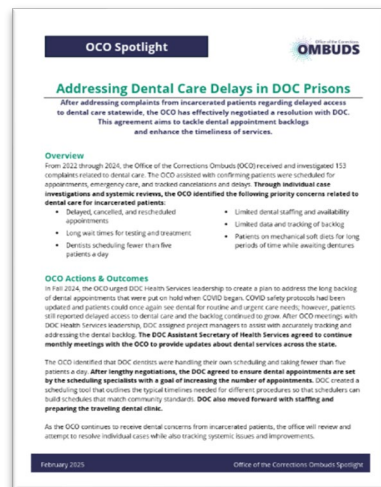
Spotlight: Urgent Care at Stafford Creek

Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) Tier Representatives invited the OCO to attend a tier rep meeting to hear more about patient concerns at the facility. The tier reps requested OCO's assistance in inviting Health Services leadership to the table to discuss their twelve-point list of concerns gathered from patients as well as their ideas for solutions. As a result of these meetings, DOC at Stafford Creek established an Urgent Care process for patients to address appointment access and medical emergencies. Feedback from the patient population and health services staff has been overwhelmingly positive: several people have mentioned improved appointment timing, quality of care, and healthcare staff caseloads.

Spotlight: Dental Care Delays

From 2022 through 2024, the OCO received and investigated 153 complaints related to dental care. The OCO assisted with confirming patients were scheduled for appointments, emergency care, and tracked cancellations and delays. Through individual case investigations and systemic reviews, the OCO identified the following priority concerns related to dental care for incarcerated patients:

- Delayed, cancelled, and rescheduled appointments
- Long wait times for testing and treatment
- Dentists scheduling fewer than five patients a day
- Limited dental staffing and availability
- Limited data and tracking of backlog
- Patients on mechanical soft diets for long periods of time while awaiting dentures



Use of Force & Restrictive Housing Policy Violations at WCCW

During an OCO monitoring visit at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) in September 2024, the OCO received multiple concerns regarding staff conduct, including policy and procedure violations, excessive use of force, and unfair practices. This prompted the OCO to open an investigation into the treatment of individuals living in the restrictive housing unit at WCCW. After an extensive review of emails, Teams messages, logbooks, critical incident reviews, use of force packets, mental health records, surveillance videos, handheld video recordings of multiple uses of force, and numerous on-site interviews with staff and the incarcerated population, the OCO identified violations of several policies, including:

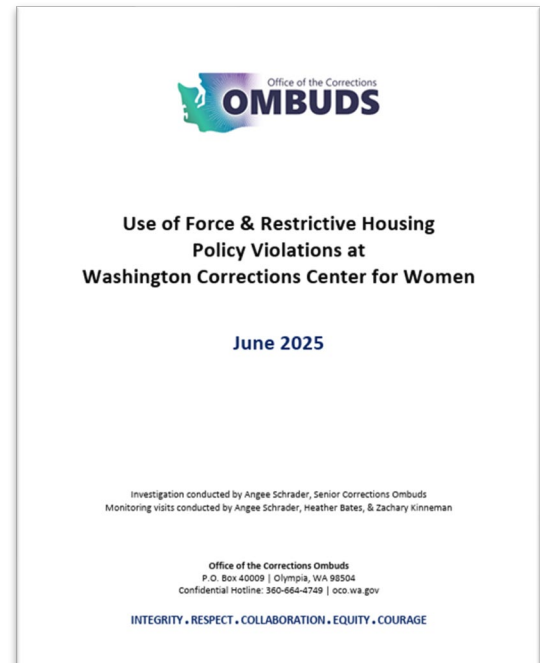
DOC 410.200 Use of Force (Restricted): Misuse of oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray in breach of the manufacturer's safety requirements; delayed decontamination process; incorrect use of restraint devices; lack of proper equipment

DOC 320.255 Restrictive Housing: Inappropriate use of conditions of confinement

DOC 420.370 Security Inspections (Restricted): Failure to conduct tier checks

DOC 890.600 Bloodborne Pathogen Protection and Exposure Response: Unauthorized blood testing

DOC 590.500 Legal Access for Incarcerated Individuals: Denied access to the law library



The OCO issued the following recommendations:

- The DOC should implement a timeline for the superintendent's review of DOC 410.200 Use of Force.
- The DOC should 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 DOC should regularly audit use of force incidents at the Headquarters level.
- The DOC should deploy more resources to WCCW to assist with facility staff training.

The DOC issued a comprehensive response to the report. DOC agreed to the OCO's recommendations, identified and acted upon additional improvements such as ending medical seclusion, and initiated a comprehensive review of numerous DOC policies in light of the concerns listed in the OCO's report.

Unresolved OCO Recommendations

The following are key OCO recommendations issued to DOC between 2021 to 2025 that remain outstanding as of October 2025. Recently, DOC has made progress addressing or implementing nearly all recommendations. **The OCO will continue to monitor developments on each of these issues.**

OCO Recommendation	Status	Comments & Updates
DOC should ensure that an individual's mental health status is considered throughout the disciplinary process. (Issued 2021)	In Progress	DOC has developed a pilot project that will incorporate information about a person's mental health status into the disciplinary process. DOC is currently in talks with labor partners regarding implementation.
DOC should reduce the frequency of placement and length of stay in any segregated housing for individuals with serious mental health conditions. (Issued 2021)	Unresolved	The OCO and DOC have resumed discussions regarding DOC's multi-disciplinary review of maximum custody placements, including the consideration of a person's mental health in determining placement. DOC reports additional efforts including increased time out of cell for people with serious mental health conditions with Washington Way teams.
DOC should equip DOC correctional officers and other staff with knowledge and skills needed to support individuals with mental health conditions. (Issued 2021)	In Progress	DOC is introducing crisis intervention mental health training with a Responding to Mental Health Crisis class given during in-service training. This class is conducted by a newly appointed Mental Health Training Specialist.
DOC should develop a comprehensive RTU [Residential Treatment Unit] policy that addresses: a) objective criteria for admission; b) modified disciplinary system; c) modified classification system; d) pathway out of RTU, including objective criteria for discharge; e) mandatory specialized mental health training for RTU custody staff; f) programming availability in RTU (to include programming support) (Issued 2021 & 2023)	In Progress	In collaboration with the OCO and Disability Rights Washington (DRW), DOC has developed a draft RTU policy. DOC is finalizing the policy and is in talks with labor partners regarding implementation.

DOC should develop a comprehensive IBMP [Individual Behavior Management Plan] policy which may include: a) objective criteria for who should or must have an IBMP; b) guidelines for incentives that may be used; c) guidelines for safety responses that may be used, including whether/when use of restraints may be part of an IBMP; d) mandatory training for all mental health providers that addresses how to write an IBMP; e) mandatory training for any DOC custody staff who routinely work with individuals who have IBMPs; and f) routine audits of IBMPs by qualified headquarters staff. (Issued 2021 & 2023)	In Progress	DOC has addressed some elements of this recommendation in protocol (2021); the remaining elements will be addressed in an additional protocol revision. DOC reports that it is no longer pursuing a standalone IBMP policy and instead will address the individual components of this recommendation through the finalization of a comprehensive IBMP protocol.
DOC should improve suicide prevention practices. (Issued 2023)	In Progress	In December 2024, DOC agreed to OCO's recommendation to extend 988 crisis hotline services to all individuals in DOC custody. Implementation began in some facilities in September 2025. The OCO will continue to monitor DOC's ongoing implementation of Dr. Hayes 2023 recommendations regarding suicide prevention. DOC reports that the department updated the CORE academy and in-service training with Suicide Prevention and intervention trainings.
DOC should update DOC policy 300.380 to establish timeframes for how long an individual can be housed in restrictive housing. (Issued 2023)	In Progress	DOC reports that, through extensive data review, they have identified a standard time frame and continue to work to identify target timeframes.

DOC should create a clear protocol for Transfer Pods by establishing a uniform process throughout all facilities of when an individual can be placed in a Transfer Pod. (Issued 2023)	In Progress	DOC has implemented pilot transfer pods and in talks with labor partners regarding expansion and further implementation.
DOC should review all individuals currently housed in restrictive housing and make it a priority to move them to appropriate placements while identifying what needs to be adjusted in DOC policy to streamline the process. (Issued 2023)	In Progress	DOC reports that, in addition to administrative segregation hearings and the maximum custody review committee, the department has now hired a Mission Housing Manager to conduct thorough monthly reviews of individuals on administrative segregation status. These individuals are the highest priority to transfer when each case has been reviewed and a sound decision has been made as to the appropriate custody level and facility placement. DOC also reports that they have added continued monitoring to strategic plan goals. They report the data is aggregated quarterly for reports through the strategic planning process.
DOC should change the “ some evidence ” standard to a “preponderance of evidence” standard for disciplinary proceedings. (Issued 2023)	In Progress	In January 2025, DOC agreed to OCO’s recommendation to change the evidentiary standard for disciplinary proceedings. DOC is currently developing implementation plans, including extensive trainings and changes to WAC, to make this policy change.
The DOC should implement a timeline for the superintendent's review of DOC 410.200 Use of Force. (Issued 2025)	In Progress	DOC agreed to implement this recommendation at WCCW. DOC also agreed to review the Use of Force policy to determine if systemwide improvements are needed; that review is underway.
The DOC should regularly audit use of force incidents at the Headquarters level. (Issued 2025)	In Progress	DOC agreed to implement this recommendation at WCCW. DOC also agreed to review the Use of Force policy to determine if systemwide improvements are needed; that review is underway.



Clockwise from top left: gardens at Airway Heights Corrections Center; artwork at Olympic Corrections Center; OCO staff at Washington Corrections Center for the OCO Open Hours pilot in August 2024; OCO staff meeting the Governor.



Our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Work

The OCO continues to be committed to embedding pro-equity and anti-racist policies and practices to reduce disparities and achieve equitable and just outcomes for everyone we serve. During FY 2025, the OCO PEAR team undertook several projects to ensure that this office continues to work in ways that reduce disparities and improve equitable and just outcomes for everyone in Washington. FY 2025 OCO PEAR accomplishments included:

- The OCO PEAR-CAT, **OCO's Community Advisory Team**, met regularly during FY 2025 to create foundational processes. As individuals most directly impacted by the work of the OCO, the majority of OCO's PEAR-CAT is comprised of people currently incarcerated in DOC facilities. **The OCO PEAR-CAT currently has two compensated members and plans to expand to additional DOC facilities** in FY 2026. Work of the OCO PEAR-CAT has focused on **developing an open, transparent, and equitable process for expanding the PEAR-CAT** to individuals in more facilities and possibly community partners.
- The OCO **prioritized lived experience** when convening the Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee. As of October 2025, more than one-third of Committee members were previously incarcerated. Individuals who are eligible receive community compensation for their expertise and time.

- **The OCO received the RAIN Outstanding Agency Award for the second year in a row.**

Every year, Washington state employees nominate agencies that have led the way to help create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees. The RAIN award recognizes state agencies that have worked diligently to make Washington State an Employer of Choice for LGBTQ+ individuals.



OCO staff receiving the 2024 RAIN Outstanding Agency Award.

- The OCO **Plain Talk Workgroup** collaborated to review templates for all written communication issued by the office. The Plain Talk Workgroup made extensive revisions to these documents to ensure that they are easily understandable and helpful to more populations.
- The OCO has **supported incarcerated individuals interested in creating or resuming cultural and other groups**. For instance, the OCO hosted meetings with people incarcerated at Stafford Creek who were interested in continuing the **Black Prisoner's Caucus** as well as people interested in restarting the **LGBTQ** group. Once the SCCC Alliances secured a group sponsor, OCO stepped back

and the group has been meeting regularly since. While BPC at SCCC had difficulty securing a sponsor, the OCO continued to support that group.

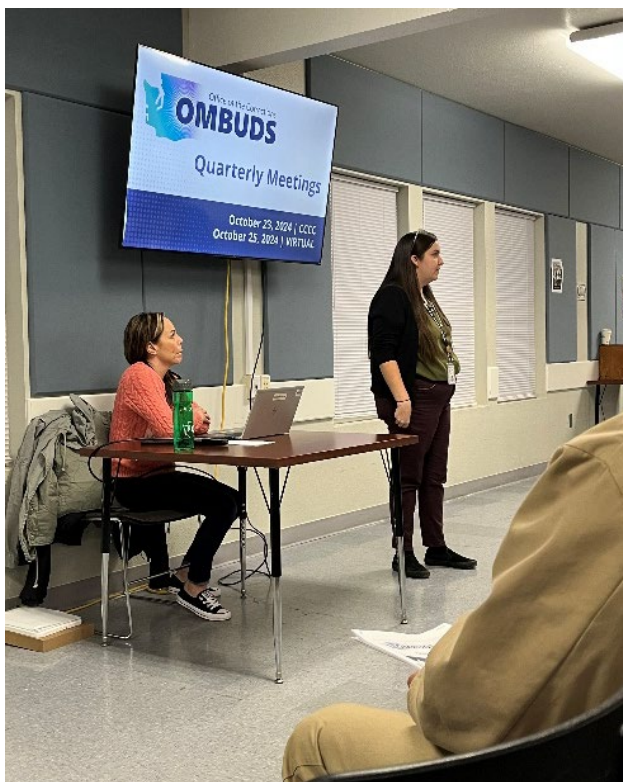
- OCO staff also attended **cultural events and Pride celebrations** at multiple prisons and shared self-advocacy information when helpful.

Community Engagement

Quarterly Meetings

During FY 2025, the office held four Quarterly Meetings for external community members and four Quarterly Meetings inside prisons for OCO's incarcerated stakeholders. Quarterly meetings in facilities typically were preceded by on-site visits to the facility to alert and inform incarcerated individuals about OCO's Quarterly Meetings and get their feedback about topics to discuss. At each event, OCO staff presented updates about the work of the office. Some meetings had an open question and answer session with all attendees, while at other meetings attendees and OCO staff divided into informal, smaller groups for questions and discussion.

The OCO worked with DOC to ensure that meeting materials were uploaded to all Securus tablets and available to review in all DOC Law Libraries. Additionally, all presentation materials are available on our public website [here](#). Additionally, to help increase incarcerated parents' awareness of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO), Director Patrick Dowd joined OCO staff at our in-prison meetings and provided self-advocacy information about OFCO services.



FY 2025 Quarterly Meeting Dates & Locations

July 18, 2024: Coyote Ridge Corrections Center

July 19, 2024: Airway Heights Corrections Center

July 26, 2024: Virtual

October 18, 2024: Cedar Creek Corrections Center

October 25, 2024: Virtual

February 21, 2025: Olympic Corrections Center
(canceled due to flu outbreak at OCC)

February 26, 2025: Virtual

April 16, 2025: Virtual

April 18, 2025: Olympic Corrections Center

OCO staff presenting past quarter data at the October 2024 Quarterly Meeting at Cedar Creek Corrections Center.

Stakeholder Input

The OCO requested feedback from community partners via online survey in September 2025. The survey was distributed to Statewide Family Council and Local Family Council members as well as the OCO distribution list, which includes nearly 600 recipients. The survey was active for 10 days and received 39 responses.

A review of survey responses identified certain common elements. Moving forward in Fiscal Year 2026, the OCO will work to address these themes and other suggestions and concerns named by respondents. What follows is a preliminary analysis of responses; **the OCO will continue to analyze and address the feedback received.**

In response to a question regarding **improving community engagement**, many respondents relayed concerns and suggestions about the Community Quarterly Meetings. Specifically:

- Need for broader publicity about the Quarterly Meetings. Ideas included providing earlier and more frequent notifications of meetings as well as posting meeting announcements in more visible places like facility visiting rooms.
- Preferences for hybrid and in-person options for these meetings.
- Desire to have respectful and collaborative meetings. These responses suggested a dislike for what one person referred to as “one-sided” updates.

Responses to a question asking for **feedback about the OCO’s work over the past year** varied.

Some respondents expressed approval:

- “WCCW investigation was impressive!”
- “Keep up the good work.”
- “Thorough, timely reports”
- “The work done is absolutely important and so much has been done as far as reviewing and investigating incidents...”

Other respondents expressed disappointment:

- “The agency needs to do more to address specific complaints and issues directly and substantively.”
- “Responses to prison issues have become unhelpful and are canned responses. There is a feeling of discouragement regarding OCO. It seems that OCO has become specialized for only life-and-death matters, which may be the way it is and has to be.”
- “It doesn’t feel useful.”

Responses specifically relating to **communication with OCO staff** varied:

- “I like when an OCO representative contacts me with questions and allows me to explain... and provide information. In the past it did not feel that way, and I appreciate the shift in allowing the stakeholders to provide information and work together to solve issues/concerns”
- “I made one complaint...to the Ombudsman and NO ONE called or contacted me.”

Multiple responses to both questions expressed an interest in the OCO **returning to workgroups** that involve community members.

Lastly, one respondent noted their **desire for OCO to improve long-term tracking**:

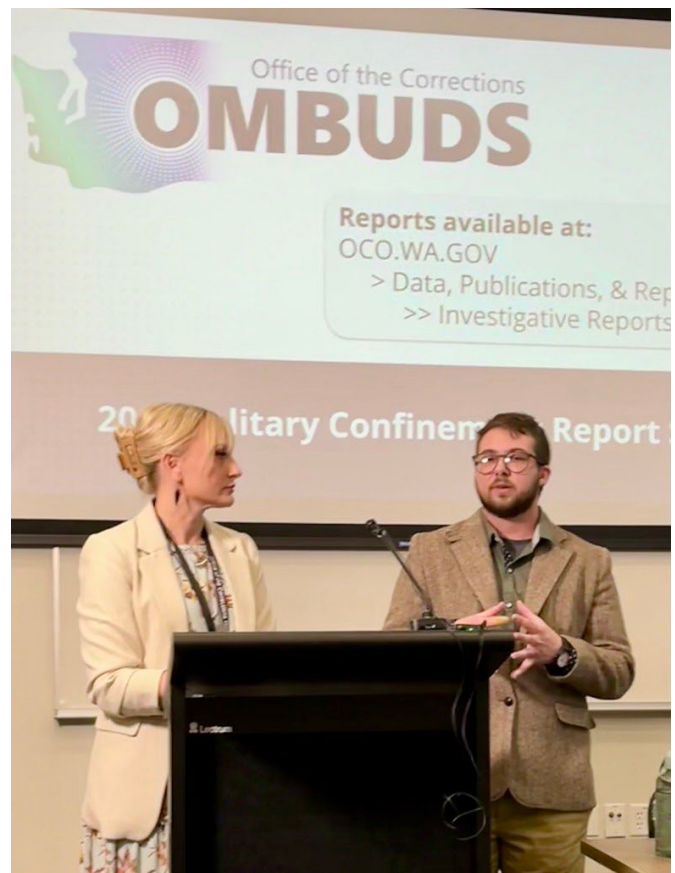
- “We are always looking for the OCO to provide more detailed long-term reporting on DOC's compliance with recommendations that DOC tends to be obstinate about. Bigger focus on tracking long-term effectiveness of the OCO's efforts.”

The OCO is extremely appreciative of the feedback received and for the opportunity to improve. All survey responses are included in Appendix A.

Increased Media Engagement

In FY 2025, OCO staff worked to increase media engagement of OCO's investigations. Examples of recent press coverage include:

- September 2024: OCO held a press conference regarding the release of the second Solitary Confinement Report.
- September 2024: OCO staff were interviewed by King 5 to address the findings of the Solitary Report Part II.
- June 2025: The lead OCO representative on the Unexpected Fatality Review Committee was interviewed by The Marshall Project for a story about deaths in custody.
- August 2025: The primary author of the report on improper uses of force at Washington Corrections Center for Women was interviewed by King 5 about the findings of that report.



OCO staff answering questions at a press conference about the release of Solitary Confinement: Part II.

Collaboration with the Correctional Association of New York

For the past two years, the OCO has partnered with the Correctional Association of New York (CANY) to compare the food and nutrition of prisons in New York to those in Washington. As part of this, the OCO hosted one of CANY's investigators to tour DOC facilities during FY 2025.

Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee

Legislation passed in 2024 updated the OCO's statute to direct to "convene an oversight committee for the purposes of expanding access to construction-related training programs in state correctional facilities, with a focus on state recognized apprenticeship preparation programs, and strengthening pathways for incarcerated persons to advance from those programs to state registered apprenticeship programs upon reentering the community."

The OCO's work to establish the framework for the Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee began July 1, 2024. An initial Project Team comprised of 12 members representing the trades, OCO, DOC, the Washington Statewide Reentry Council, and the Washington State Legislature began meeting in September 2024. During the fall and winter of 2024, the Project Team held a series of meetings to develop the committee charter, engage with stakeholders, develop an application process for appointed members, and plan the kick-off meeting. The OCO hired a contract project manager to coordinate and support the Project Team's work until a full-time Senior Strategic Projects Manager was recruited and hired in December 2024.

In February 2025, the Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee held its first meeting to introduce members, discuss the bill language, review and provide feedback on the draft charter, and establish a cadence for future meetings. The charter was ratified by unanimous vote and approved by the Office of the Corrections Ombuds in June. On October 1, 2025, the Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee presented its first report to the Legislature. That report, in addition to all meeting agendas and approved minutes, are available on the Committee's website [here](#).



Construction Training Pathways Oversight Committee members
at their first Committee meeting in February 2025.

Looking Ahead

Implementation of Community Feedback to Date (October 2025)

In 2025, after receiving feedback from community members, the OCO implemented several changes to the Community Quarterly Meetings. These changes included:

- Returning to hybrid meetings (in-person with virtual option)
- Returning to less-structured “open forum” time
- Returning to “meeting-style” instead of webinar-style Zoom meetings
- Reducing OCO presentation time and dedicating more meeting time to open forum, question/answer, public comments

In October 2025, the OCO extended the meeting time from 60 minutes to 90 minutes, as requested by meeting participants. OCO staff will continue to listen to community feedback and will continue to work to improve awareness of and participation rates for Quarterly Meetings.

Improved Community Engagement

The OCO will continue to prioritize building new and rebuilding existing relationships with community partners and stakeholders. Presently, OCO staff are planning the following actions in response to stakeholder feedback:

- Resuming regular attendance at Local Family Council meetings
- Initiating a workgroup involving community partners, DOC staff, and OCO staff to examine and problem-solve around a systemic concern
- Conducting more frequent, more informal stakeholder check-ins out in the community and/or virtually. Unlike Quarterly Meetings, these check-ins would not be recorded or televised and may not have set agendas unless requested by community. These meetings would give OCO staff and community members opportunities to connect, build trust, and provide space for OCO staff to listen to stakeholder concerns and feedback in order to be responsive to community needs.

Solitary Confinement Part III

OCO staff are committed to releasing Solitary Confinement Part III, the third and final report in the OCO’s series on Solitary Confinement, in FY 2026. This report will identify potential means of reducing the numbers of incarcerated individuals who live in solitary confinement in Washington’s prisons. OCO staff have met numerous times already with DOC leadership to flag policy and process concerns that impact individuals’ custody level and/or the conditions in which they reside. This report will make shorter- and longer-term recommendations for addressing the systemic problems underlying and associated with solitary confinement.

Food Systems Research Team Report on Therapeutic Diets

The OCO will be releasing a report detailing several concerns with DOC’s administration of therapeutic diets that OCO staff have identified through casework. This report will include recommendations for improving processes regarding therapeutic diets and related concerns.

OCO Process Changes & Updates

In recent months, the OCO has identified several changes to implement in FY 2026:

- **Monitoring Visits & Reports** – In response to stakeholders’ requests for OCO to provide the public with more information about what is happening inside facilities, the office will begin compiling brief monitoring reports following monitoring visits. An OCO staff member will be responsible for identifying needed visits and ensuring that all facilities are monitored regularly.
- **Tracking Implementation of OCO Recommendations** – Historically, due to limited resources, the OCO has not prioritized dedicating significant staff time to tracking the outcomes of OCO’s recommendations made to DOC. However, community partners have consistently asked for more or improved OCO follow up on recommendations. In light of this, during FY 2026 the OCO will be exploring methods for more thorough tracking of recommendation outcomes.
- **Updated Case Closure Reasons** – Based on feedback from incarcerated individuals and to continue to “plain talk” agency communications, the OCO updated case closure reasons for FY 26. The updated closure reasons, listed below, also align with the agency’s goal to ensure transparency in reporting.

Case Closure Reason	Meaning
Unexpected Fatality Review	The incarcerated person died unexpectedly and the death was reviewed by the Unexpected Fatality Review Committee, as required by RCW 72.09.770.
Assistance Provided	The OCO achieved full or partial resolution of the person’s complaint.
Information Provided	The OCO provided individualized self-advocacy or case-specific information.
DOC Addressed the Complaint	DOC staff addressed the concern prior to OCO action.
Insufficient Evidence to Substantiate	Available evidence was insufficient to substantiate the concern.
No Violation of DOC Policy	The OCO determined that DOC did not violate DOC policy or no applicable DOC policy existed.
Substantiated	The OCO verified the concern but was unable to achieve a resolution to the concern.
Complaint Withdrawn	The incarcerated individual did not provide permission to proceed with an investigation or asked OCO to close the complaint, or OCO staff opened the complaint in error.
Declined	The OCO declined to investigate the complaint per WAC 138-10-040(3).
No Jurisdiction	The complaint did not meet OCO’s jurisdictional requirements set forth in RCW 43.06C.040(2)(e).
Technical Assistance Provided	The OCO provided general self-advocacy information to resolve the concern through a DOC process prior to OCO involvement.

Our Staff

Sara Appleton

Quality Assurance and Training Manager

Heather Bates

Administrative Services Manager

Nicholas Brock

Senior Strategic Project Manager

Jon-Ann Deleon-Guerrero

Intake Specialist

Carmen Donovan

Executive Assistant

Elisabeth Kingsbury, JD

Acting Director

Zachary Kinneman, JD

Community Relations Specialist

Jacob Marley

Early Resolution Ombuds 1

Jessica Means

Records Specialist

Finn Schinnick

Early Resolution Ombuds 2

Angee Schrader

Senior Corrections Ombuds – Investigations

David Skattebo

Early Resolution Ombuds 1

Stella Spracklin

Assistant Corrections Ombuds – Resolutions

Madison Vinson, JD

Assistant Corrections Ombuds – Policy

Ollie Webb, M.E.S

Assistant Corrections Ombuds – Investigations



OCO and OFCO staff at Olympic Corrections Center for the April 2025 Quarterly Meeting.

Fiscal Year 2025 OCO Feedback Survey

39 Responses 04:46 Average time to complete Closed Status

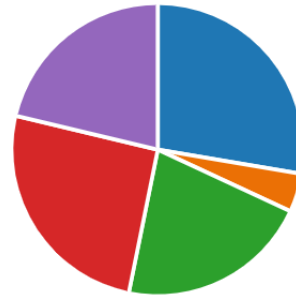
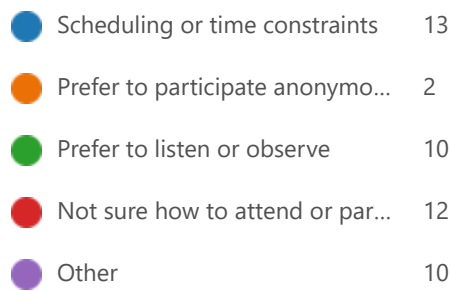
1. Every three months, the OCO holds one stakeholder meeting inside a prison and one stakeholder meeting for community members. How often do you attend the OCO's Community Quarterly Meetings?



2. Community stakeholders are invited to participate in Quarterly Meetings by submitting questions or comments ahead of time or speaking during the meeting. Do you participate in Quarterly Meetings?



3. What barriers prevent you from attending or participating in OCO quarterly meetings?



4. What suggestions do you have for the OCO to improve community engagement?

39
Responses

Latest Responses

"I think putting out some sort of a newsletter or sorts that ...

"To start responding to complaints made against correctio...

"Doing great"

5. Please provide feedback about the OCO's work over the past year. What has worked well and what suggestions do you have for improvement?

39
Responses

Latest Responses

"I have really enjoyed the information being brought to th...

"You can improve by checking your correction officer's "

"None"



What barriers prevent you from attending or participating in OCO quarterly meetings?

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Prefer to listen or observe;

Temporarily in another state;

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Scheduling or time constraints;

attitudes by staff at meetings. it is obvious the do not want to be there.;

Scheduling or time constraints;

Lack of relevance and meaning;

Not sure how to attend or participate; Scheduling or time constraints;

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Not sure how to attend or participate; Prefer to participate anonymously;

Not sure how to attend or participate;

Prefer to listen or observe;

Scheduling or time constraints; Prefer to listen or observe;

Scheduling or time constraints;

Scheduling or time constraints;

Gatekept format ;

Prefer to listen or observe;

Scheduling or time constraints;

Scheduling or time constraints;

Prefer to listen or observe;

Don't always know when they are;

Too shy to participate. Get tongue-tied when I do. ;

Prefer to listen or observe

Not sure how to attend or participate; Scheduling or time constraints

Scheduling or time constraints

Not sure how to attend or participate

Not sure how to attend or participate

I had no idea these meetings happen

Scheduling or time constraints; Prefer to listen or observe; Some issues need to be discussed to come up with a solution. Listening and then emailing suggestions often works for those of us you like to think though a problem and then offer alternative solutions.

Prefer to listen or observe; As an advocacy org I feel I have other access to the ombuds office or DOC and do not want to take time away from community stakeholders and families who do not have other access points to ask questions, etc.

Scheduling or time constraints

Scheduling or time constraints; Prefer to participate anonymously

Not sure how to attend or participate

Prefer to listen or observe

Live in another state

Prefer to listen or observe

What suggestions do you have for the OCO to improve community engagement?

Return staff bios with emails to website

Community engagement would improve dramatically if there was an underlying belief in the OCO's ability to effect change within DOC. While I believe in the OCO's commitment to their work, without enforcement authority the DOC mostly ignores their recommendations.

Cover issues that are important to incarcerated

Ensure that the scope of your work affects the largest percentage of prisoners to keep their community supports engaged. There have been times the OCO has focused excessively on issues related to transgender prisoners, which are such an incredibly small percentage of the overall prison population that this alienates the majority of prisoners' community support and causes the OCO to lose credibility in their eyes.

I appreciate the hybrid meetings, this makes it easier to attend even to just watch. If there are materials available it'd be nice to have a download pdf file or similar so while on hybrid anyone could download and follow along.

A fair response in a timely manner

Let it be a true collaborative not an update that feels one sided

In person meetings

Communication of these meetings, accessibility.

I don't think enough people know about it.

None

More publicity about what can be accomplished

I believe it is so important to treat people with kindness and respect and have found the meetings held by the State and the Prison facility does not follow this which is why i do not attend. So my suggestion is to make sure that those running these meetings treat the public and stakeholders with respect and kindness. It is okay to ask questions and disagree with those running things.

Make the process more accessible to a wider section of the community. Publicize meetings and schedules more widely across various platforms.

No Budget cuts to your organization or other OMBUDSMAN agencies

There used to be work groups that included community members, especially those who had loved ones in prison. The work groups addressed specific issues, such as postsecondary education. To my knowledge, there are no attempts to engage community persons who have loved ones in prison in active problem-solving workgroups. Volunteers on work groups kept issues alive and community engaged. It's all nicely organized, but it seems to have lost its heart in the process. OCO has lost its relevance.

I'm not sure how often I get email notifications. Would it be possible to post meeting announcements at the different facility visiting rooms? If you set the dates at the beginning of the year, you could post them at each facility just once and you wouldn't have to re-post unless a meeting was rescheduled

Speaking loudly about the issues that are happening in Washington State DOC, (regarding the deaths and lack of access to mental and physical health care. Giving direction/suggestions of how the community partners can really help in moving forth steps you cannot do. (we know your limitations)

Deal with REAL issues, stay neutral. Don't do the governors bidding.

How do we advocate for improvement in mental health services and education/training?

none

Make notice of the meetings more widely distributed. Have particular topics for each meeting.

Send out notifications before quarterly meetings

N/A
None
none
Provide resources for reentry programs and community supervision
N/A
No suggestions.
NA
talk to staff about the real issues in prisons.
Not sure. We did not know about this program until 2 years ago even though we had family members who had been incarcerated in Washington State. Maybe letting family member know about the work and what specifically you can help with.
Workgroups on specific issues that engaged family and stakeholders were useful in the past (grievance workgroup, etc). Also, changing the statute to allow the OCO to provide folks with a copy of their case file (especially DOC records and correspondence with DOC from OCO) would help demonstrate how extensive some of OCO's investigations are. And I would love to see an advisory council, particularly one that has a large number of currently incarcerated folks, to help guide OCO priorities.
I was unaware the meetings were held at prisons. Knowing the location several months in advance could help me be there in person.
Mindful of the majority of stakeholders work at other jobs and it is difficult to attend meetings. I try to attend via zoom when possible.
I have no idea how to participate or attend, but I would love to!
Doing great
To start responding to complaints made against correctional officer 's
I think putting out some sort of a newsletter or sorts that you send to your distribution list, that more closely illustrates the successful work of your office each month. I know it is a practice to highlight stories in the quarterly meetings, but not everyone attends those. I think if your office could put together a monthly highlights newsletter that would be sent out in some high-level detail and show some of the successes individually as an office or in collaboration with work within DOC.

Please provide feedback about the OCO's work over the past year. What has worked well and what suggestions do you have for improvement?

Wccw investigation was impressive!

I think the work the OCO does is important but impotent.

Very hard to know what is happening with workgroups or give input to investigations during or after

We are always looking for the OCO to provide more detailed long-term reporting on DOC's compliance with recommendations that DOC tends to be obstinate about. Bigger focus on tracking long-term effectiveness of the OCO's efforts.

The work done is absolutely important and so much has been done as far as reviewing and investigating incidents, the suggestion for improvement is admirable but should not end there. The incidents that seem to repeat several times in the same place should have a very different response with actual repercussions that encourages change not just a talk and a short reeducation maybe fines suspension or termination may be more fitting and sometimes charges holding them accountable for their actions.

A fair response in a timely manner could use improvement.

It doesn't feel useful. Just like family council ot doesn't seem to require any real accountability for priblems

Keep up the good work. You need to focus on the fact that over long sentences without rehabilitation or parole produce bitter and angry individuals. Without parole what is the motivation to change?

I don't know enough about the OCO's work to provide sufficient feedback.

I think there should be a better way for inmates to contact you. When my son was in solitary confinement it was impossible for him to reach you.

None

Not sure

I made one complaint/corn to the Ombudsman and NO ONE called or contacted me. Instead some very rude man called my loved one and treated him with extreme disrespect insinuating that we should not have complained as the facility he is in is the best in the state. WHAT?? Wrong doing is wrong doing regardless of what the Ombuds staff think about it.

The boilerplate responses to valid complaints are ineffective and inappropriate. The agency needs to do more to address specific complaints and issues directly and substantively.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

I have recommended OCO to imprisoned individuals to address concerns, but the responses I have gotten is that their concerns are not a priority so why bother. Responses to prison issues have become unhelpful and are canned responses. There is a feeling of discouragement regarding OCO. It seems that OCO has become specialized for only life-and-death matters, which may be the way it is and has to be. Many times, there are no OCO forms available or clear instructions on how to send in complaints.

I personally have not talked to anyone who has had a successful contact with OCO in the last couple of years. The telephone meetings under the previous director often resulted in lively discussions with multiple people chiming in on the same topic, demonstrating that certain issues are very widespread, and resulting in a brainstorming of ideas shared with everyone. I have not seen the same lively give and take of ideas since

Asking the governor to allow you to have more authority to enforce the summaries of the complaints from all the DOC institutions. To many deaths and suicides. Thank you

WCCW report was thorough. But it went nowhere

I don't know

none
N/A
I received 1 notification of meeting. Need more
I like when an OCO representative contacts me with questions and allows me to explain the situation and provide information. In the past it did not feel that way, and I appreciate the shift in allowing the stakeholders to provide information and work together to solve issues/concerns
None
Thorough, timely reports
prison system seems to work great, would like to see same system for those who remain in the jurisdiction of the agency after release from prison (partial confinement/community supervision)
N/A
Based on my involvement with the OCO, I feel that they have been responsive to the needs of persons housed at WCCW. I do not have any suggestions for improvement. Potentially more involvement/interaction with online staff may help foster trust between employees and the OCO?
not sure, not aware..
Hold leadership accountable for not holding line staff accountable for behavior issues.
We worked with the OCO when my son was in prison. It seemed like it took along time for anything to happen. He had medical needs that needed to be met. This was a new diagnosis and his mobility along with his cognitive abilities had been effected. When some one inside is in a survival mode the expiation of the process and numerous forms to be filled out seems overwhelming and they often give up.
I like the annual UFR report that consolidates all the findings for the past year. I am not sure how many folks look at the monthly report out of cases that have been resolved but I care more about systemic/ issue reports (and suspect the monthly reports take a lot of time). I think increased hotline hours would be great to increase capacity to address individual issues.
I'm new and don't have the information/experience to make an informed statement.
The fact that I.I. are still having to deal with sub-human grade foods and less medical care that is even given by vets to animals is a GREAT CONCERN. You can not change people's perspective about prisons without positive reporting of change.
N/A
None
You can improve by checking your correction officer's
I have really enjoyed the information being brought to the DOC liaison team when your office is finding barriers. It is a highlight of our work to be able to assist in pushing important things through the finish line for the facilities or the agency that others may not have the resource to fully investigate or pursue. I would love to do more of that collaborative work together.



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

October 30, 2025

Elisabeth Kingsbury, Acting Director
Office of the Corrections Ombuds
128 10th Ave. SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Acting Director Kingsbury:

Thank you for sharing a draft of the Office of the Corrections Ombuds Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report. As I have mentioned before, the oversight your office provides makes the Department of Corrections better.

Operating prisons is challenging work. Our staff not only provides opportunities for people to become better neighbors upon release, but they also are required to manage the risks presented by individuals who choose to engage in violence and other dangerous behaviors while incarcerated. Having an independent agency available to investigate claims of mistreatment helps ensure we are abiding by policy and living up to our commitment to operate a safe and humane corrections system.

Moving forward, the Department of Corrections is committed to working through the recommendations identified in the report. It is important to us that the report reflect the efforts made to adopt and implement Office of the Corrections Ombuds recommendations, even if the recommendation is identified as “in progress” or “unresolved.” I understand our teams are coming together to provide clarity in that regard, so that we may share meaningful updates and realign the recommendations to allow for measurable endings and completions.

Thank you for the time and effort your office continues to commit to the incarcerated population and the community.

Sincerely,

Tim Lang
Secretary

cc: Jeri Boe, Assistant Secretary, Men's Prison Division
Dr. MaryAnn Curl, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Corrections
Dave Flynn, Assistant Secretary, Department of Corrections
Nate Olson, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor
Paige Perkinson, Correctional Operations Program Manager, Department of Corrections