

**OCO Monitoring Visit to Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women  
Conducted by Angee Schrader, Assistant Ombuds- Gender Equity and Reentry and  
Carolina Landa- Early Resolution Manager**

**Background**

- The Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) received numerous concerns regarding the Department of Correction's (DOC) response to COVID-19. Additionally, OCO received several requests to enter DOC facilities and perform monitoring visits. For the above reasons, on May 15, 2020, OCO Assistant Ombuds-Gender Equity & Reentry Specialist Angee Schrader and OCO Early Resolution Manager Carolina Landa conducted a monitoring visit to Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW). The purpose of the visit was to observe MCCCW's response to COVID-19.

**Executive Summary/Key Findings**

- Throughout the OCO monitoring visit, normal interactions were observed between DOC staff and incarcerated individuals. The overall atmosphere among DOC staff and the incarcerated population appeared standard. Incarcerated individuals and DOC staff were all masked and practicing social distancing. Some incarcerated individuals were playing cards, watching TV and using J-Pay. The tier reps are meeting daily with their CUS in each unit.
- The facility appeared clean and orderly. Porters were observed cleaning throughout the facility. Bottles of Hepastat and heavy-duty cleaner were observed widely available throughout the facility. Bleach was available upon request at the officer station in two of the three units. Bear Unit had a cleaning schedule listed on the dry erase board. The monitoring team was told by the incarcerated population that Bear and Mission Units are deep cleaning twice a shift with Gold Unit deep cleaning once a shift.
- OCO staff observed 100% compliance with DOC staff wearing face coverings (fabric cloth coverings, surgical masks, etc.) and 100% compliance with the incarcerated population wearing face coverings. The incarcerated population was given two masks each and the authorization to make more. They are allowed to wash them in the sink or in laundry. They were all given free antibacterial soap. Hand sanitizer is located in the gym and periodically in pill line and mainline.
- While two out of the three units have been able to lower the population and socially distance (Bear and Gold), the Mission Unit that houses Therapeutic Community has steadily stayed at a high capacity. When someone exits the program, their place is immediately filled. To attempt to socially distance, this unit has converted the visitation room and a large programming room into a dorm like setting.

- DOC staff has tried to keep morale high among the incarcerated population by providing different extra activities. They have added trivia games and bingo with the opportunity to win small prizes and brought in ice cream, popcorn and popsicles to distribute on different days of the week. All of the population is allowed to participate in this.
- The incarcerated population is not allowed to eat canteen in the dayrooms. They must eat the canteen food items in their rooms. DOC staff relayed this is because they do not want the incarcerated to take their masks off in the dayroom. The incarcerated do, however, take their masks off to eat in the dining hall.
- OCO staff asked if there were any infractions or behavioral observations being written for the population not wearing masks or adhering to social distancing. The answer from both DOC staff and the population was no. OCO was informed the Superintendent has specifically requested that the population should only be reminded if found not following social distancing and/or PPE guidelines.

### **Statutory Authority**

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

### **Observations**

#### ***Entrance***

- At the main entrance of MCCCW, DOC staff read and asked the screening questions. After answering no to all questions, temperature was taken by DOC staff. After passing the temperature check, the monitoring team observed the officer sanitize the thermometer between screenings. All DOC staff were observed wearing face coverings and the officer doing the screening was also wearing gloves and standing behind a clear plastic-like barrier. (Appendix A, Photo A and Photo B).

#### ***Main Facility***

- OCO observed COVID-19 posted DOC memos, health-safety information posters, and reminders to staff and incarcerated population throughout the facility in both English and Spanish. DOC staff were observed wearing face coverings and additional PPEs throughout the facility, both inside and outside of buildings. Porters were observed cleaning. (Appendix A, Photo C and D)

#### **Mission Creek Unit**

- Mission Creek Unit is home to the Therapeutic Community which is a substance use disorder program. All DOC staff inside the unit were observed wearing masks and the incarcerated population in common areas were wearing masks. Due to the size of this unit social distancing is extremely difficult. Currently DOC is housing

three to a room and have created a dorm like setting in the visitation room and programming room. The women in those rooms are volunteers. The incarcerated population voiced frustration over the size of the unit. Every time someone graduates or leaves the program they are quickly replaced with another person. Current capacity is at 81, at least 15-20 more than the other two units. Inside the unit, COVID-19 posters were visible in the dayroom in English and Spanish. The housing unit appeared clean and soap and water were available in the restrooms. Hand sanitizer was not available. Hepastat, heavy duty cleaner and clean rags were available in the unit. The hot shot in the visitation room downstairs is broken so the women must go upstairs and still share the common area. The women housed in the visitation room do have their own TV. One part of the Mission Unit was taken off quarantine last week, resulting in no one on quarantine on the unit. The monitoring team was told by the population that most staff are supportive and the CUS makes announcements frequently with COVID-19 information. Information is posted above the phones with OCO's hotline, PREA hotline, and Victim Advocate information (Appendix A, Photo E and F).

#### Bear Unit

- Staff and the incarcerated population were observed wearing masks. The day room chairs were socially distanced. Hepastat and heavy-duty cleaner were observed with clean rags. Soap and water were available in the restrooms. Bleach is located behind the desk and available upon request. Cleaning supplies such as brooms and mops were available. COVID-19 and social distancing flyers were posted in both English and Spanish. The cleaning schedule was located on the dry erase board. The living units are mostly two per room; however, the CUS did say once a few more people leave next week all rooms will be down to two. Normal capacity is four per room. No one was currently on quarantine. The monitoring team was told by the population that all staff in Bear have been extremely supportive. Hand sanitizer is not available. DOC relayed that there are no maintenance issues. OCO posters were not observed however plaques above the phone were. (Appendix A, Photo G, H, I,)

#### Gold Unit

- Inside the unit, they had a COVID-19 dedicated poster wall. Information was in English and Spanish. The housing unit appeared very clean. Dayroom chairs were socially distanced. Hepastat and heavy-duty cleaner were observed with clean rags. Bleach was kept in a room behind the officer's desk, but the monitoring team was told by the population that they are not allowed to use it. No hand sanitizer was available. They currently have two broken toilets in the unit. No one in the unit was on quarantine. The incarcerated population informed the monitoring team that they do not feel that all staff is supportive in this unit and named a specific staff member that yells and uses inflammatory language. This was information given from multiple incarcerated individuals in the unit. OCO

posters were not observed however plaques above the phones were. (Appendix A, Photo J and K)

#### Kitchen Area

- Social distancing is difficult in a small commercial kitchen with many incarcerated individuals and DOC staff working in tight spaces. All DOC staff and incarcerated individuals were observed wearing face coverings and, while preparing and serving food, were observed wearing hair nets and gloves. The dining hall has four seats to a table but they are only utilizing two in order to promote social distancing. Each unit is brought in separately. There are social distance stickers in the dining hall to create space between each person in the food line; the monitoring team was told that had been placed there only the day before. (Appendix A, Photo L, M and N)

#### Medical Clinic

- Mission Creek is a camp so the clinic is very small. Any one with major medical concerns would be sent back to Washington Corrections Center for Women. In the waiting area the seats were socially distanced apart. Only two people are brought into the clinic at a time to limit potential infection. Medical staff verified they did have three Covid-19 tests available for use; however, they do not test there and would send someone back to Washington Corrections Center for Women for a test. Medical staff was observed wearing PPE. The monitoring team did not see hand sanitizer available for the population. (Appendix A, Photo O and P)

#### Gym

- Hepastat and heavy-duty cleaners were observed at the entrance to the gym. COVID-19 flyers were posted in English and Spanish. Hand Sanitizer was located and available for use in front of the Recreation Specialist's office. The gym was closed during our visit due to mainline. (Appendix A, Photo Q and R)

#### Warehouse

- The monitoring team toured this area. Nobody at the time was working due to mainline. The monitoring team was told only three people are in the warehouse at a time and bleach cleaner is available in the office. PPE is required.

#### Yard

- The monitoring team walked through the yard and observed multiple flyer reminders for social distancing. (Appendix A, Photo S)

#### ***Tier Rep Meetings (Mission, Gold, Bear)***

- The monitoring team met with all tier reps from the facility. Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication and the team was not able to attend the tier rep meeting with DOC

staff but instead met with them alone. Seats were arranged to provide social distancing in a large room. They provided both positive and negative information. They said the population was starting to acclimate to the new normal. They feel that they are updated often by their CUS about what is happening with Covid-19 outside of the facility. (Appendix A, Photo T).

## Appendix A

**Photo A**

**Description:** Entry DOC staff with screening questions, touchless temperature gun, and standing behind protective barrier.



**Photo B**

**Description:** DOC staff observed sanitizing thermometer in between use at entry.





**Photo C**

**Description:** Porter observed cleaning in the main building.



**Photo D**

**Description:** Porter observed cleaning in the main building.





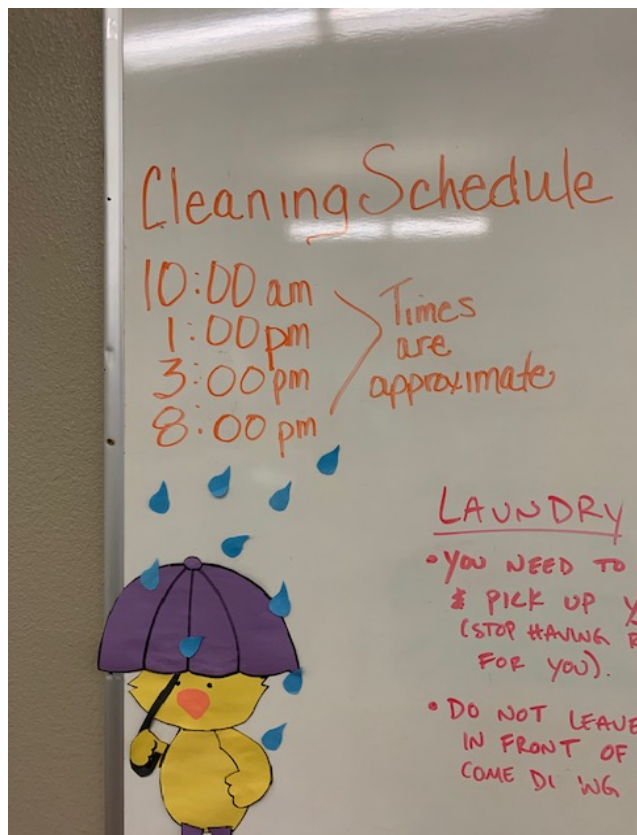
**Photo E**

**Description:** Visitation room turned into dorm for Mission Creek Unit.



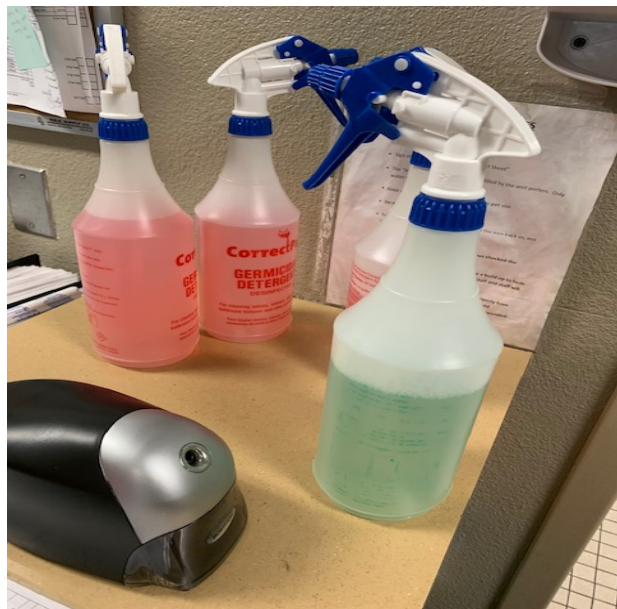
**Photo F**

**Description:** OCO plaque above telephone in Mission Unit.



**Photo G**

**Description:** Cleaning schedule posted on dry erase board in Bear Unit.



**Photo H**

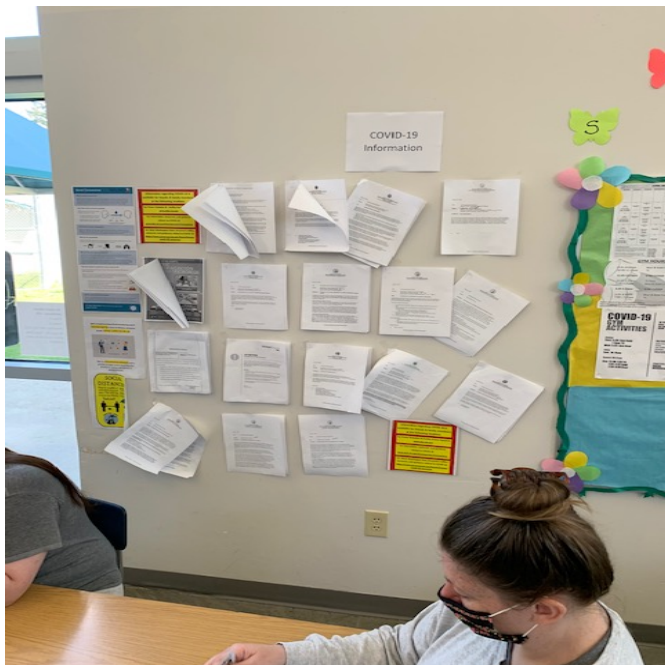
**Description:** Cleaning supplies available in Bear Unit



**Photo I**

**Description:** Dayroom Bear Unit.





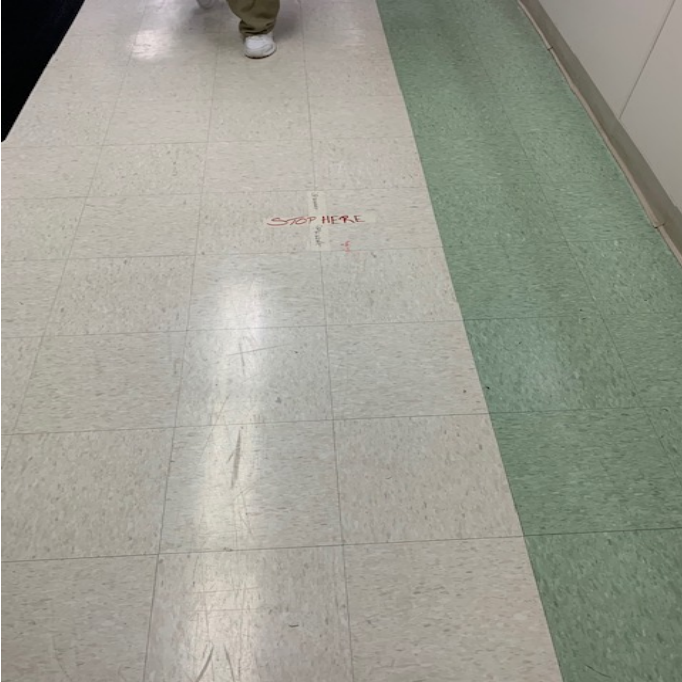
**Photo J**

**Description:** Covid-19 informational wall in Gold Unit.



**Photo K**

**Description:** Dayroom in Gold Unit.



**Photo L**

**Description:** Social Distance tape on lunchroom floor in the food line.



**Photo M**

**Description:** Dining Hall with 2 per table.



**Photo N**

**Description:** Kitchen workers during lunch mainline.



**Photo O**

**Description:** Medical Clinic waiting area.





**Photo P**

**Description:** Three unused Covid-19 tests.



**Photo Q**

**Description:** Cleaner available in gym.



**Photo R**

**Description:** Hand Sanitizer in the Gym outside of the Recreation Specialist's Office.



**Photo S**

**Description:** Social distance signs posted outside.





**Photo T**

**Description:** Tier rep meeting while socially distancing.



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

May 21, 2020

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

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to respond to the 'OCO Monitoring Visit to Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women' report completed by the Office of Corrections Ombuds (OCO).

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

We also appreciate your team's understanding of the unique implementation across facilities and the addition of policies and procedures being put in place to protect our populations. The facility will continue to consider ways to enhance physical distancing between the women incarcerated at the facility as well ways to proactively implement any further precautionary measures as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. Moving forward, Washington Department of Corrections will continue to collaborate with the Office of the Corrections Ombuds on any future quality assurance visits.

Sincerely,

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

Steve Sinclair, Secretary  
Washington Department of Corrections

*"Working Together for SAFER Communities"*