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Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC)
July 2026 Site Tour Observations
Date of Report: August 7, 2026

On Thursday, July 9, 2026, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC) collectively as a group. The tour included three of the five Commissioners – Chair Patterson, Commissioner Torney, and Commissioner Ibarra– in addition to staff.

Meeting with Warden John Schell

The Commission and Representatives had the opportunity to meet with the OCCC Warden at the beginning of the tour.

Upon asking about the status of contact visits, the Commission was told that contact visits are not approved at the Department level, so only non-contact visits are currently available.

This year, during the 2026 annual tour, the Warden reported an average of approximately 40 vacancies due to restricting overtime during any given shift, resulting in closing an average of approximately 22 black posts per shift because of call outs. The Warden reported that housing units requiring three ACOs on post due to the occupants' security classification are further limited to out-of-cell time due to vacancies. The short and long-term impacts of trauma experienced by people in custody are also a concern given the conditions of confinement created by extended lockdowns.

The Commission is deeply concerned regarding the lack of out-of-cell time for those in custody and views the relationship between restricting overtime and population management as a serious management failure on the Department level. Many of the solutions and recommendations that the Commission has put forward previously cannot be implemented at the facility level but must be implemented at the Department level.

Module 7

Module 7 contains 12 cells and has a rated capacity of 24 people in custody under general-population standards.

At the time of observation, all people in custody were in lockdown due to staffing shortages, though full access was provided to conduct interviews. The ACO on post had started a second shift, and was on course to be on post for a total of 16 hours.

One cell was observed to have four people assigned. People in custody reported that dayroom activities included television access and the ability to contact family members or attorneys through tablets. Several individuals noted concerns about limited tablet availability and inconsistent access depending on the shift. Outdoor recreation was reported to be available on a regular basis. Additional feedback included concerns that meal portion sizes were small.

People in custody also shared that visitation opportunities are often limited to Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and that family members traveling from neighboring islands may only receive 15-minute visits. They reported that, when visitations are canceled, notification is not consistently provided.

Several people in custody also compared the facility's commissary services to those at Saguaro Correctional Facility, stating that Saguaro allegedly offers more protein options.

Medical Unit/Infirmary

A supervising nurse reported that the medical unit has 12 Registered Nurse (RN) positions, with 10 currently filled, and five Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) positions, with two filled. One LPN is currently on workers' compensation. With a facility population of 911 on the day of the visit, the staffing levels represent approximately one RN for every 91 people in custody and one LPN for every 455 people in custody, underscoring the significant workload carried by the medical unit. Supervisory staff reported that daily medical encounters average roughly 230, and daily intakes average around 10, with increases to 20–30 intakes on Mondays and after holidays.

Supervisory staff reported also reported that staffing varies by shift: when fully staffed, the day shift (0600–1430) is staffed with seven nurses; when fully staffed, the evening shift (1400–2230) is staffed with seven nurses on Mondays and after holidays, six nurses Tuesday through Friday, and five nurses on weekends and holidays when there are no Intakes; when fully staffed, the night shift (2200–0630) is staffed with two nurses.

Both the day and night shifts are reported to sometimes operate one to two nurses short due to vacancies. The pool of available agency nurses has also been affected. The agency nurse contract was briefly discontinued between May 2025 and August 2025, which reportedly depleted the previously reliable pool of agency nurses. After reinstatement, many of the assigned agency nurses were unfamiliar with the medical unit's operations and required additional supervision. Agency nurses may only cover staffing gaps and cannot fill vacant positions when current staff are not available for their shift (sick leave, vacation leave, family medical leave, worker's comp).

The Department is implementing a new medical records system (FUSION), which did not include migration of data from the prior system. As a result, medical staff must access the older system when individuals with previous incarceration histories are re-admitted.

No people in custody were observed in the infirmary area, which is small and generally avoided for routine use. The restroom within the infirmary area was recently renovated.

Module 20

Module 20 has a capacity of 80, with 55 people in custody assigned at the time of the visit. Forty-five individuals were actively employed in the community, and ten were in the pre-furlough stage participating in orientation and job-search activities.

People in custody who were available for interviews reported that the assigned case manager Scott Whitney was very helpful in connecting them to community resources such as assistance with birth certificates, state identification cards, bus passes, and similar needs. Referral agencies identified by people in custody included Waikiki Health Center, the Division of Motor Vehicles, Parents and Children Together (PACT), and the Honolulu Community Action Program (HCAP), among others.

Two newly transferred individuals were observed in the orientation phase, each wearing an ankle monitor. One individual reported being incarcerated for 18 years, with transfers from a mainland contract facility to a Hawai'i facility and subsequently to another state facility. According to the individual, the most recent transfer was linked to a urine test that was considered "too clean," a concern previously raised by others. This allegation involves an assumption that excessive water consumption is used to dilute urine samples, though this reasoning is unclear given that some facilities emphasize hydration as part of daily work requirements per policy.

The second newly transferred individual reported 29 years of incarceration, including extended periods in mainland contract facilities. Both individuals reported involvement in religious programming during incarceration and stated that these experiences supported their personal growth. Their interactions with Commissioners were positive and constructive.

Module 20 consists of two open dorms connected to a shared dayroom. At the time of observation, one of the two bathrooms did not have hot water, resulting in all people in custody using the showers in the functioning bathroom. Water pooling was observed on the floor in that area.

People in custody assigned to Laumaka later mentioned that Module 20 houses individuals convicted of sex offenses; this information could not be verified during the visit. If confirmed, sex-offense-specific treatment services should be available within Module 20.

The Commission counted at least six mail drop boxes in the module, some designated for social-service staff, that were secured with padlocks. The Commission has previously reported on the safety concerns associated with the use of padlocks in correctional facilities and recommended discontinuing their use due to the potential risk they pose as improvised weapons. The Commission recognizes that, given the age and physical limitations of the facility, certain gates and entryways have few viable alternatives for secure closure. However, the Commission observed at least one mailbox in the module that was secured with a standard key lock, indicating that installing additional mailboxes that do not require padlocks is feasible.

Kitchen

The kitchen is an area where the age of the facility is particularly apparent. The condition of the walls, floors, and ceiling is significantly deteriorated, with visible mold on portions of the ceiling

and missing tiles on both the walls and floor. These conditions are not due to neglect but attributed to the constant heat generated during food preparation rather than a lack of upkeep. Despite these challenges, staff and assigned workers consistently maintain cleanliness in food-preparation areas.

Since the previous site visit, the dishwasher has been replaced, although the current model is smaller than the original. Several pieces of kitchen equipment are not aligned with the volume of meals required each day. The kitchen does not have steamers; instead, kettles are used for rice and other foods prepared in water. The refrigerator within the kitchen was operating at the appropriate temperature, while additional refrigerators and freezers were located in a secured area that was not accessible for temperature verification.

The Kitchen Administrator reports that repairs to the kitchen's roof and ventilation are expected to be complete within the next 3 months, which will hopefully address ongoing mold issues that the Commission has previously reported.

Module 2

While walking past the module, the Commission observed from the exterior of Module 2 that several upstairs windows were completely obstructed by what appeared to be roofing material positioned between the window openings and the exterior security bars, limiting occupants' access to natural light.

The Commission was previously informed that these windows had been blocked to comply with sight-and-sound restrictions associated with housing men and women in the same facility. Now that women have been relocated to WCCC, the Commission does not understand why these barriers remain in place.

According to ACA Standard 4-ALDF-1A-16, all rooms or cells housing people in custody must provide access to natural light through at least three square feet of transparent glazing, with an additional two square feet required for rooms or cells housing three or more individuals. In alignment with this standard, the Commission recommends that OCCC conduct a facility-wide review to identify any materials obstructing natural light in housing units and remove any barriers that limit natural light for occupants.

Module 1

Module 1 has 24 cells with a rated capacity of 48, and 36 people in custody were reported at the time of the visit. Of these, six were assigned to the work line, four were on suicide watch, two were on safety watch, and 19 were housed due to mental-health needs. Module 1 serves as the primary unit for individuals requiring mental-health care or heightened observation through suicide or safety watch placements.

During the tour, the Commission observed four people on suicide watch housed together in a single cell. All appeared to be sleeping, and when in a prone position, the individuals collectively occupied nearly the entire floor space. Two additional suicide-watch cells in the module did not appear to be in use at the time of observation.

Laumaka

Laumaka consists of three residential buildings and a program/dining building, with a rated capacity of 96. Thirty-five people in custody were housed there at the time of the visit, and Building 1 was undergoing renovation.

Building 2 was visited, where several people in custody were present in the dayroom. It appeared that all individuals assigned to this building were employed in the community, with work schedules varying by employer; one individual, for example, reported working a 4:00 a.m. to noon shift at a restaurant in Waikīkī. People in custody were relaxed and engaged positively during interactions.

The need for renovations was clear. Window louvers were missing throughout Building 2, and no screens were installed. The walls and floors showed signs of significant wear and appeared dingy. A bedroom on the second floor was observed to be comfortable in size, although the furniture showed noticeable wear. The second-floor bathroom did not have hot water available in the shower, and residents had improvised a system by attaching a hose to a sink and extending it over the shower wall to allow access to hot water.

The Commission recommends that Laumaka install a dedicated ice machine for the facility to ensure a consistent supply of ice for drinking water and cooling needs. Additionally, the Commission recommends that each housing unit be equipped with microwaves, ice boxes, and fresh drinking water sources such as coolers with ice water or water dispensers. These measures would support temperature regulation, promote occupant comfort, and contribute to maintaining a stable correctional environment appropriate for a minimum-custody facility.

Follow-up on Previous Commission Recommendations

The Commission made the following recommendations following the HCSOC September 2025 tour, which have not yet been implemented. The Commission continues to recommend the following:

1) Allow for Natural Light by Removing Wood Covering from all Cell Windows

The Commission recommends that OCCC conduct a facility-wide review to identify and remove any materials obstructing natural light from entering housing-unit windows. Although some obstructions have been previously removed, others remain in place and continue to limit access to natural light. According to ACA Standard 4-ALDF-1A-16, all rooms or cells housing people in custody must provide access to natural light through at least three square feet of transparent glazing, with an additional two square feet required for rooms or cells housing three or more individuals. Ensuring full compliance with these standards is particularly important as OCCC moves toward ACA accreditation.

2) Restoration of Contact Visits

OCCC has not offered in-person contact visits for five years, initially due to COVID-19. Extensive research underscores the importance and rehabilitative benefits of contact visits for those in custody, as these visits allow individuals to maintain closer connections with their loved ones and communities. The Commission therefore continues to recommend OCCC reinstate contact visits.

3) Expand Programming Opportunities

People in custody at OCCC have too much idle time and limited access to programming, including cultural, education, and reentry preparation. The Commission recommends expanding programming opportunities and community partnerships to reduce idle time and increase programming opportunities. While the facility has made some progress in this area, it is essential to continue and be innovative (even within limited space) to support people in custody and gain community support and trust.

4) Expand Furlough Utilization at OCCC

Although OCCC has the highest furlough participation and occupancy rate in comparison to the other three jails, there is still opportunity to increase furlough participation at OCCC. Identifying and addressing the roadblocks to furlough is crucial to allow more individuals to benefit from these programs and move through the correctional system. The Commission recommends that DCR assess, identify, and resolve systemic issues around furlough participation. The Commission would like to see furlough occupancy rates near 100% as it significantly increases the chances of success post-release.

5) Install Shade for Recreation Cages in the Holding Unit

The Commission did not have time to check

The recreation area outside the Holding Unit consists of individual cages, which currently lack shaded areas to protect people in custody from the sun. The Commission recommends installing shade structures, even tarps, to provide protection from sun exposure.

6) Investigate and Address Concerns from People in Custody at OCCC

The Commission did not have time to check

The Commission has received multiple complaints regarding the following issues at OCCC:

- **Roaches in Cells:** Roaches are present in the cells. This poses a health and sanitation concern. **The Commission recommends implementing a pest control plan that effectively and safely eliminates the roach population.**
- **Difficulties in Accessing Bail Calls:** The Commission learned that some individuals have experienced delays of several weeks in accessing bail calls, which has prevented those who could make bail from being released. This delay not only impacts individual rights but also contributes to overcrowding. The Commission urges the facility to establish and confirm a reliable system that allows timely access to bail calls for all eligible individuals and **ensures all people in custody have prompt access to bail calls.**

7) Ensure Regular Access to Books and Reading Material, Legal Calls, Mail, and Recreation for Those in Holding Unit, including those in Disciplinary Segregation

People in custody in the holding unit at OCCC reported irregular access to legal calls, daily recreation, and inconsistent mail service, along with no books or reading material. ACA standards require the following access for people in disciplinary segregation:

Mail: Inmates in Restrictive Housing can write and receive letters on the same basis as inmates in the general population.

Source: American Correctional Association (ACA) Performance-Based Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 5th ed., March 2021, 4B Restrictive Housing, 5-ACI-4B-20, p. 128.

Access to Legal and Reading Materials: Inmates in Restrictive Housing have access to reading materials.

Source: American Correctional Association (ACA) Performance-Based Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 5th ed., March 2021, 4B Restrictive Housing, 5-ACI-4B-23, p. 129.

Exercise Out of Cell: Inmates in Restrictive Housing receive a minimum of one hour of exercise outside their cells, five days per week, unless security or safety considerations dictate otherwise."

Source: American Correctional Association (ACA) Performance-Based Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 5th ed., March 2021, 4B Restrictive Housing, 5-ACI-4B-24, p. 129.

Telephone Privileges: Inmates in Restrictive Housing are allowed at minimum telephone privileges to access the judicial process and family emergencies as determined by the facility administrator or designee unless security or safety considerations dictate otherwise.

Source: American Correctional Association (ACA) Performance-Based Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 5th ed., March 2021, 4B Restrictive Housing, 5-ACI-4B-25, p. 129.

Access to Programs: Inmates in Extended Restrictive Housing have access to programs and services that include but are not limited to the following: educational services, commissary services, library services, social services, behavioral health and treatment services, religious guidance, and recreational programs.

Source: American Correctional Association (ACA) Performance-Based Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 5th ed., March 2021, 4B Restrictive Housing, 5-ACI-4B-26, p. 130.

8) Evaluate the Impacts of Requiring Post Closures to Limit Overtime Costs

The Department needs to seriously consider how requiring post closures to limit overtime impacts daily access to showers, out-of-cell time, outdoor recreation, programming and general conditions of confinement. The Department should allow Wardens to make these decisions as they should know the needs of their facilities the best. Additionally, the Department should consider holding regular inter-divisional meetings between Division Administrators to evaluate the fiscal and humanitarian impacts of requiring post closures before authorizing overtime.

Additional Recommendations to be Considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation:

1) Add Microwaves and Options for Cool Drinking

The Commission recommends that Laumaka install a dedicated ice machine for the facility to ensure a consistent supply of ice for drinking water and cooling needs. Additionally, the Commission recommends that each housing unit be equipped with microwaves, ice boxes, and fresh drinking water sources such as coolers with ice water or water dispensers. These measures would support temperature regulation, promote occupant comfort, and contribute to maintaining a stable correctional environment appropriate for a minimum-custody facility.

The Commission extends special thanks to the OCCC staff for their time, professionalism, and expertise during the tour.