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Hawaii Community Correctional Center (HCCC)
August 2026 Site Visit Observations Report
Date of Report: October 2, 2026

On Thursday, August 27, 2026, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Hawaii Community Correctional Center (HCCC). The tour included Chair Mark Patterson, Commissioner Martha Torney, Commissioner Ron Ibarra, and Commission staff. During the tour, the Commission was granted access to all areas of the facility and was able to communicate with people in custody.

General Observations

HCCC is organized into six housing units. Four of the six housing units are located at HCCC's primary jail location (commonly referred to as "the Main," and referred to as the Main hereafter), located at 60 Punahale St., Hilo, HI 96720. These include Punahale, Komohana, and Waianuenue, and the new unit, Kaumana. The Hale Nani Annex site, located at 3196 Kai Ki St, Hilo, HI 96720, contains two housing units: Hale Nani Mauka, holding sentenced men on furlough preparing to reenter the community, and Hale Nani Makai, designated for the female general population.

Punahale

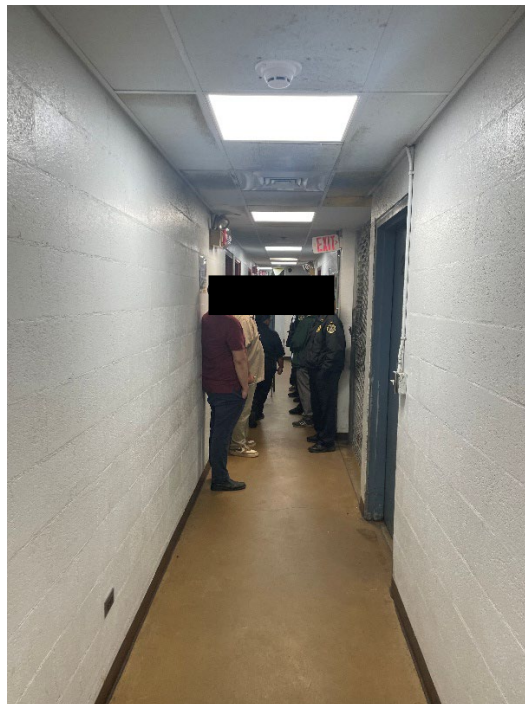
HCSOC toured the Punahale control center, where there was one ACO on post. HCCC staff explained that the post requires two ACOs, however, sometimes there is only one ACO on post doing the job of two due to staffing shortages. From the control center, staff brought attention to the newly constructed visitation area, which is expected to be opened for in-person visits in the coming months.

HCSOC toured the intake area, which is located in Punahale. The intake area has three holding cells: one large holding cell that appears to hold seven people comfortably, and two smaller cells each with an unrated capacity of two to three. At the time of the tour, the larger cell was holding seven people, and the two smaller cells were holding one person each.

HCSOC toured the records area. While in records, HCCC staff presented a smock, which is blue, and explained that people in custody are dressed in smocks while on suicide watch, but often do not have any clothes on underneath. The smock was similar in fashion to a hospital night gown, but is made with a thicker material that is more similar to a blanket or quilt. Like most hospital nightgowns, the smock is sleeveless, covers the entire torso and is approximately knee length. The smock is secured to the body by Velcro. HCCC staff explained that the Velcro often becomes worn and ceases to effectively secure the smock to people's bodies, but can be replaced.

The Commission then toured the medical corridor where there are two wet cells (cells with a sink and toilet), storage spaces, medical offices, and one dry cell (a cell with no sink or toilet). The dry cell has cameras installed and is next to the control station and it typically used for suicide watch. Staff explained that one of the many challenges and dangers of the medical corridor is that the spacing constraints do not make it possible to safely comply with policy of suicide watch. Staff explained that policy requires one-on-one supervision for suicide watch, which means there needs to be one ACO on post for each person on suicide watch. Spacing constraints often result in multiple people who are on suicide watch being placed in a single cell, which requires multiple ACOs to be posted outside that single cell. This further congests an already congested narrow hallway that serves as thoroughfare between intake and housing units, and is also where intake medical examinations occur. Staff further explained that intakes who routinely pass through the hallway to get to their housing units can agitate the behavior of those on suicide watch, and pose a risk to the ACOs who are posted to suicide watch.

The following picture illustrates the narrow space that facilitates movement from intake to housing units, where ACOs are posted for suicide watch, and where intake medical assessments occur:



HCCC Punahele Medical Corridor

HCCC's spacing constraints present a **dire need** for additional space to ensure that basic needs are met, such as privacy for medical examinations, safety for ACO's who are posted to suicide watch, and appropriate housing space for people who are on suicide watch.

The Commission found four women housed in one of the 2 wet cells in the medical corridor. Staff explained that one of the four women would be moved back to an auxiliary space that is marked "storage room," when it was no longer being used as a meeting space for the day to accommodate legal or medical visits. HCSOC staff have observed that, due to spacing contains, HCCC often has

to temporarily convert spaces in Punahale, such as the kitchen or storage space, into meeting spaces for attorneys by temporarily placing a table and chairs in the space. Housing anyone in dry cells does not meet federal guidelines. Another woman was held in the second wet cell. Staff explained she had to be housed alone because she had a history of putting her own feces on people. This highlights the severe mental health issues of those in custody.

In the medical corridor, close to the cells where the women are held, is a small room with a shower. This is where the aforementioned women shower. The door, seen in the photo below, opens directly to the aforementioned hallway, or medical corridor, that is heavily trafficked by people being moved from intake to housing units. Additionally, parts of the shower room, such as the door seen in the photo, appeared to be in disrepair. The shower itself appeared to be leaking water.



Bathroom used by women housed in Medical Corridor of Punahale

The medical corridor leads to a connected housing unit, separated by a security door, with 4 sets of dayroom cells (cells that connect to their own individual dayrooms) surrounding a common area called the Multipurpose Room Floor. Staff indicated that **no one housed in Punahale is taken outside for recreation**. This is against federal standards requiring fresh air and sunlight for at least one hour per day, every day.

The cells in Punahale that are meant to hold two people were overcrowded, housing 3-4 people in each cell. Staff explained that some of the overcrowding was due to the need to keep people separated for their safety, as some people had a history of targeting one another. Two of the individual dayrooms each had one person sleeping on the floor in order to accommodate the separation that is needed for safety.

A large space commonly referred to as “the fishbowl,” or Multipurpose Room 2 (MP2), is also connected to the Multipurpose Room Floor and is completely visible through large, floor-to-ceiling glass panels. The space resembles a small, empty gymnasium. At the time of the tour, there were 9 people housed in “the fishbowl.” Last year, there were 25 people in the fishbowl. The fishbowl has no beds, sinks, or toilets – only thin mattresses on the floor. The lack of toilets presents the added burden of staff periodically escorting people from the fishbowl to the toilet, creating an operational burden that would not exist if there were enough cells to house everyone. An L-shaped hallway, separated by a security door, leads out of the MP Floor and includes additional cells known as the K-Unit.

One of the cells in the K-Unit was filled with a contractor’s construction tools who was reportedly working on wiring for the fire alarm system. The cell was not being used for housing.

The K-Unit also included a shower that appeared to have mold on the ceiling, as seen below.



Shower K-Units in back of Punahale

The Commission was pleased to find a renovated bathroom in Punahale that connects to the MP Floor (see below), featuring 3 toilets and sinks and ceilings with no mold. This renovation marks an important step toward eliminating all mold-infested bathrooms in the facility.



Recently Renovated Punahele Bathroom

Komohana

Komohana is a two-story housing unit, designed to house 64 individuals. At the time of the tour, Komohana housed 80 people who share 8 showers – 4 showers on the lower level and 4 showers on the upper level. All showers were reported to be operational, an improvement from last year, when 2 showers were in disrepair and not operational, leaving only 6 showers to be shared by 89 people at the time.

People in custody reported outdoor recreation has not occurred for one to two months. Staff reported that recreation is being offered, but people sometimes refuse recreation. Staff reported that refusals for recreation are recorded in the logbook, or sometimes on the headcount sheet.

People in custody also reported that mail is not delivered regularly. They reported that there are only 3 tablets available and 1 is broken, and tablet usage is limited to 30 minutes a day, further limiting contact with loved ones.

One of the cells downstairs, reportedly housing 4 people, requiring 2 to sleep on the floor, did not have any natural light. While most cells viewed by the Commission appeared to be appropriately fitted with opaque glass to allow natural light to enter, the window of the cell in question was fitted with a metal panel, secured from the outside. The panel appeared to be in place to cover a hole that appeared to be melted into the glass window.



Cell Window in Komohana with metal plate covering and what appears to be melted plastic.

Kaumana

Kaumana is a new, two-story housing unit with an unrated capacity of 48. The headcount was 44. None of the cells have windows for sunlight, however, the cell doors have 2 large windows that face the dayroom and outside area, providing the occupants with a view of the outdoor atrium. The dayroom includes a large, 3-piece panoramic landscape portrait of Mauna Loa with the ocean in the foreground that can be seen from the inside of all cells. The Commission appreciates that the portrait helps to create a rehabilitative environment that starkly contrasts with the environments of the other housing units. The dayroom also included access to a variety of board and card games.

The building includes a classroom that can accommodate approximately 20 people. This space could potentially be used for attorney visits, reducing the need to temporarily outfit limited areas in Punahele with tables and chairs, a practice that further compounds existing overcrowding challenges in Punahele.

In contrast with people in other housing units, Kaumana occupants reported that they have consistent out-of-cell time and outdoor recreation via access to Kaumana's atrium, where they take

outdoor recreation and phone calls, most of the day. Additionally, they reported being out of their cells most of the day. People in custody reported that Kaumana is reserved to house people in custody who do not have behavioral issues. People in custody reported that behavioral issues can lead to being removed from Kaumana and placed in Punahale or Komohana.

Security noted how they have had to address security concerns related to drones dropping contraband into the atrium by adding nets to the fence that covers the atrium.

Kaumana's building layout is designed to allow staff to oversee all cells and the outdoor recreation area from a single post, enhancing security, improving the staff-to-custody ratio, and demonstrating how facility design can help mitigate staffing shortages.

People in custody reported that, until approximately a month ago, they had routine access to a Chaplin. People in custody do not know why the Chaplin has come less frequently, but spoke about the positive impact of having regular access to a Chaplin and hopes to regain regular access to a Chaplin, or a similar rehabilitative resource.

Waianuenue

Waianuenue is comprised of two separate dorms with a large control station in the center. One dorm housed sentenced felons, the other dorm housed pretrial detainees. The Commission observed that the bathroom in general required significant maintenance and sinks were missing handles. This was observed last year, and no improvements have been made.

Additionally, showers used by the pretrial detainees did not have working shower handles to turn on the water. Showers are turned on by accessing water valves through 2 maintenance hatches located in a connecting area where beds are located, as seen below.



Showers used by the those in Wainuenue did not have working shower handles to turn on the water.

Shower floors were also in disrepair, with several tiles missing from the shower floors, creating the potential for injuries to occur and sanitation issues to manifest.



Showers in Wainuenue

There is now an on-site grievance officer, whose office is located in Waianuenue, however, they were not available during the Commission's tour. HCSOC staff will schedule a meeting at a later time to learn about how grievances are being processed.

Library

The Commission visited the library, which was well stocked with a wide variety of books and appeared to be actively in use by a person in custody. Education staff reported that there are active programs in place that help people in custody become certified for food service in order to expand their employment opportunities when they are released.

Visitation

Currently, there is no in-person visitation, and this has been the case for over five years (initially due to COVID-19, then due to construction). In-person contact visits are imperative for maintaining relationships with family, friends, and communities. HCCC staff reported that in-person visits are expected to resume in the coming months, but could not provide an exact date.

Conclusion

Although the Commission has reported on this before, it is important to highlight again here, HCCC lacks many basic necessities to make it a fully functional jail. The facility lacks a proper segregation unit, a proper protective custody unit, a proper mental health unit, an appropriate space for those on safety and suicide watch, a proper infirmary, a perimeter fence, and a proper female housing unit. This makes managing the population an *extremely* difficult task for all staff who work at HCCC, especially given the overcrowding.

The facility was originally built over 60 years ago. It is old, antiquated, and outdated, and these infrastructure deficiencies and the needs of the populations cannot be adequately addressed in this current facility.

The Commission thanks the Department and HCCC staff for their time and expertise.