

2023 Washington County Correctional Facilities Report

Introduction

Pursuant to ORS 132.440, a grand jury panel was selected by the Circuit Court for the purpose of inspecting the conditions and management at four correctional facilities located in Washington County, Oregon: the Washington County Jail (WCJ), the Washington County Community Corrections Center (CCC), Harkins House (HH), and Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF).

We, the Grand Jurors, visited each facility. We were given an orientation by management and staff at each facility followed by a detailed walking tour. The management of each facility was aware of the reason for the Grand Jury's visit. The inspections provided the Grand Jury an adequate overview of the physical conditions of the facilities. The Grand Jury did not examine audits, budgetary records, detailed outside inspection reports, nor official findings aside from what was provided at the orientation sessions. We believe our review of each facility provided a realistic impression of the day-to-day operations, and allowed us to judge the overall fitness of the buildings, the attitude of staff and security strategies in practice.

The orientations and walking tours were interactive and the Grand Jurors were able to ask questions through each review. The staff at each facility provided additional information when asked. Though time constraints prevented us from examining every area of all four institutions, we are satisfied that we observed the overall structure of each facility and had access to any portion of the facilities we desired to see. As such, we feel that we can report reliably on the general physical condition and relative fitness of the facilities.

Senior Deputy DA Gina Skinner and Deputy DA Trinity Hatch of the Washington County District Attorney's Office accompanied us on the tours.

The Grand Jurors also met with Judge Erik Buchér and DA Kevin Barton. They shared their perspective on a variety of topics that helped the jurors contextualize and understand some of the information gleaned during the various facility tours.

General Thoughts and Common Themes

There were several common themes noted by facility administrators and individuals the Grand Jurors met with.

- **Inadequate staffing is an issue everywhere.** Most of the facilities are not operating at full capacity due to lack of staff, rather than budgetary issues.
 - **Lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.** During the pandemic, facilities operated at reduced capacity including both staff and inmates. Reversing the trend remains difficult and was noted at several facilities.
 - **Mental health programs have extremely limited availability.** Nearly every facility noted an increase in individuals with mental health issues while available mental health treatment resources decreased.
 - **Similar sentiments were conveyed around the availability of drug treatment programs.** Regarding Ballot Measure 110 and Oregon’s decriminalization of drug possession, Judge Buchér noted that drug court had been a very useful tool for helping individuals. After BM 110 passed there were fewer opportunities for individuals to take advantage of the program. DA Barton shared a similar opinion that the BM 110 has had a negative impact on the community.
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Washington County Community Corrections Center (WCCC)

Conducted Nov 22, 2023

- Employees noted an increase of adults-in-custody (AICs) with mental health issues and a decrease in those receiving treatment.
- ~50 of ~90 available beds were in-use. The facility can accommodate 215 beds when operating at full capacity. With better staffing, WCCC could accommodate additional AICs that would otherwise be force-released.
- If employed, AICs pay “rent” while in the program. The jurors received a truncated explanation of how an AIC’s rent is calculated as, “Twice their hourly wage per day minus any discounts”.
 - What struck several jurors was the absence of additional qualifications like the number of hours worked, an upper cap (in terms of dollar amount, or relative percentage) limiting the AIC’s cost.
 - For individuals re-entering the community the opportunity to save this money instead may have a positive impact. An individual’s rent at WCCC is a small fraction of what it costs to house them—Would the individual get greater benefit from it than WCCC does?
 - For comparison, Coffee Creek automatically places 5% of an AIC’s earnings into a savings account.
- A juror overheard an AIC expressing gratitude to staff for help finding a job.
- The facility seemed focused on supporting AICs and providing them with tools for rehabilitation and reentry into the community.

Harkins House (HH)

Conducted Nov 27, 2023

- Currently housing 14 youths aged 12-18. This represents the full capacity at current staffing levels. The facility is typically full.
- With increased staffing, more of the facility could be opened and more youths could be housed.
- The facility uses a leveling system to incentivize, encourage, and reward positive behavior and interactions.
 - Administrators are working on transitioning from a points-based leveling system to one tailored to individual youths.
- The facility was clean and welcoming.
- The facility offers on-site school, GED preparation, counseling, and group sessions focused around self-reflection and modifying behaviors.
- Notably, HH offers what they call The Harkins House Farm 2 Fork Program. The program exposes individuals to culinary arts in the facility's kitchen and gardening at a local farm. The administrators spoke highly of the program and its participants.
- HH also places an emphasis on parental involvement. They note that the greatest odds for long-term success rely on support from parents and family.

Washington County Jail (WCJ)

Conducted Nov 28, 2023

- Staffing issues are a concern. At the time of the tour, there were 101 deputies & corporals operating the jail. There is a budget for 140 deputies/corporals.
- Forced overtime was noted to have an impact on employee morale.
- Administrators cited a lack of quality candidates as well as fewer new candidates overall despite Washington County Jail having high wages relative to the industry standard.
 - Despite relative wages, this suggests that the compensation is no longer sufficient for the work—Higher wages are likely to attract additional employees.
- Due to staffing issues, the jail is operating at reduced capacity.
 - At full capacity the jail operates with 572 beds.
 - The current capacity is 388 beds.
 - Lingering effects from the COVID-19 pandemic were cited as potential causes.
- Excluding a spike in forced-releases due to Jail upgrades in 2017-2018, forced-releases peaked in 2022 and appear to be trending down (based on 2023 estimates). Still, forced-releases remain significantly higher than the historical average.
- The facility seemed clean and well-maintained.
- The jail offers a number of programs aimed at reducing recidivism: Cognitive programs, education (Diploma/GED), employment services, and counseling.

- It was also acknowledged that recidivism is high, and most AICs are repeat offenders.
- There was no data presented to determine the efficacy of the programs.

Washington County Release Office (WCRO)

Conducted Nov 28, 2023

Operating out of Washington County Jail, WCRO staff shared a presentation with the Grand Jury panel about the pretrial release process.

- It was noted that Senate Bill 48 has led to an increase in individuals being arrested for additional offenses during pretrial release.
- The GPS monitoring system, Vigilnet, sounded antiquated and ineffective. Alerts from the system are sent to WCRO by email where they are monitored during business hours.
- Due to the significant alert and monitoring shortcomings the system is not sufficient for situations where rapid response is necessary.
- Defendants with GPS or alcohol-monitoring devices pay monitoring fees, \$10 per day. For low-income or unemployed individuals ~\$300 per month seems likely to impose a financial burden.
 - A review of Vigilnet's website also shows they employ "Collections Specialists" where "Previous experience in collections [is] strongly preferred", supporting the idea that costs are a financial hardship.

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF)

Conducted Dec 5, 2023

- Like many of the other facilities, CCCF is operating at reduced capacity due to inadequate staffing. At full capacity CCCF can house 1795 AICs. The currently utilized capacity is 1220 AICs.
- Administrators noted shortage of prison staff and mandatory overtime.
- Administrators noted morale issues among employees related to overtime and the attention the facility receives related to staff sexual misconduct involving female AICs.
 - They additionally noted that there are now reporting channels available to AICs that bypass prison staff.
- The Grand Jurors were impressed with the work programs offered to AICs. Among them, the tour focused on:
 - Cosmetology program—An 18-month program where AICs can acquire a cosmetology license upon completion.
 - Textiles program—AICs quilt, produce clothing for other female AICs, premature-baby clothing.

- Oregon DMV call center
 - One juror noted discomfort with AIC's handling DMV records containing personal information.
 - Identity theft or computer-related crimes disqualify AICs from participating in the program.
- Service dog training—After training the dogs are then sent to California to be homed. Jurors questioned why the dogs were not used in Oregon.
- AICs receive compensation for participation in various work roles in the prison. By default, 5% of the compensation is automatically placed into a savings account for the AIC. An individual can increase their contribution if they wish. The jury felt that this was an excellent idea.