

# **2024 Grand Jury Report of Correctional Facilities in Washington County Oregon**

## **Purpose:**

Each year, in accordance with ORS 132.440, the Washington County Circuit Court empanels a special Grand Jury tasked with inspecting conditions at all correctional facilities across the county. The jury members inspect the Washington County Jail, the Washington County Community Corrections Center, the Harkins House juvenile shelter home, and Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Our findings are detailed below.

## **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 panel of seven Grand Jurors, were given an orientation held at the DAs office prior to visiting the facility. At which time we received an overview of our purpose and expectations and allowed an opportunity to ask questions. We were supplied with access to previous years reports (also available to the public via the DA website) and briefed about safety and security protocols. The jury panel visited each facility in November 2024 for approximately two hours each and given “free access”, as the law states, to all areas of the facilities. We were accompanied by DA Gina Skinner and DA Trinity Hatch at each location as well as by facility management and operating officers, adhering to all security requirements and background checks. The Jury was never denied access to any reasonable request for viewing specific areas in the facility nor

were they denied any answers to questions asked. All facilities made a clear effort to accommodate requests for further information and offered means to follow up after the visit should any additional questions arise. While we were not denied access to any areas, by virtue of time constraint, it was not possible to inspect all important areas of interest and therefore we can offer only as complete of an assessment as time allowed.

While Jury was accompanied by DA Skinner and DA Hatch and given orientations at each location, the following report was the product of the seven Grand Jury members alone. The report was written and compiled by the members of the jury and is true, transparent, and complete by our measure.

## **Washington County Jail (WCJ)**

### **Safety and Staff-AIC Interactions:**

Concerns regarding safety and staff-AIC interactions were raised. The atmosphere during the tour felt intimidating, exacerbated by the lockdown of AICs during staff lunch hours, which limited observations of their interactions. Improvements are needed to address AIC assaults and attempts against officers, as Washington County Jail's statistics surpass those of Coffee Creek Correctional Center. Adopting practices from Coffee Creek may align with the facility's vision and improve outcomes. Enhancing these interactions would also foster a more rehabilitative and less punitive environment for AICs.

### **Health and Medical:**

It was concerning to this jury that there is no actionable ability for AIC to receive needed medical attention. The WCJ provides a paper in which an AIC can request to be seen by a medical provider, but these are at the deputies station, are not always accessible, and are at the mercy of when an officer turns it in for them.

When asked what AIC do when there is an urgent health concern, the jail commander

reports that the officer on duty would determine how urgent this need is. However, the commander admitted that these officers do not have medical training or knowledge of appropriate triage for medical issues. There is great risk here for AIC to experience potentially harmful or even life threatening complications due to this delay in care. Comments of AIC “complaining a lot” were made by jail staff. Because they are not healthcare providers themselves, they do not have the qualifications to be differentiating between urgent and lower priority symptoms. The apparent disregard for their expressions of need, calling them “complainers” was a deep concern for this jury.

The lack of access to medications that AIC were prescribed outside of the WCJ, by their healthcare providers in the community, was also a place of concern. While we were told that some medications that AIC are prescribed can be received in the jail, not all of them can be. Changing of prescriptions, or sudden cessation or lapse in treatment can have severe consequences on an individuals physical health as well as psychological health. This lapse in care seems to present not only a risk for AIC as they return to community and attempt to reintegrate but also potentially causes harm to individuals in custody which costs tax payers money and harm to those that the WCJ is charged with the care of.

#### Facility Conditions and Security:

The facility is well-secured with interlocked doors and extensive video surveillance, ensuring safety throughout major areas. However, the environment feels cold, sterile, and grim, with stale air contributing to its unwelcoming nature. While no deaths have occurred in 2024, reflecting a high standard of care, AIC dissatisfaction with the food service contractor, **evidenced by a "cat food" joke made by the jail commander to the jury**, highlights areas for improvement in quality and perception. Limited recreation options, such as a small assortment of used books, tablets, and board games, contribute to a monotonous experience for AICs.

#### Staffing Challenges and Operational Impact:

Staffing shortages are a critical issue affecting both operational efficiency and AIC care. These shortages have led to the closure of facility pods and a reduction in available cells, which exacerbates forced releases. The projected forced releases exceeding 10,000 in 2024, compared to 11,458 bookings, raise alarms about public safety. Long shifts for deputies contribute to burnout and turnover, further hindering operations. The Attorney General has linked systemic court inefficiencies to forced release issues, emphasizing the need for comprehensive staffing and judicial improvements.

#### Positive Aspects and Areas for Growth:

Despite challenges, the jail provides several positive services to AICs. Recreational spaces for prayer, reading, and activities, as well as zero deaths in 2024, showcase efforts to prioritize AIC welfare. However, these benefits are limited by staffing constraints, and opportunities for outdoor recreation and kitchen work have been reduced. Leadership should explore adopting successful strategies from other facilities, prioritizing both infrastructure upgrades and staff retention efforts, to enhance care and security.

#### Leadership and Decision-Making Concerns:

The police chief's role in approving AIC accommodations raises concerns about potential bias and highlights the need for a clear, impartial decision-making process. Adopting more transparent and systemic strategies could address these issues while ensuring consistency in operations. Collaborative leadership between county jail officials and other correctional facilities may provide insights into improving both AIC management and staff welfare.

#### Economic Inequality and Program Policies:

The county's shift away from the bail program aims to reduce the systemic advantage afforded to economically well-off individuals. However, other practices, such as restrictions on AIC video calling and the option to purchase additional time at a steep rate, appear inconsistent with this ideology. These policies disproportionately benefit AICs with financial resources, perpetuating the inequities the county is attempting to address. A more equitable alternative could involve using video calling privileges as rewards for meeting behavioral or rehabilitative goals, aligning with the county's broader vision of fairness and rehabilitation.

## **Washington County Community Corrections (WCCC)**

### Program Overview:

Washington County community corrections is a transitional residential program mainly serving AICs who were previously held at the Washington County Jail. In most cases judges had approved a transfer to WCCC for AICs to complete their sentence in a lower-security dormitory environment focused on rehabilitation services.

Residents may stay up to a year, though 77% of residents stay at WCCC for 30 days or less. The program focuses on rehabilitation services for adults designed to foster living independently outside of custody. These services include mental health, behavioral interventions, substance abuse treatment, and developing employment skills.

### Facilities:

WCCC has capacity for 215 adults, living in gender-separated dorm accommodations. Each dorm pod consists of a few shared sleeping quarters with singles beds and locking cabinets for personal belongings. These rooms surround a common room that are open to the main hallway. Different colors of carpet delineating the living area from the off-limits

hallways - creating firm rules without use of bars or locking cells Residents have access to televisions, books and one exercise machine in every common room.

Private bedroom accommodations have been utilized to house past residents who identified as trans-gender and didn't safe in shared sleeping quarters.

#### Security:

After the first 14 days of orientation in the program, residents become eligible for passes to leave the facility. GPS ankle monitors are employed to monitor a resident's whereabouts and supervise compliance with the terms of their sentence. Failure to report back at the designated time will result in additional charges.

Upon return, non-invasive body scanners are used to screen residents for drugs, alcohol, weapons, or other contraband that could be harmful to the wccc environment.

Grand jury members have conflicted assessments of the security environment. While the low security nature of the center creates an environment free for restraints and places focus on personal responsibility for compliance with rules, it leaves residents open to making poor decisions that might be detrimental to their sentences and rehabilitation goals.

#### Room and Board:

Residents must pay their own room and board - offered on a sliding scale that considers their financial obligations, employment status, and earnings. Room and board must be paid in full prior to release.

#### Drug screening:

WCCC exceeds standards for comprehensive surveillance by screening 2-3 per week. Primary methods of screening include retinal scanning and urinalysis. Positive tests may result in loss of passes and privileges for 30 days.

AICs are permitted to smoke tobacco in outdoor courtyard - rather than limits being placed on their habits. This solution was a result of a previous arson accident with residents sneaking cigarettes while inside.

#### Behavioral Health Services:

Changes the root causes of criminal behavior is critical to WCCC's goals of rehabilitation. By employing effective use of authority and pro social modeling, core correction practices are reinforced as the building blocks of behavior change.

Peer mentoring and community support are crucial for ongoing healing. WCCC set a goal of 80% of residents being connected with Support groups at the time of release. Since 2020, they've fallen short of that benchmark, coming in at 54% for 2024.

Mental health intervention prior to release are at 16% - substantially below the 50% benchmark.

Prior to 2020 - the Covid pandemic - WCCC was able to more consistently meet their stated targets in these metrics.

#### Job placement and housing services:

Employed individuals entering the program are required to have their place of employment vetted by WCCC. Pay rate, dates, overtime policy and supervisor contact

information are verified to make sure the work environment supports the employee recovery efforts

WCCC partners with outside businesses to find suitable employment opportunities for residents preparing to be released. Residents have access to a job resource center equipped with computers on the ground floor of the building.

With a goal of 50% of residents being employed at the time of release, WCCC falls short of that benchmark at only 25%. 2019 was the last year they met this goal.

With a goal of 70% of residents placed in stable housing at the time of release, WCCC falls short with 59% in stable housing for 2024 so far.

#### Conclusions:

WCCC has created a more positive and affirming environment for certain categories of AICs previously held in the Washington County Jail. While transition back into the community is the ultimate goal, data from 2019 -2024 shows they are struggling on several metrics to effectively deliver transition services to this population.

Prior the disruption of the COVID pandemic, WCCC met most of these benchmarks. Partnerships with outside organization need to be evaluated and invested in to improve these numbers.

### **Harkins House**

During the Harkin's House visit, Panel F's overall perception of the facility was positive. There were no outstanding grievances with resident treatment, issues with cleanliness, or obvious abuses of resources. Harkins House staff professionally answered each question completely and provided substance-filled responses to alleviate any concerns raised. Panel F is impressed with the individualized on-site education programs provided by volunteer teaching staff, the genuine support for HH residents' mental health, and the dedication to resident learning, growth, and emotional literacy. The Farm 2 Forks program was also well-received and serves as further proof of Harkins House commitment to aid youth development. The only concern presented was dissatisfaction with funding provided for the program. Lack of additional funding tends to impact the staff forcing hired individuals to dedicate more of themselves to the development of each HH attendee. This is also the likely contributing factor to the fourteen-student program limit.

The Harkins House staff provided an in-depth explanation of the resources available to continue education for children court-appointed and enrolled in the HH residential program. Examples included individualized and pace driven curriculum to meet students at their current education level, student expression in the form of art visible throughout the facility, and opportunities to express, interpret, and manage complicated emotions. The Harkins House program exhibits individualized plans and care that mirror special education resources for juveniles who may be experiencing extenuating circumstances. As part of the facility tour, Panel F was able to observe the classroom where students attend class where there were visible examples of mental and emotional support. Everything from positive messaging and signage to displays of student art and vision boards inspired emotion boards. These emotion boards displayed different terms to describe emotions that juveniles who attend the program have felt and demonstrate consideration for differing backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and circumstances, emanating a sense of acceptance. In addition, the educational resources available are opportunities for individual counseling with graduate level interns. For attendees to the program, HH seems to look for every opportunity to supply youth with the resources necessary to succeed and rise above their current circumstances.

Another positive and well received facet of the Harkins House program is the Farm to Forks Program. This program allows youth opportunities to learn gardening on a local twenty-five-acre farm and begin learning culinary arts. The F2F program aims to help youth learn how to grow food and cook delicious recipes from their harvest, practical skills that will transfer well into their day-to-day lives. Opportunities like these provide much needed structure

for youth who have had to persevere through precarious circumstances. The culinary and kitchen training program is well loved by both staff and residents providing meaningful opportunities to demonstrate learned practical skills. This structure could serve as a solid foundation for liberating themselves from unfavorable circumstances and establishing a life for themselves, which perfectly aligns with the Harkins House Residential Goal: "To Promote Growth in Youth and Their Family."

The third major positive facet of Harkins House Residential program is the individual dorm-like rooms for program attendees. Program accommodations are positive for attending youth, providing them with individual rooms to allow for a sense of normality and privacy and allowing them to decorate these areas to further allow students comfortability and self-expression, a recurring theme through this tour.

Overall, the facility seemed like a truly healthy environment designed to ensure resident well-being and continued growth. Staff seemed well-dedicated, and the rapport between residents and staff was positive. As stated before, a program like this should have more financial support. Fourteen attendees is smaller than the average public school classroom where juveniles could benefit from the value this program is bringing to the county.

## **Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF)**

The overall impression of Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) is that it operates as a progressive, rehabilitation-focused institution where incarcerated individuals (AICs) are given meaningful opportunities for personal growth, skill-building, and preparation for life beyond incarceration. One of the most striking aspects of the facility is its emphasis on creative expression and vocational training, which contribute significantly to both the well-being and rehabilitation of the AICs. The mural program, where AICs paint the facility's walls, is especially notable. These murals, including an awe-inspiring undersea-themed mural nicknamed "The fishbowl" serve as a visual representation of the commitment and potential of AICs. They transform the otherwise stark environment

into one that reflects the creativity and talents of those serving time. It is clear that this initiative not only beautifies the facility but also fosters a sense of pride, accomplishment, and hope among AICs, reinforcing the message that they are capable of positive change.

In addition to creative outlets, CCCF provides a wide range of vocational training programs that equip AICs with valuable skills for the workforce. Programs such as cosmetology, culinary arts, call center operations, and fabric production (which even contributed to sewing PPE for healthcare workers during the pandemic) are particularly impressive. AICs have the opportunity to earn certifications in fields such as cosmetology, allowing them to gain credentials that can improve their chances of employment upon release. The DMV call center, which was an unexpected and striking discovery, is another example of an innovative initiative that benefits both the AICs and the community. This program not only offers valuable job training but also allows AICs to contribute directly to public services, creating a win-win situation for everyone involved. These diverse and robust programs clearly reflect CCCF's commitment to providing AICs with meaningful educational and career opportunities, preparing them for a successful reintegration into society.

Another key theme that emerged during the visit was the positive, supportive relationship between the facility's staff and the AICs. The staff at CCCF were noted for being exceptionally welcoming, demonstrating genuine care and respect for the AICs, which is crucial for building trust and creating a rehabilitative environment. During the tour, many AICs greeted the staff warmly, and one AIC shared her personal experiences, acknowledging both the improvements at the facility and the challenges faced over time. The rapport between staff and AICs was evident, with AICs speaking respectfully to staff members, such as Miss Popoff, and demonstrating an openness

that highlighted the genuine trust that had been built. The less militarized, more collaborative approach of the officers contributes to a positive atmosphere where AICs feel more supported in their journey toward rehabilitation. This approach contrasts with the environment at other facilities, such as the Washington County Jail, where AICs are often treated more harshly.

Despite the many successes, there is a recognition that the facility faces some challenges, particularly in terms of mental health and additional resources for rehabilitation programs. While the existing programs at CCCF are well-established and impactful, both staff and AICs expressed a desire for more resources to address the

mental health needs of the incarcerated population. It is clear that current programs rely heavily on the dedication and commitment of the staff, but there is an understanding that more funding and support would allow for further improvements. Mental health services, in particular, appear to be an area in need of expansion, as they are critical to the overall rehabilitation and well-being of AICs. Additionally, while the facility's environment is overall well-maintained—with spacious, well-ventilated areas for AICs, recreational activities such as gardening and exercise, and the constant aroma of food being prepared by AICs—there is still a sense that more resources are needed to fully meet the complex needs of those incarcerated there.

Overall, CCCF stands out as a facility that is deeply committed to the rehabilitation and growth of AICs. The facility's focus on providing diverse, meaningful programs that offer AICs the chance to gain skills, earn certifications, and contribute to the community demonstrates a clear dedication to helping incarcerated individuals succeed. The strong, respectful relationship between staff and AICs plays a key role in fostering an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, which is essential for rehabilitation. Although

there are areas for improvement, particularly in mental health services, the positive atmosphere, dedication of the staff, and wide range of programs indicate that CCCF is making a significant impact in preparing AICs for life after their sentences. The facility's success is a testament to the power of a supportive, rehabilitative environment and the potential for meaningful transformation within the correctional system.

Dated: December 26, 2024

<u>          <i>M.K.</i>          </u>	Madisen Kuball, Grand Jury Foreperson
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