



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION**  
**E HUIKALA A MA'EMA'E NŌ**  
235 S. Beretania Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
(808) 587-4160

**Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC)**  
**September 2023 Site Tour Observations**  
**Date of Report: October 19, 2023**

In accordance with Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC)'s mandate to oversee the State's correctional system, on Thursday, September 21, 2023, the Commission toured the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) collectively as a group. The tour included two of the five Commissioners – Martha Torney and Ron Ibarra in addition to the Oversight Coordinator and Reentry and Diversion Oversight Specialist. The Commission had unfettered access to staff and the facility. There were three new buildings under construction: Building A (secure housing), Building B (intake), and Building C (administration). The Commission visited Building A, Ka'ala Cottage, Maunawili Cottage, and Ho'okipa Cottage. The Commission did not visit Building B, Building C, Olomana Cottage (built 1952) or Akahi Cottage (built 1999).

This report encompasses notes from the Commissioners and will be discussed during the Commission's monthly public meeting held on October 19, 2023.

General Observations

The Commission was most impressed with Warden Guillonta and the staff they encountered. Warden Guillonta is the first woman to be designated as Warden in WCCC's history. The Commission commends Director Tommy Johnson for hiring Warden Guillonta as she has over 30 years of correctional experience, is undoubtedly a compassionate leader, and has a clear vision for WCCC and all who live and work there.

Staff interactions with the women were relaxed and generally respectful. Many of the women had books in their area to read at will. Although the Commission did hear complaints about the living conditions, the women seemed to know that the staff were doing what they could to alleviate the concerns. The facility is not overcrowded, unlike other correctional facilities, and the Commissioners were impressed with the general condition of the facility even though there is still work that needs to be completed.

WCCC is one of the only facilities in Hawaii offering in-person visitation options for people in custody. However, people in custody shared that in-person visitation is occasionally canceled, even at the last minute, due to a lack of staff.

Overall, Commissioners were concerned about the lack of outdoor recreation areas with grass and trees.

### Building A (new housing under construction)

Building A is a secure housing unit that is currently being constructed and is slated to open in February 2024. Once the housing unit is opened, PSD plans to transfer all women who are currently incarcerated at the Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC), which is a men's jail, to WCCC for more appropriate gender-specific housing. PSD estimates the jail population will be moved during March or April 2024 and is already planning the logistics of the transfer. Building A is currently designated for the incoming jail population, but Warden Guillonta wants to consider using it for the prison population.

Building A has two separate living units, with one side designed with open bays and the other cells. Each side is two stories with a centralized day room and officer station on the first floor. Beginning with the open bay side – There were eight open bays per floor, with each bay containing four double bunks attached to the walls (capacity=128). Four desks will be placed in each bay. Unfortunately, this design does not provide any sense of privacy. There was a closed-in recreation yard with cement walls, cement flooring, and plans for metal mesh-covered windows. Metal mesh coverings allow for airflow and a view of the surrounding area. If the sun is directly overhead of the recreation yard, there is no shaded area provided. There is no provision for a larger grassy outdoor recreational area, as so much of the property is now covered with buildings.

The bathrooms were located at the end of the bays on each floor, and the first-floor bathroom was ADA compliant. The shower will have partial privacy shields (not walls) at each shower head. As described, the shields will cover the legs from the knees up and the torso with no privacy shield at the front. Toilets will have similar privacy shields separating each toilet, but no privacy shield or door in front. Again, the lack of privacy was very evident in this newly constructed space.

Shifting to the cell side of the unit – The cell-based housing area was separated from the open bays by a corridor with offices and limited rooms for programming. There were 24 cells designed to house two people per cell, and 12 on each floor. There was at least one ADA-compliant cell on the first floor. The showers are individual, allowing for more privacy, and an ADA-compliant shower was available. There was a day room on the first floor with a smaller recreation yard for outdoor recreation. This yard was also a closed-in recreation yard with cement walls, cement flooring, and plans for metal mesh-covered windows for airflow.

The lack of program space in the newly built unit is of concern to the Commission. Additionally, the color choices of the paint were extremely disappointing. Evidence shows the importance of both warm (red, yellow, orange) and cool (blue, green, white) paint colors in rehabilitative and therapeutic spaces. When color is used properly in prisons and jails, it can lessen overall tension and make a facility a better place in which to live and work. However, the unit was painted white with deep brown paint throughout the unit and doors.

Additionally, Commissioners do not understand why a new kitchen and medical/infirmary were **not included** in the new construction projects. These essential areas must be replaced. The condition of the kitchen and medical/infirmary does not meet the needs of the current population, let alone the influx of the female Oahu jail population in the near future. It was clear that staff have long been concerned about the kitchen and infirmary, yet no plans are in the works.

### Ka'ala Cottage (housing)

Ka'ala Cottage is one of the original housing units from 1952, when the facility opened as the Ko'olau Boys Home. It is in dismal condition and must be replaced. A large square outdoor recreation area had dorms on one side, cells on another, and a combination day room and mess hall on another. Staff offices and limited program space were also available. The recreation area itself was badly in need of rehabilitation, with cracks throughout.

The living area, made up of two separate dorms with bays, had two double bunks in each with heavy plastic containers between the bunks for personal belongings. The bays were small, approximately 6' x 9.5', with no room for a desk or a chair. One of the dorms was the site of a newly formed "honor dorm" designed by a lieutenant at the facility. The honor dorm provides residents with additional privileges and requires good behavior as a condition of being part of this specific dorm community. There was no real dayroom space in these dorms, although the facility did squeeze in a TV with limited seating. The Commission commends this innovative undertaking of creating an honor dorm, even with space limitations, by the leadership and staff at WCCC.

Everything in the bathroom needs to be updated. Each dorm bathroom had four sinks, toilets and showers but many facilities were not working. In the dorm visited, two toilets were down, one sink was down, and fixtures in one shower were falling off the wall. Although there were mirrors above the sinks, you could not see your reflection. The cell area was in equally bad shape and some cells were occupied. The Warden informed us that renovations have been funded, and a preconstruction meeting will be held at the end of the month. It is the Commissioners hope that construction will be quick.

The mess hall and program areas were cleaner and more orderly than the dorms.

### Maunawili Cottage (recreation, programming, medical, kitchen)

Maunawili is another of the original 1952 buildings but has not been used as housing for decades. It contains the education/programming space, library, infirmary and medical, isolation cells, and the kitchen. Each specific location in Maunawili Cottage is detailed below.

#### *Recreation*

The outdoor recreation area in the center of the unit had been converted into a grassy field where women were participating in a kickball game during the tour, thoroughly enjoying themselves. There was a beautiful mural designed and painted by the women on one of the walls surrounding the recreational area. The Commission extends a special thanks to the Women's Prison Project, the Department, and WCCC for leading and supporting the mural project.

#### *Programming/Classroom Spaces*

There were at least two classrooms that were adequately sized and staffed. People in custody had a range of access to different programs, could pursue their GED, or earn credits towards a college degree. This is an important step towards rehabilitation.

### *Law Library*

The Law Library provided both legal references and an abundance of recreational books with more than adequate space. The recreational books are donated, while the law books are budgeted. The law books consist of Hawaii Revised Statutes, Hawaii Digest, Hawaii Session Laws, Appellate Reports, Hawaii Reports and law on Search and Seizure. There was a legal form book to assist the women in formatting their legal pleadings. The women also have access to LEXIS in conducting their legal research. Women who are incarcerated can also access legal resources through tablets found in the living units.

The Law Library was well organized and staffed with a very caring and knowledgeable full-time librarian. The Law Library is open five days each week from 8am until 4pm, and the librarian assists the women in conducting legal research which averages two to three women a month. Women in custody sign up with the librarian for in-person use. If the request is approved, the librarian will compile a list of the women with the appointment times. The librarian sends the lists to the dormitories Sergeants, who inform the women of their appointments.

When specifically asked whether individuals show up to their appointments, a Commissioner was informed that sometimes the women do not show up for their appointments, and when later asked why, they claim that no one told them of their appointments.

The Commission was also informed that women occasionally ask for names of attorneys, but the librarian is not familiar with the Criminal Defense Bar.

### *Medical/Infirmary*

The medical unit, though neat, was small and inadequate for the size of the population assigned to WCCC. Records appeared to be properly stored. The infirmary within the medical unit was in appalling condition and should not be used, but it is all they have. Half of the rooms could not be used due to ceiling leaks from the AC unit on the roof, with the floor covered with pails and towels. The other half had two beds, one that was occupied long-term by an elderly woman who recently had knee surgery and was confined to a wheelchair chair. The smell indicated there was a serious mold problem.

In addition to the infirmary, there were three to four cells for safety and suicide watch, plus quarantine cells for those returning from court. The officer assigned to the area sat opposite to one cell and had the others on camera. The Commission was informed that officers regularly visually check all the cells.

### *Kitchen*

The kitchen is in abysmal condition. All food is prepared there and delivered to the living units. The sinks were filled with dirty pots and pans, dishes, and utensils. The ceiling air vents were very dirty, there was water pooling by one of the floor drains, and there were rat traps with peanut butter scattered on the floor. There was no one in the area, yet a large pot of something was boiling on the stove.

One Commissioner looked in the refrigerator, which felt warm, but could not locate the temperature gauge. There was only one person, a cook, on duty that day, who was delivering food

at the time the Commission arrived, so there was no kitchen staff available to speak with. This is another example of how staff shortages cause dangerous conditions.

#### Ho'okipa Cottage (furlough under construction)

Ho'okipa Cottage at one time was the home of the Ko'olau Boys Home superintendent and had many other uses over the decades. It was last used as a living unit for the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility but was abandoned about a decade ago.

The space is now being completely rebuilt and reimagined as the community workline and furlough program for WCCC. Nothing is remaining of what the space used to be. Still under construction, it contains areas with bays of different sizes and some former cells that are being converted into individual rooms with their own bathroom, including a private shower. The toilet and sink are steel, but privacy will make a huge impact in this space.

The intention is to move women to smaller, more private rooms as they progress through the program. There was also a large, covered lanai that will be used for recreation and visitation. Overall, the space was beautiful. The Department utilized bright, restorative colors, and it had a kitchen space where ideally, women will be able to prep some of their own meals and begin gaining independence and confidence before release.

Recommendations to be considered by the Department of Public Safety:

- 1) Review new construction plans for Building A (secure housing) and implement as many therapeutic and rehabilitative spaces as possible.**
  - a. Consider adding doors, curtains, or some partition that allows for privacy while women in custody shower or use the restroom in the dorm areas.
  - b. Prioritize re-painting the interior brown color with different colors that support rehabilitative and therapeutic spaces. The facility workline could be utilized for this painting project if it is too difficult to change the work order with the current vendors. Additionally, the facility should consider asking the women in custody about their color preference for the living space.
  - c. Become creative and identify or create opportunities for programming space and an outdoor recreation area beyond the current closed-in cement recreation yard already in place. The women will need space for programming and to be outside, as is available in the other housing modules.
  
- 2) Secure desperately needed funding for facility updates.** As outlined throughout this report, current conditions are unhealthy, dangerous, insufficient for the influx of new residents from OCCC, and could, in some cases, amount to violations of regulations and legal standards. They are not fit for living or working conditions.
  - a. Funds must be allocated, and timely construction must be prioritized for facility updates to the kitchen, medical/infirmarary, and bathrooms.
  - b. Funds must be allocated for cameras to support the safety of staff and people in custody.

- c. Facility should consider adding turf to recreation area to create a more rehabilitative space, and consider creating a larger dayroom space for Ka'ala Cottage.
  - d. Ensure the Commission is updated on the process of funding the above requests.
- 3) Ensure appropriate access to the Law Library, and ease of access to defense attorney information.**
- a. Review the Law Library callout process and ensure proper operation is in place for people in custody to have timely access to the law library. Additionally, ensure that dormitory Sergeants and staff are reminded of the policy to inform people in custody of their Law Library appointment.
  - b. Request the Bar Directory from the Hawaii State Bar Association to ensure women in custody have access to defense attorney contact information, as needed. The Bar Directory lists all of the lawyers in the state including a list of Criminal Defense attorneys. This is of particular importance with the incoming jail population.
- 4) As the Department of Public Safety plans new facilities or housing units, the design should be consistent with the rebuilt and reimagined Ho'okipa Cottage.** The design, materials, and sentiment support healing and success and exemplify the transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model.
- 5) Continue and further the current trajectory of leaders at WCCC.** Warden Guillonta, Ms. Candace Beale, WCCC Offender Services Administrator, and several of the correctional staff the Commission toured with, and other dedicated staff members are in the early stages of truly transitioning to a rehabilitative model of corrections. This is clear through their humanizing and innovative practices, programs, and mindset. Additionally, Warden Guillonta recently traveled to Las Colinas, a model jail in San Diego County, with Commission staff to gain insight and ideas. Overall, the Commission recognizes WCCC's accomplishments and simultaneously knows there is more work to do.
- a. The Commission hopes and recommends that Warden Guillonta and leadership continue to move the facility forward and implement additional ideas and framework for change.
  - b. The Commission recommends Warden Guillonta, WCCC facility leadership, and WCCC staff connect and communicate with other wardens and their facility leadership on how to continue to implement innovative practices, programs, and move the Department forward in the transitions to a therapeutic model of corrections. This transition must start through innovation and change at facilities and even units and include extensive training which WCCC has prioritized.

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