



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

**Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF)**  
**October 2023 Site Tour Observations**  
**Date of Report: November 16, 2023**

On Thursday, October 19, 2023, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) collectively as a group. The tour included two of the five Commissioners – Mark Patterson (Chair) and Martha Torney, in addition to the Oversight Coordinator and Reentry and Diversion Oversight Specialist. On the day of the tour, there were 835 individuals housed at Halawa, with approximately 19% comprised of parole violators.

This report encompasses notes from the Commissioners and will be discussed at a public meeting held on November 16, 2023.

General Observations

Commissioners first met with Warden Shannon Cluney, who has been with the facility for nine months after a 30-year career with the Idaho Department of Corrections. Warden Cluney clearly has the knowledge and experience for the job, and Commissioners appreciated that Warden Cluney accompanied them on the facility tour.

Individuals housed at Halawa are still wearing striped uniforms that were commonly used in prisons in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Commissioners were informed that the striped uniforms would be replaced, and new uniforms had already been ordered. The new uniforms will be different solid colors that designate classification. Commissioners were very pleased to hear that the striped uniforms will no longer be used.

The facility is old and has not been updated properly. As such, there were a lot of maintenance issues and the speed at which facility issues are fixed is an issue. For example, at the time of the tour, there was an electrical outage that affected about 20% of the cells, leaving individuals in darkness. Additionally, the perimeter fencing needs updating to prevent potential risk to public safety. At some point, there used to be an electrical and plumbing workline that helped keep the facility maintained. The electrician union previously came to the facility and trained people for the workline, and then people leaving prison would have an income-generating trade and connections to the unions and jobs in high demand. However, that program has not existed for some time.

Special Needs Facility

The Special Needs Facility is no longer in use while the Department of Public Safety considers the cost of repairs. The Special Needs Facility originally opened in 1962 as the Honolulu Jail under

the control of the Honolulu Police Department, was transferred to the State in 1977, and was extensively renovated in the early 1980s. Its condition has deteriorated significantly over the decades and was no longer appropriate for housing. As a result of this closure, staffing shortages at the main facility are reduced, resulting in less mandatory overtime for staff and more posts filled at the main facility.

### Correctional Industries

By the time the tour began, the Correctional Industries was closed for the day (around 2pm). The Hawaii Correctional Industries (HCI) is not as robust as it used to be. Halawa's HCI focuses on commissary for the State, but no specific training on skilled trades that would lead to gainful employment (plumbing, electrical work, welding, etc.). The number one product/service of HCI, according to their website, is, "a productive contributing member of society." The Warden would like to expand HCI to 300 people and update the skills provided to link to gainful employment upon release.

### Learning Center

Education is open Monday through Friday and runs from 8:30-10am, 11:30am-1:30pm, 2:45-4:15pm, and 6:30-8:15pm (*late classes not available on Fridays*). HCF offers GED and college classes through Chaminade University and Windward Community College. The first associate degree graduation from HCF occurred on May 17, 2023. Although the Learning Center was closed during the afternoon while Commissioners toured, it was clear that the Learning Center and adjacent library are well used for programming. The main room in the Center was set up with desks and desktop computers where people in custody could work towards a GED or access other online educational programs. Surrounding classrooms allowed for group classes. The library was adequate, with both legal references and recreational books.

Education has one full-time staff member who runs education for the entire facility. There is also one person in custody on the education workline. Education is down three full-time teachers and one secretary, and two workline positions. It was reported that there have been fewer class cancellations due to security staff shortages lately.

### Kitchen

The kitchen was clean and very orderly. A worker assembly line was preparing food, packing food, and cleaning the dishes. One Commissioner reviewed the refrigerator and pantry areas, which were in very good order with visible temperature gauges above each refrigerator door. One of the steamers was overflowing with water and was scheduled to be fixed within the next day or two. There was also a sink pipe leaking water continuously toward the back of the kitchen. While there were some tiles missing on the floors and walls, the kitchen was overall clean. The Commission did not hear major complaints about the food during the tour.

### Medical/Mental Health Infirmary

The infirmary was made up of two units – one for the medically ill and the other for the mentally ill with 13 cells in each of the units. The cells on the medical side had two people per cell, while on the mental health side, people are single-celled. On the day of the tour, there were 26 people on the infirmary side of medical and 12 on the mental health side. The infirmary is for people who need full-time medical care, similar to the care provided in a hospital or nursing home. The

population on the mental health side is similar to those in a State Hospital in terms of psychiatric care and observation.

The medical side was overcrowded, and it was hard to believe that any of the men are still considered a threat to the public based on their conditions and state of mind. Some of the medically ill individuals were long-term residents of the infirmary, with one individual informing the Commission that he had been there for five years (unconfirmed by staff). Many of the mentally ill individuals will remain in the unit, single-celled in individual suicide-proof cells, for extended periods of time as well.

Nursing staff conduct sick calls in the modules, with those needing follow-up referred to the medical unit. Staff told Commissioners that healthcare staffing is “always a struggle,” and that weekends are particularly difficult. A large percentage of the staff are traveling nurses. The medical records backlog is getting smaller, but there is still a significant backlog.

#### Special Holding Unit (SHU)

The Special Holding Unit, made up of 44 cells broken down into smaller sections separated by glass, is used for disciplinary segregation, protective custody, and the seriously mentally ill. During the visit, eight cells were assigned to individuals in protective custody who also identify as gang members. Even with multiple uses, not all cells were occupied, implying that there was adequate restrictive housing space available to the facility.

Four cells in the Special Holding Unit (SHU) were used for the serious mentally ill. Those housed in the SHU are visited by the mental health staff several times during the day, participate in individual and group therapy, and have access to individual outdoor recreation.

Four small recreation yards were available, and individuals are offered two hours a day of recreation if they so choose. However, the recreation yards had no covering, leaving them to be very hot in the direct sunlight. Additionally, the recreation yards are required to be utilized on an individual basis, and there was no weight equipment, hand balls, or other items within the recreation yards that people could occupy themselves with. There is not enough recreation space for each person in the SHU to individually recreate for one hour per day, which is a correctional standard. Lastly, the yards were surrounded by cement with no access to view nature or greenery.

#### Module 1

The facility has four modules of the same design with 124 cells broken down into two blocks with four quads of 15 to 16 cells each. Security staff are in boxes separated from the incarcerated population by glass and then bars and communicate with people in custody through a muffled microphone. Unfortunately, this structure does not allow as much face-to-face contact and communication with the incarcerated population.

One of these quads was designated for a mental health population that didn’t require 24-hour care or supervision but also couldn’t operate safely in the general population unit. The facility added mental health offices right off the quad so mental health staff can be close to the population.

The Commissioners were informed that there was one Unit Team Manager and two social workers assigned to each module. However, the facility has eight (8) social work vacancies which results in high caseloads (80+ people per social worker) for the existing social workers. It was discouraging to Commissioners to see a note on the Unit Team Manager's door that read in bold letters, "DO NOT ENTER." It was unclear if that message was meant for staff, people in custody, or both.

The module was generally clean, and the people in custody were fairly quiet. Some of the upper-level cells have not been used for housing in years as leaks from the roof shortened the electrical systems. Commissioners did speak to a few people who informed them that they were out of their cells for most of the day, either interacting with each other, watching TV, or playing board games. However, idleness was still a problem for many who were not assigned worklines, in correctional industries, or participating in Learning Center programs.

There were two outdoor recreation yards in each module - small yards made of concrete with little more than a basketball net. Although there is a very large grassy outdoor recreation area on the mauka end of the facility, it has rarely (if ever) been used for that purpose since the facility first opened in 1987 and is not currently used.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1) Increasing non-security staffing must be a priority for transitioning to a rehabilitative and therapeutic system.**

The two main staffing shortages that the Commission learned about were in the Learning Center and social work. Education has one full-time staff member who runs education for the entire facility with assistance from one individual from the workline. Education is down three full-time teachers, one secretary, and two workline positions. Additionally, the facility has eight (8) social work vacancies which results in high caseloads (80+ people per social worker) for the existing social workers.

According to the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) website,

*Social Workers and Human Services Professionals seek to improve the overall quality of life of people within the context of their environment through the remediation and prevention of their problems, and by improving accessibility, accountability and coordination of service delivery among a variety of professionals and/or agencies tasked with providing appropriate services to clients. These professionals come from a variety of interdisciplinary bases, establish working relationships of mutual respect and trust with the clientele served, and utilize a variety of helping interventions to enable these clients to function as effectively as possible.*

The facility cannot fulfill the essential mission and purpose of the Department of Public Safety and forthcoming Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation without staff in these crucial roles. The Learning Center and social work positions are imperative for rehabilitative and therapeutic services.

The Department should not only prioritize filling these vacancies but work directly with DHRD to lessen the amount of time it takes to go through the interview and hiring processes.

**2) Permanently close the Special Needs Facility.**

Since the temporary closing of the Special Needs Facility, staffing shortages have eased, resulting in less mandatory overtime. The Special Needs Facility is extremely restrictive, does not have a functioning outdoor recreation space, and is not a conducive or healthy environment for staff to work in. Additionally, it appears that Halawa does not need the additional space that the Special Needs Facility provided. Repairs will be extremely expensive as the Special Needs Facility, and at this point, could be considered unnecessary.

**3) Prioritize and expedite Capital Improvement Projects to repair electricity and the perimeter fence.**

The lack of updated perimeter fencing poses a danger to the safety of the community. Similarly, the absence of electricity in at least 20% of cells poses a danger to the safety and well-being of those in custody and puts the Department at considerable risk of litigation. Both are out of step with correctional and safety standards. These updates should be prioritized, funded, and expedited.

**4) Expand the Correctional Industries worklines to include specific training in skilled trades that would lead to gainful employment after incarceration.**

At some point, there used to be an electrical and plumbing workline that helped keep the facility maintained. The electrician union previously came to the facility and trained people in custody, and then people leaving prison would have an income-generating trade and connections to the unions and jobs in high demand. However, that program has not existed for some time. It would benefit the Department to work with skilled trade unions to train individuals in plumbing, electrical, welding, HVAC, etc. This would not only create opportunities for individuals to earn gainful employment upon release, but also help the facility with desperately needed maintenance concerns. Correctional Industry worklines can assist in upkeeping the facilities while learning skills that are at the core of the Hawaii Correctional Industry work.

**5) Increase training and support for uniformed staff.**

To expedite and stay current on uniformed staff training, consider placing or training certified instructors to be onsite full-time at Halawa. This would allow the facility to train staff more efficiently in a way that corresponds to the facility's schedule and specific needs. Also, consider updating the training academy curriculum to better prepare staff for their actual roles onsite at facilities.

**6) Increase training and support for case/unit managers to better meet the population's needs upon release.**

Related to recommendation one above, the role of social workers and unit managers is vital to successful rehabilitation and reentry for people in custody. The Commission is aware that many people in custody are released to the community from Halawa. Here, it would be helpful to identify and offer additional training to support the critical role these staff

members assume. Staff should stay current on local and national best practices in their field. The crucial role of these staff members and the importance of a mindset dedicated to supporting people in custody and their success should be included in the training.

**7) The Department should support legislative efforts towards Compassionate Release or transfer to a more appropriate medical setting for the severely ill.**

People housed in the infirmary need intensive medical and/or psychiatric services and would be better served in a different setting other than a prison. Most individuals on the medical side are not in a physical state to potentially cause harm to another and do not appear to cause a risk to public safety. Additionally, the care for these individuals is particularly expensive for the Department, staff-intensive, and causes strain on the facility overall.