



**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

**Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC)**  
**May 2025 Site Tour Observations**  
**Date of Report: June 12, 2025**

On Thursday, May 8, 2025, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC) collectively as a group. The tour included four of the five Commissioners – Mark Patterson (Chair), Martha Torney, Mark Browning, Ron Ibarra in addition to the Oversight Coordinator and staff. This report encompasses notes from the Commissioners and will be discussed at the monthly public meeting held on June 12, 2025.

General Observations

The rated capacity of KCCC is 128, and during the tour, the headcount of the facility was 84 individuals (67 males, and 17 females) with a 65% occupancy. The Commission is happy to report that the population has lowered by approximately 26% since the Commission last visited in 2024, when the headcount was 117 individuals (96 males, and 21 females) with a 91% occupancy. The pretrial population makes up 52.3% of the KCCC jail population.

KCCC staff provided access to the Commission without any hesitation or issues. Commissioners were able to speak to individuals in custody throughout the facility. The Commission is pleased to report that people in custody are no longer being housed in shipping containers or dayroom spaces at KCCC. This is much needed change and the Commission appreciated the KCCC team and all of their efforts to ensure people are housed appropriately.

Ongoing Construction Projects

There were two critical construction projects underway during the Commission's previous visit in 2024. The first being the sewer main in front of the facility had burst, preventing the utilization of three holding cells adjacent to the administration area, and the second being the water main by the highway being serviced. The Commission was informed that the water main construction has resulted in the delay of much needed remodel of the kitchen.

The construction on the sewer main and water main is complete, no longer preventing the kitchen from being repaired or replaced, or the use of the holding units.

Shipping Container Housing

The shipping containers in front of the administration area were originally used for new intakes and active COVID-19 cases. When the Commission visited in 2024, they were being used as a secure housing unit for women. The Commission is pleased to report that the shipping containers

are no longer being used for housing. This is an important development as staff have reported when utilizing the shipping containers, there were not enough staff to post at the unit, leaving people in custody with no supervision.

### Module A

Module A is the oldest part of the facility, opened in 1977, and is made up of four, three-cell units. Each three-cell unit has a very small dayroom that opens into a larger central dayroom. During the Commission's last visit, the new shower area in Module A had water pooling in the center of the room. The Commission did not observe any water pooling during this visit.

Despite some overcrowding in single-cells, Module A's population has generally improved since the Commission's prior visit. Another notable improvement in Module A is that the dayrooms are no longer being used for sleeping quarters but are serving their intended purpose.

Some people in Module A reported spending 22 hours per day in their cell due to short staffing. The Commission finds this unacceptable as research clearly indicates that more time locked in cells creates more mental health issues and suicide risks, greater tension between people in custody, less safe conditions for staff, and less rehabilitative programming for those in custody.

The law library is located in Module A, a male-only unit, potentially causing access restrictions for females. The Commission observed what appeared to be sign-up sheets for people in custody to make appointments to use the library. The Commission observed that the sign-up sheet had no entries. However, access to the law library is not a complaint the Commission has received from people in custody at KCCC.

### Holding Cells

Three holding cells are located within the Administration area of Module A, with observation windows along the hallway. These are multipurpose cells for administrative segregation and suicide watch. During the Commission's visit in 2024, the holding cells were not in use due to sewage repairs that were being made.

The Commission observed a woman in a holding cell whom staff reported had serious mental health needs. The Commission is concerned that if the woman in custody is exhibiting mental health conditions, the conditions of the holding unit could potentially deteriorate her mental health condition further. Housing women in a men's facility severely limits the facility's ability to ensure women are in an environment that is more conducive to their rehabilitation. The Commission is also concerned that this particular woman is not getting the out of cell time she needs, as people with mental health conditions often require more supervision than those who do not have mental health conditions. The Commission is concerned that extended periods of confinement in holding cells could be detrimental to anyone's reported mental health condition.

### Module B

Module B was added in 1986 and is a unique space with six large cells, allowing a rated capacity of four people in custody assigned to each cell. During the Commission's previous visit in 2024, three double bunks (beds for six individuals) were found in the cell that the Commissioners had visited. The individuals assigned to that cell were deeply concerned with the time spent in their

cells. They claimed they were confined to the cell for 22 hours per day. The population in that cell has improved since the prior visit, now housing 2 individuals, however, it is clear that the amount of time they get out of cell has not changed.

The dayroom is quite large, but all individuals were locked in their cells during the Commission's visit. Staff reported they receive two hours per day of out-of-cell time (22 hours locked down), but sometimes they may receive an additional hour out (21 hours locked down). Additionally, the facility placed steel shutters over the cell door windows, limiting any sight outside of the cell. During the Commission's prior visit in 2024, staff claimed this was for security reasons. Again, the Commission finds this level of in-cell time and isolation unacceptable.

### Module C

Module C, opened in 1997, is an L-shaped building with two large dormitories joined by a multipurpose room in the center and a bathroom for each wing. Each dorm is divided into cubicles with half-walls. The building was under renovation during the Commission's March 2023 visit, and renovations were completed when the Commission visited again in 2024. During the 2024 visit, it was evident that all windows were replaced, and the bathrooms were renovated. The unit was clean, and individuals had considerable freedom of movement within the unit.

On May 8, 2025, Module C was closed due to staffing shortages and a low count of individuals who can be housed in a dorm setting. Exposure to natural light in Module C is significantly less limited than the exposure to natural light in Module A and B cells. With more staffing, Module C could be opened, potentially addressing some of the overcrowding in Module A, and providing a more rehabilitative environment for a larger number of the facility's population.

### Cabins A-C

Cabins A, B and C were originally built as temporary housing for Kauai residents after Hurricane Iniki. The cabins were moved to the facility between 1993 and 1995 as temporary housing but continue to be used today. These units were not included in the 2001 capacity report as they do not meet fire code—no fire suppression system and no second exit. Although the cabins feel tight and overcrowded, there were no complaints from the male or female occupants.

### Kitchen

The facility-wide kitchen and mess hall for Module C and the cabins are in a separate building that is in dire need of replacement. The floors in the kitchen and mess hall were worn through to bare wood in some areas and completely gone in other areas. Plywood had been temporarily laid down to cover missing floorboards, but they were flimsy and extremely dangerous to walk on. The dangerous condition of the floor in the kitchen and mess hall could easily result in serious injury to staff and people in custody. A new floor must be laid as soon as possible.

It is important to note that during the March 2023 tour, the Commissioners noted the same issues and concerns but were told that the kitchen was soon scheduled to be replaced. During the 2024 visit, Commissioners were told work cannot start until the water main was repaired, a project that is now complete. In 2024, Commissioners were also informed that a module system is to be installed behind the existing kitchen which will then be removed, and a kitchen and chow hall will

be built. The conditions have only worsened since the Commission's 2023 and 2024 tours, and it is obvious that nothing has been done to remedy the situation.

The condition of the structure has degraded so significantly that the ability of staff to manage and provide quality meals is in question. One Commissioner noted that the kitchen is in such despair that it should be closed entirely and alternative means of providing meals be considered.

As of May 8, 2025, Commissioners are still being informed that a module system has been ordered but has missed its shipping date several times at a port in California. Once the module is shipped, there are concerns that shipping logistics could cause further delivery delays. Once shipped to Honolulu, the module will most likely have to change barges at Sand Island before being shipped to Nawiliwili Harbor on Kauai. The most direct route from Nawiliwili Harbor to KCCC is approximately 6 miles (13 minutes). Commissioners are concerned that the module could be too heavy for any cargo trucks on the island, and the width of the module may be greater than the width of the road, which would require closing the road when transporting the unit.

As various factors make the exact installation date of the modular kitchen unknown, the Commission does not view the promise of the modular kitchen as a solution to the immediate dangers of the current kitchen. Staff reported that they have estimated the cost of ordering meals from outside sources pending the arrival of the modular kitchen. This may be a solution that is less costly to the State than the lawsuits that could arise from keeping the current kitchen open. Pending the installation of the modular kitchen, the Commission urges DCR to close the current kitchen and immediately implement a temporary food service solution. The Commission has been reporting on this issue since 2023 with no changes made or action taken by administration.

#### Staffing Shortages

Staff burnout was extremely evident during the tour in 2024 and continues to concern the Commission. This appears to be due to severe staffing shortages, consistently long work hours (consistent 16- and 24-hour shifts), and being tasked with multiple posts and multiple roles. For example, the gate post is expected to manage the shipping containers and the furlough population. In reality, those should be three separate posts for three separate officers, however, one officer is expected to run all posts without mistakes. Pure exhaustion has been more evident in KCCC than in any other facility. The Commission believes that KCCC staff are doing the best they can, but they have been forced to work in these same conditions for far too long, and relief is needed as soon as possible.

Staff reported that they may need to return to 24-hour shifts due to staffing shortages being compounded by staff taking leave.

#### Restraint Chair and WRAP Chair

In 2024, the Commission was quite taken aback to discover both a Restraint Chair and a WRAP chair (which uses straps to fully immobilize the body) in the security office of the facility. These restrictive restraints are at the highest level on the use of force continuum. Restraint and WRAP Chairs have caused serious harm to people in custody, resulted in death, and have been subjected to lawsuits in many states. It is an area ripe for misuse and litigation.

The Commission is happy to report that there is no longer a Restraint Chair at KCCC. However, a WRAP chair is still being stored in the security office. Staff in the facility were not aware of any policy governing the use of the chairs but claimed that staff were trained in how to use the WRAP chair. The Commission ensured the Warden has access to confidential policies in his office, and that staff can reference them as needed.

The Commission did not see a log that is maintained while an individual is restrained in the WRAP chair. The Commission was informed that the chair is mostly utilized when an individual is kicking or banging the cell door to protect the individual from injury and the cell from destruction.

**Previous Recommendations to be considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation:**

- 1) Immediately prioritize the construction and replacement of the KCCC kitchen as it poses a dangerous threat to individuals or staff being hurt due to its desperate condition. In the interim, must repair and maintain current flooring.**

The floors in the kitchen and mess hall were worn through to bare wood in some areas and completely gone in other areas. Plywood had been temporarily laid down to cover missing floorboards, but they were flimsy and extremely dangerous to walk on. The dangerous condition of the floor in the kitchen and mess hall could easily result in serious injury to staff and people in custody. A new floor must be laid as soon as possible.

Pending the installation of the modular kitchen, the Commission urges DCR to repair and maintain the floor. The Commission has received complaints from people in custody and staff, and the safety of staff and people in custody is one of the highest responsibilities of the department.

- 2) Ensure individuals in the facility are receiving the most out-of-cell time possible in alignment with a rehabilitative and therapeutic environment.**

In 2024, individuals in Module B claimed to be locked in their cells for 22 hours per day. On May 8, 2025, individuals in Module A and B made the same claim. This, by definition, is considered restrictive housing, also sometimes referred to as solitary confinement.

The Commission understands there are staffing issues that contribute to this issue, and applauds the Department's efforts to fill vacancies. However, if the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is serious about the transition to a therapeutic and rehabilitative system, it is imperative to ensure individuals are not locked down within their cells for such extended periods of time.

Therefore, daily schedules should be posted in all housing units for transparency and accountability regarding programming and out of cell time. This allows individuals in custody to anticipate what is to come, and to hold the staff accountable and ensure programming and out of cell time is completed in a consistent manner.

**Additional recommendations to be considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation:**

**1) Implement 12-Hour Shifts**

The Commission highly recommends implementing 12-hour shifts. This has been requested by the facility after surveying staff and measuring interest. This was also highlighted as an evident solution for KCCC in the [Correctional Staff Survey, Findings, and Recommendations Report](#). In order to eliminate the need for exhausting 24-hour shifts that cause burnout and an increase in leave requests, the Department must try something different than what it is doing now. Having additional staff at the facility can ensure that posts are not understaffed and increase out-of-cell time and safety for people in custody.

**2) Enable all Facilities to Initiate and Process Emergency Hires On-Site**

The Commission highly recommends that DCR allow correctional facilities to conduct on-site emergency hiring to expedite filling vacancies and increase staffing levels that are desperately needed to:

- Monitor the mental health population and ensure the mental health population are housed in the best possible setting for their condition;
- Ensure people in custody have access to out-of-cell time;
- Provide much needed and urgent relief to burnt-out staff; and
- Improve staff morale and retention.

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