

2026 - 2030

Reentry Oversight

Strategic Plan

Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission
Reentry Oversight Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission (HCSOC, the Commission) was established through Act 179, session Laws of Hawai'i 2019, and codified in the Hawai'i Revised Statutes 353L to *ensure transparency, promote safe conditions, and support the transition to a more rehabilitative and therapeutic correctional system.*

The Commission's first agency-wide [Strategic Plan](#) was released on January 1, 2023, and set the four priority areas for the office: oversight, rehabilitation, population limits, and reentry. While this plan aligns with the HCSOC agency's wide strategic goals, it is focused specifically on reentry. It is a living document that will continue to grow as the work evolves, with the goal of building a system that helps people return home with dignity, support, and purpose.

MANDATE

The Commission's mandate is broad and encompasses several different oversight functions. This section delineates each of the Commission's mandated roles—italicized below—and how each relates to reentry.

Per the HRS §353L, the Commission has four core functions:

- 1) *Oversee the State's correctional system and have jurisdiction over investigating complaints at correctional facilities and facilitating a correctional system transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model. HRS § 353-L(b)(1) (2019)*

This section of the mandate can be broken down into three parts:

- *Oversee the State's correctional system.*
 - This work involves routine inspections, data collection and synthesis, and public reporting on correctional institutions and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR).
- *Investigating complaints at correctional facilities.*
 - The Commission will investigate individual complaints – the Commission accepts complaints to inform system-wide monitoring processes to identify and address systemic issues within Hawai'i's correctional system.
- *Facilitating a correctional system transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model.*
 - Given the preamble of Act 179 of 2019, focusing on rehabilitative and therapeutic practices is the core of the Commission's mission and efforts.

2) *Establish maximum inmate population limits for each correctional facility and formulate policies and procedures to prevent the inmate population from exceeding the capacity of each correctional facility. HRS § 353L-3(b)(2) (2019)*

This section of the mandate can be broken down into two parts:

- *Establish maximum inmate population limits for each correctional facility.*
 - This work falls within the Commission's agency-wide agency strategic plan and sets limits based on the American Correctional Association (ACA) and established federal standards to promote safety and health.
- *Formulate policies and procedures to prevent inmate population from exceeding the capacity of each correctional facility.*
 - This serves as the basis for the Commission's reentry work.

3) *Work with the department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in monitoring and reviewing the comprehensive offender reentry program, including facility educational and treatment programs, rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and the Hawaii paroling authority's oversight of parolees. The commission may make recommendations to the department of corrections and rehabilitation, the Hawaii paroling authority, and the legislature regarding reentry and parole services. HRS § 353L-3(b)(3) (2019)*

This section of the mandate can be broken down into two parts:

- *Work with the department of corrections and rehabilitation in monitoring and reviewing the comprehensive offender reentry program, including facility educational and treatment programs, rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and the Hawaii paroling authority's oversight of parolees.*
 - The Commission's focus on monitoring and reviewing the Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program will be specific to the defined requirements outlined in HRS 353H, the transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model, and the specific needs of the population the program, service or agency serves.
- *The Commission may make recommendations to the department of corrections and rehabilitation, the Hawaii paroling authority, and the legislature regarding reentry and parole services.*

4) *Ensure that the comprehensive offender reentry system under chapter 353H is working properly to provide programs and services that result in the timely release of inmates on parole when the minimum terms have been served instead of delaying the release for lack of programs and services. HRS § 353L-3(b)(4) (2019)*

The Commission will assess whether the established performance indicators and requirements from the 353H are being fulfilled and the extent to which the programs and services offered result in timely release at minimums.

A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

The success of a correctional system is not measured by how many people it holds; it is measured by how many people walk out the doors stronger, more prepared, and less likely to return. A justice system that truly serves people must be one that prioritize healing over harm, transformation over punishment, and opportunity over despair. This is not just about changing policies but about changing lives. The Commission is dedicated to utilizing this plan to further restore and build community trust and work with the Department to create pathways for successful reentry – ensuring that every person leaving the system has the support they need to thrive – by promoting equity, expanding access to essential services, uplifting peer-led recovery models, and working alongside system partners to turn second chances into lasting change.

GUIDEPOSTS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

Overseeing the state's correctional system is done through the lens of facilitating a transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model. Below are the standards and principles the Commission will use to guide their inquiry into reentry:

Applicable Legislation:

- [HRS §353](#) Corrections
- [HRS §353L](#) Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission
- [HRS §353H](#) Comprehensive Offender Reentry System
- Reentry specific legislative measures, including Senate and House Concurrent Resolutions related to reentry

National and Generally Accepted Standards for Corrections:

- [American Correctional Association Standards](#)
- [Federal Standards for Prisons and Jails](#)
- Generally accepted national practices for conditions of confinement

Organizational Policies and Statements:

- [Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Hawaii Paroling Authority, Parole Handbook](#)
- [Mission and Values Statements](#) for the new Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- Mission and Values Statements for the Hawaii Judiciary, Prosecuting Attorneys, Public Defenders, Hawaii Paroling Authority, and other relevant parties

Facilitating a Correctional System Transition to a Rehabilitative and Therapeutic Model:

- [Hoe Amau: The current state of reentry in Hawaii](#)
- [Creating Better Outcomes, Safer Communities, House Concurrent Resolution 85 Task Force Report](#)
- Recommendations from the [Native Hawaiian Cultural and Healing Practices and the Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force Report](#)
- [Getting it Right: Recommendations and Action Plan for a Better Jail](#)
- Best Practices in Hawaii, including medical and mental health care treatment and services, substance use treatment, trauma-informed care and treatment, housing and employment stability, education, peer support, and additional practices that will best support and meet the needs of people in custody.

USING THE PLAN

The Commission is mandated to *facilitate a corrections system transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model*. For this core function of and priority area for the Commission, this strategic plan operates with the assumption that, in its most basic form, there are three components to actualize system-wide change:

1. Understanding the status of the system—where we are now.
2. Having a vision for the future of the system—where we want to go.
3. Implementing incremental steps that move toward the vision and away from the status—one step at a time.

These steps are built into this strategic plan and the corresponding work of the Commission.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Taking into account the HCSOC agency-wide strategic plan, the Commission's mandate, and applicable standards and guideposts outlined in this document, the following objectives and priorities were developed to guide the Commission's reentry work. Additionally, this section provides a general framework and understanding of the Commission's approach to each of the priority areas as they relate to reentry.

Hawai'i is in a period of transition—from a system rooted in punishment to one grounded in healing, dignity, and purpose. To truly create a rehabilitated and therapeutic system, it is imperative to understand what people need to be healthy, safe, stable and successful—and then ensure the programs, services, and support inside our facilities meet those needs.

This means gathering both data and lived experiences, listening to people inside and making sure their voices are reflected in what the Commission reports and recommends. It means going into spaces, talking with people in custody, and working with staff to understand where things are breaking down and where things are working. It also means making sure our recommendations aren't just performative.

Please note that some of the objectives and strategies in this section will relate to more than one priority area. For brevity, each objective was included only once under the most relevant priority area.

REHABILITATION

Facilitating a correctional system transition to a rehabilitative and therapeutic model.

As Hawai‘i transitions to a more rehabilitative and therapeutic corrections model, the public perception of incarceration, reentry, and individuals directly impacted by the justice system must also shift. This transition requires a new mindset, one that recognizes people in custody as human beings with potential, not just charges or classifications. The Commission’s role in this shift is to support a rehabilitative model by identifying the gaps within the system.

To be successful, the Commission must understand who is in custody, what their needs are, and where the system is falling short. This fundamental step will guide how the Commission can work with the Department to improve reentry, case management, and further support healing over punishment.

Objective 1: Work with the Department to create a correctional environment where people in custody feel valued, supported, and encouraged in their ability to change, laying the groundwork for hope, healing, and successful reentry.

Strategies:

1. Support opportunities for people in custody to reconnect with their roots through Hawaiian cultural practices—such as mele (song), hula, oli (chant), mo’olelo (storytelling), and working with the ‘āina (land). These activities support healing, restore a sense of identity, and strengthen the connection to values like aloha, pono, and kuleana, creating a foundation for personal growth and transformation.
2. Facilitate connections between facilities and community members who can bring mentorship, cultural guidance, and positive role models, build trust and strengthening ties between people in custody and the broader community.
3. Highlight and support programs, such as prison monologues, that give people in custody a voice and build encourage self-expression and build confidence as they prepare for reentry.

4. Support opportunities for families to stay connected through visits, communication, classes, and activities that strengthen relationships, promote healing, and create a strong support system for reentry.

Objective 2: Uplift the role of human connection in reentry by fostering peer support, strengthening case manager capacity, and encouraging consistent volunteer engagement to inspire hope and positive change.

Strategies:

1. Support peer-led programming to provide mentorship, shared lived experience, and positive role modeling.
2. Support additional training in trauma-informed care, cultural competence, and motivational skills to strengthen connections with individuals in custody.
3. Encourage consistent and diverse volunteer presences inside facilities to build genuine connection between the community and individuals in custody. Having volunteers help reduce isolation and remind people that they are valued and not forgotten.

Objective 3: Work with the Department to increase out-of-cell time across all classifications, recognizing that meaningful activity, social interaction, and access to programming are essential for mental health, rehabilitation, and reducing tension in the facilities.

Strategies:

1. Collaborate with the Department to create a transparent, achievable step-down pathway so people understand exactly what is required to move to lower classification levels and gain increase freedom of movement.
2. Increase opportunities for work assignments, education, and skill-building programs, while adding unique, pro-social incentives such as volley ball tournaments, movie nights, and cultural activities to encourage participation and positive behavior.
3. Support and advocate for legislators efforts that increase out-of-cell time by providing legislators with data, research, and lived experience perspectives on how structured time outside cells improves safety, reduces recidivism, and fosters rehabilitation.

Objective 4: Identify, evaluate and support expansion of successful and promising practices that support rehabilitation, reduce population pressures, and improve reentry outcomes.

Strategies:

1. Collect and synthesize data from stakeholders and partners through data requests, talk stories, and meetings to report on how people are moving through the system including security levels and classifications.
2. Highlight current best and promising practices in Hawaii and other jurisdictions.
3. Offer recommendations and highlight opportunities for collaboration to improve correctional system movement and the classification system to procure better outcomes.

Objective 5: Work with DCR to ensure individuals in max-out population are not overlooked, but instead prioritized for reentry preparation, as they are among the most likely to recidivate.

Strategies:

1. Conduct surveys and interviews with incarcerated individuals approaching max out to understand their needs and reentry barriers, and available support.
2. Recommend implementation of preparation track at least one year prior to max-out, incorporating trauma-informed workshops, reentry planning, and peer support for individuals who will be released without parole supervision.
3. Promote the use of the peer support integration strategy across facilities to ensure those at highest risk of reentering society without supervision receive peer-based guidance and mentorship and connection to resources before and after release.

POPULATION LIMITS

Establish maximum inmate population limits for each correctional facility and formulate policies and procedures to prevent the inmate population from exceeding the capacity of each correctional facility.

As highlighted throughout this plan, the best way to ensure the population does not exceed capacity of each correctional facility is to ensure the programming efforts in place are impactful enough to prevent individuals from coming back into the system. Overreliance on a small number of clean and sober homes often places individuals at different stages of readiness in the same environment, which can hinder recovery and reintegration.

Objective 1: Identify and assess barriers to securing stable housing for individuals preparing for release, and provide recommendations to DCR and other relevant stakeholders to ensure housing and essential community resources are in place prior to reentry.

Strategies:

1. Work with DCR to gather and review information from case managers on pre-release planning efforts at least 90 days prior to release, and report on progress related to securing stable housing.
2. Support the rollout of the 1115 waiver to help connect individuals with care and coverage prior to release, including behavioral health treatment, medications, and medical enrollment.
3. Engage with community housing and program providers across the state to understand available resources, identify potential barriers in working with DCR, and report findings to inform smoother transition process.
4. Advocate for legislation that increase affordable housing, such as 1% housing tax or low income housing credits, with particular attention to undeserved counties including Maui, Kauai, and Hawai'i Island.
5. Support efforts to expanding healing-centered housing, evidence – based residential programs, and community – based supports that offer a range of placement options to meet individuals where they are in their recovery journey.

Objective 2: Support efforts that prepare individuals for success upon release, including access to employment, education, life skills, and community-based resources.

Strategies

1. Pre-release employment planning – Work with DCR to report on efforts to connect individuals with employment opportunities prior to release.
2. Collaborate with legislators on initiatives such as “Unlock the box” to increase employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals.
3. Promote second chance hiring in state agencies by spearheading discussions with state departments on hiring qualified individuals returning from incarceration to help address vacancy rates in the government positions.
4. Work with DCR to track government position vacancies, identify in-demand skill sets, and encourage training program positions in prison that align with actual job openings.

Objective 3: Promote data transparency to track system movement and program effectiveness, identify what works and ensure access to the right programs. Address parole-related delays by exploring approved outside programs, reduce facility populations, and prevent unnecessary incarceration.

Strategies

1. Support the development of real-time reentry dashboard to track facility population and overall program enrollment and update stats on quarterly basis to monitor trends and ensure timely responses to capacity or service gaps.
2. Promote joint planning and open communication between stakeholders including judiciary, probation, parole, law enforcement, and community organizations - to align efforts and prevent unnecessary incarceration.
3. Implement regular assessments of in-custody and community-based programs to determine which produce the highest rates of successful completion and timely release.

REENTRY

Work with the department of corrections and rehabilitation in monitoring and reviewing the comprehensive offender reentry program, including facility educational and treatment programs, rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and the Hawaii paroling authority's oversight of parolees. The commission may make recommendations to the department of corrections and rehabilitation, the Hawaii paroling authority, and the legislature regarding reentry and parole services; and ensure that the comprehensive offender reentry system under chapter 353H is working properly to provide programs and services that result in the timely release of inmates on parole when the maximum terms have been served instead of delaying the release for lack of programs and services.

HRS §353L(3) outlines the Commission's responsibility to monitor and review the Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program and system. The Commission will identify and report on current reentry programs and efforts, identify gaps in services and programs, uplift best and innovative practices that are being pursued, highlight staff and leadership taking on a pioneering role through this transitional period, recommend the expansion of successful efforts, and recommend the implementation of other programs and efforts that would serve the needs of people in custody.

Oversight efforts will emphasize healing-centered and culturally grounded approaches, including trauma-informed care, Native Hawaiian practices, mental health and substance use treatment, education, peer support, and creating a sense of purpose and belonging for those returning home.

Objective 1: Monitor, review, and report on the Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program, including facility educational and treatment programs, rehabilitative services, work furloughs, and the Hawaii paroling authority's oversight of parolees. HRS §353L (3).

Strategies:

1. Review the Department's Request for Proposals (RFPs) and partnerships with community service providers both inside of facilities and in the communities as they relate to the Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program.
2. Conduct an ongoing study of national and local reentry policies, literature, and relevant federal regulations, including public sentiment toward existing practices.
3. Revisit previous Commission recommendations over time and publicly report on adoption, denial, or implementation outcomes.

Objective 2: Ensure that the comprehensive offender reentry system under chapter 353H is working properly to provide programs and services that result in the timely release of inmates on parole when the maximum terms have been served instead of delaying the release for lack of programs and services. HRS §353L(4).

Strategies:

1. Analyze system capacity by reviewing data and treatment plans to determine whether the number and type of available programs can serve the population before their minimum release date.
2. Recommend staffing increase and expand program offerings where gaps are identified to support productive time use and timely parole eligibility.
3. Support DCR, other state and local agencies, and other partners in actualizing program offerings.

Objective 3: Report on and support the status, success, and implementation of beneficial reentry-specific legislative efforts.

Strategies:

1. Identify and publicly report out on proposed bills and resolutions related to reentry.
2. Meet with applicable stakeholders to give feedback on reentry-focused bills.

3. Where applicable, make recommendations to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to support reentry-specific bills and ensure Commissioners are prepared to testify on reentry-specific bills.

OVERSIGHT

Oversee the State's correctional system and have jurisdiction over investigating complaints at correctional facilities.

The Commission will connect with people in custody, staff, leadership, and the community through different avenues and learn more about what is most important to them. On a parallel track, the Commission's complaint intake system will be used to identify priorities of those in custody, and priority areas for the Commission to focus on.

Objective 1: Report facility-specific reentry efforts, including best practices and recommendations.

Strategies:

1. Conduct reentry- focused site visits at individual facilities and compile relevant findings into reports.
2. Use the Commissions stakeholder engagement strategy (e.g., talk stories, surveys, data requests, meetings) to gather input from system- impacted individuals and reentry professionals.
3. Highlight best practices already in place in the Department and make recommendations to further improve reentry efforts and outcomes.

Objective 2: Highlight what is most important to people impacted by the system and those with the greatest opportunity to influence change.

Strategies:

1. Connect with people in custody, correctional staff, leadership, and community members to gauge their top priorities.
2. Receive and track allegations of violations and system-wide complaints pertaining to reentry to ensure accountability.
3. With information gathered, identify priority areas for the Commission's focus.

Objective 3: Serve as a resource and work with DCR and HPA to review applicable policies and procedures, handbooks, and staff training related to reentry to better align with a therapeutic and rehabilitative model.

Strategies:

1. Review current policies, procedures, handbooks, and training modules to assess alignment with the rehabilitative and therapeutic model.
2. Provide recommendations to the DCR and HPA, and include examples of other jurisdiction's policies, procedures, and training content that is embedded in a rehabilitative and therapeutic corrections system.
3. Serve as a resource for agencies and stakeholders seeking to improve their reentry frameworks, with an emphasis on systems change and cultural responsiveness.

MAHALO

The Commission extends our deepest mahalo to the individuals, families, community partners, and justice impacted individuals who continue to share their voices, stories, and insights. Your lived experience is the foundation of this work. To the staff, service providers, policy advocates, and frontline workers who remain committed to reentry, rehabilitation, and healing, your dedication makes systemic change possible.

Me ka ha'aha'a (with humility)

Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission