



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

Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC)
April 2026 Site Tour Observations
Date of Report: May 8, 2026

On Friday, April 17, 2026, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC) collectively as a group. The tour included two of the five Commissioners – Mark Patterson (Chair), Ron Ibarra in addition to staff. The Commission extends its deepest gratitude to Becky Like and Michael Miranda from the Kaua'i County Office of the Prosecuting Attorney for joining the Commission and engaging in a meaningful conversation about coordinating the continuity of care for reentry efforts. This report encompasses notes from the Commissioners and will be discussed at the monthly public meeting held on May 14, 2026.

General Observations

The Commission is pleased to report that the overall population at KCCC remains low compared to 65% occupancy last year. The rated capacity for KCCC is 128. Based on the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) Weekly Population Report dated April 13, 2026, the facility's headcount stands at 85 individuals (72 males and 13 females) with a 66.4% capacity (<https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2026-04-13.pdf>).

KCCC staff provided the Commission with access to the facility without any hesitation or issues.

Last year, in May 2025, the Commission was pleased to report that people in custody were no longer being housed in shipping containers or dayroom spaces at KCCC. This was a much needed change and the Commission appreciated the KCCC team and all their efforts to ensure people are housed appropriately.

This year, during the tour on April 17, 2026, the Commission learned that 4 people were being housed in the container units due to mental health or behavioral issues. People with behavioral or mental health issues often need to be housed independently for their safety and the safety of others, which can cause some housing units to become crowded, even when the facility is under capacity.

The Commission learned that two dayrooms, which have a capacity for six people, were housing eight people and nine people respectively, while two other dayrooms, with the same capacity, housed four and two people respectively. See “Shipping Container Housing” and “Module A” below for more information.

Ongoing Construction Projects

The Commission is delighted to celebrate the successful installation and full operation of the new modular kitchen. This milestone marks a monumental achievement for KCCC, effectively mitigating serious safety concerns presented by large holes in the floor of the previous kitchen. This successful update reflects a commendable commitment to infrastructure excellence and the well-being of staff and people in custody.

The Commission has learned that the previous kitchen and dining area are being renovated. When renovations are complete, the new modular kitchen will be interconnected with the renovated space.

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 was pleased to report in May 2025, that the shipping containers were no longer being used for housing. This was 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.

On April 17, 2026, the Commission learned that the containers are being used again to house individuals with mental and behavioral health needs who require single-cell housing.

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.

The Commission's findings noted an imbalance in capacity and overcrowding:

- **Unit 1:** Housed **4 people** (under capacity)
- **Unit 2:** Housed **8 people** (2 over capacity)
- **Unit 3:** Housed **2 people** (under capacity)
- **Unit 4:** Housed **9 people** (3 over capacity)

While two of the dayrooms were over capacity, the remaining two were under-utilized despite all four units having the same six-person capacity.

Last year the Commission noted an overall improvement in Module A's population but noted some overcrowding in the dayrooms due to the need for single-cell housing.

This year's headcount indicates that KCCC has maintained its prior improvement with lowering the overall population, but the capacity imbalance in Module A has not changed due to an ongoing need for single-cell placement and staffing shortages.

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, located behind a secured door, had limited entries. It should be noted that HCSOC has not received any complaints from people in custody at KCCC pertaining to access to the law library. A standardized portion of the Commission's review process of a facility's law library is apparent and readies access to the Commission's annual public reports. During this most recent visit, all Commission annual reports appeared to be absent from the law library.

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.

The Commission observed an exchange in the holding area between staff and a PIC that reflected an ongoing positive relational dynamic between KCCC staff and people in custody.

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 and a large dayroom in a central area.

On April 17, 2026, Module B's four 4-person cells were filled as follows: 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.

On April 17, 2026, Module B's 4-person cells were filled as follows:

- **Unit 1:** Housed **7 people** (1 over capacity)
- **Unit 2:** Housed **6 people** (at capacity)
- **Unit 3:** Housed **7 people** (1 over capacity)
- **Unit 4:** Housed **6 people** (at capacity)
- **Unit 5:** Housed **8 people** (2 over capacity)
- **Unit 6:** Housed **6 people** (at capacity)

Additional information indicates that the population for each cell can vary throughout the day due to the transient nature of the jail population. For example, records indicate that, at approximately 7:00 am on April 17, 2026, **Unit 5** housed **4 people**. At approximately 10:30 am, and for the remainder of the day, **Unit 5** housed **8 people**. This data suggests that, in a jail setting, overcrowding or undercrowding can change on an hourly basis.

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 number 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.

On April 17, 2026, Module C remains closed due to staffing shortages, a low number of individuals who can be housed in a dorm setting, and renovations to the previous kitchen, which is in close proximity to Module C.

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.

Kitchen

The Commission is pleased to report that the new modular kitchen has been installed and is now fully operational at KCCC. This significant development directly addresses the long-standing and critical safety concerns regarding the previous structure's flooring and overall degradation.

The Commission wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the KCCC leadership for their persistence in overcoming the complex shipping and logistical hurdles that previously delayed this project. The transition to this modern, functional unit represents a commendable commitment to the safety and well-being of both the staff and the people in custody.

Staffing Shortages

The Commission remains deeply concerned regarding the persistent staffing shortages at the Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC), which continue to impact facility operations and personnel well-being.

These prolonged conditions are unsustainable. The reliance on exhausting shifts not only impacts staff morale and retention but also limits the facility's ability to provide adequate out-of-cell time and supervision for the population in custody.

To address these critical issues, the Commission continues to recommend the implementation of 12-hour shifts

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

1) 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.