



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
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HON. RONALD IBARRA (ret.)
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January 2, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

In accordance with Chapter 353L-6, I am submitting the monthly Oversight Coordinator Report for the month of December. This report includes actions taken by the Commission and expenses for the preceding month. This report may be reviewed electronically at <http://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/reports>.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 808-900-2200.

Respectfully,

Christin Johnson
Oversight Coordinator

Enclosure

c: Governor's Office
Legislative Reference Bureau Library (1 hard copy)



Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission

Monthly Oversight Coordinator Report – December 19 2024

Contents

Introduction..... 3
Death in Custody..... 3
Budget Request 3
Tour of Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF)..... 4
Tour of Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF)..... 6
Current Projects 7
Expenses for the Preceding Month – November 10
General Office Information..... 10
Monthly Meetings..... 11

Introduction

In accordance with Chapter §353L-6, the Oversight Coordinator shall submit a monthly report to the Commission, the Governor, and the Legislature. The monthly report shall include actions taken by the Commission and expenses for the preceding month. In addition to the mandated parties this report must be shared with, the Oversight Coordinator publicly posts the monthly report to increase transparency and accountability. This report will also be shared with each individual who has the responsibility of appointing members of the Commission. This includes:

- 1) Governor of Hawaii
- 2) President of the Hawaii Senate
- 3) Speaker of the Hawaii House of Representatives
- 4) Hawaii Supreme Court Chief Justice
- 5) Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

The Oversight Coordinator monthly reports are released on the third Thursday of each month to align with monthly Commission meetings where this report is publicly discussed.

Death in Custody

- 1) **Late Notice¹**: On October 20, 2024, a person in custody, male, 34 years old, was found unresponsive in his cell with a sheet around his neck at the Halawa Correctional Facility. Staff immediately cut the sheet from the individual, called 911 Emergency Services, and performed CPR until EMS arrived. The individual was transported to Pali Momi, where life saving measure continued, but unfortunately at approximately 6:04pm, the individual was pronounced deceased by the attending ER doctor. This incident appears to be suicide.
- 2) On Thursday, December 5, 2024, around 2:15am, a person in custody, male, 33 years old, was found unresponsive in his cell with a sheet around his neck at the Halawa Correctional Facility. Staff immediately cut the sheet from the individual, called 911 Emergency Services, and performed CPR until EMS arrived. Around 3:46am, the individual was unfortunately pronounced deceased by the City and County EMT. This incident appears to be suicide, which is the fourth suicide this year.

Budget Request

The Commission submitted its budget request for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027. This budget request reflects the office, travel, and personnel needs in order to establish responsible, efficient, and transformative oversight practices in the State of Hawaii.

Initially, the HCSOC requested \$572,749 for FY26 and \$403,217 for FY27 which included a Prison Oversight Specialist, two Research and Policy Associates, a Clerical Assistant, a case management system, consultant costs for a bed utilization study, inter-island and

¹ The Department notified the Commission in a timely manner, however, the Commission accidentally missed it as there were two deaths that occurred within one day of each other – Oct 20 and Oct 21. The October 21 death was reported in the November, 2024 Oversight Coordinator report.

mainland correctional facility travel, memberships and conferences, and operational expenses. Budget and Finance released their budget recommendations which removed one Research and Policy Associate, a Clerical Assistant, a case management system, and a consultant for a bed utilization study bringing the request down to 172,863 for FY26 and 259,445 for FY27.

The Commission appealed to the Governor’s Office and the case management was incorporated back in the request bringing the final request to 196,863 for FY26 and \$271,445 for FY27. The full request is below:

	<u>FY 26</u>	<u>FY 27</u>
Reentry Oversight Specialist	10,000	10,000
Jail Oversight Specialist	10,000	10,000
Prison Oversight Specialist	48,188	96,376
Research & Policy Associate	38,394	76,788
Inter-island Correctional Facility Travel	17,245	17,245
Mainland Correctional Facility Travel	31,520	31,520
Memberships and Conferences	11,816	11,816
Office Operational Expenses	5,700	5,700
B&F Recommendation	172,863	259,445
Case Management System	24,000	12,000
Governor Decision	196,863	271,445

The Commission looks forward to this upcoming legislative session in hopes of being granted the above funding.

Tour of Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF)

On Thursday, November 21, 2024, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF) collectively as a group. The tour included two Commissioners, Ron Ibarra and Martha Torney, in addition to Commission staff.

Below are recommendations to be considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation which stemmed from the HCF tour. The full report can be read at: <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/facility-specific-reports/>.

Recommendations:

- 1) Increase the Population at Waiawa as Waiawa is One of the Most Rehabilitative Facilities in Hawaii**

The DCR has not fulfilled this recommendation, and in fact, the population numbers at KCF and WCF (both minimum custody) are worse in 2024 than they were in 2023. The same chart below was utilized in the Commission’s November 2024 report regarding the Kulani Correctional Facility tour, but it seems worth repeating for the purpose of highlighting the lack of rehabilitative beds utilized in both KCF and WCF.

Waiawa is one of the most rehabilitative facilities in Hawaii and sits around 50% capacity. As of November 2023, there were around 240 people in custody at Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) and Saguaro Correctional Facility in Arizona (AZSC) with a custody status of minimum or below. In October 2024, there were around 260.

2023 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications							
Male Prison	Community	Minimum	Medium	Close	Maximum	Unclassified	Total Population
AZSC	--	53	455	369	--	--	877
HCF	4	183	435	187	2	11	822
WCF	27	154	--	--	--	--	181
KCF	24	61	--	--	--	--	85

Source: Hawaii Department of Public Safety Roster, Dated Nov. 13, 2023

2024 Hawaii Male Prison Security Classifications							
Male Prison	Community	Minimum	Medium	Close	Maximum	Unclassified	Total Population
AZSC	--	77	506	411	--	--	994
HCF	6	179	306	204	6	5	706
WCF	23	113	--	--	--	--	136 - DECREASE FROM 2023
KCF	13	65	--	--	--	--	78 - DECREASE FROM 2023

Source: Hawaii Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Roster, Dated Oct. 14, 2024

- 2) *Expand the Opportunity to be Housed at a Minimum-Security Facility to Those who are Medically Frail*

In general, those with medical conditions that impact their ability to work should not be deprived of living in less restrictive environments and stepping down in preparation for release. However, this recommendation has not been fulfilled.

- 3) **Identify a Vessel to Donate Excess Produce to the Community**

One factor limiting farm production at WCF is the facility's inability to donate excess produce, therefore the Commission recommended that DCR leadership

work with WCF to find an avenue for produce donation in a timely manner (like Correctional Industries, for example). This recommendation has not been fulfilled.

Tour of Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF)

On Thursday, December 5, 2024, the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission (the Commission, HCSOC) toured the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) collectively as a group. The tour included four of the five Commissioners – Mark Patterson (Chair) Martha Torney, Ron Ibarra, Mark Browning, in addition to Commission staff.

Below are recommendations to be considered by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation which stemmed from the HCF tour. The full report can be read at:

<https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/facility-specific-reports/>.

Recommendations:

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

Last year, the two main staffing shortages that the Commission learned about were in the Learning Center and social work. At the time, education was down three full-time teachers, one secretary, and two workline positions leaving one full time employee to run all educational programs. Additionally, the facility had eight (8) social work vacancies which resulted in high caseloads (80+ people per social worker) for the existing social workers.

During the Commissions visit, it was confirmed that there are no social work vacancies, and that education vacancies had gone down from four vacancies to two (education supervisor and office assistant). The Commission congratulates the Department on their success with aggressive recruitment tactics for filling these imperative positions.

2) Permanently close the Special Needs Facility.

Although the Special Needs Facility is closed now, it is unclear if that is a permanent decision.

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

Both projects have been funded and are currently being executed.

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

This recommendation has not been fulfilled.

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.

This recommendation has not been fulfilled.

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.

This recommendation has not been fulfilled.

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.

The DCR has refused to support or stay neutral on compassionate release. Instead, the DCR has testified against compassionate release legislation.

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.

Current Projects

Corrections Staff Survey and Report

Consistent with the Commission's mandate to investigate complaints at correctional facilities, the HCSOC staff are focusing on an all-encompassing staff survey to better

understand the corrections environment; enhance data collection capacities to promote transparency and accountability; and recommend evidence-based programs and policies to improve conditions for those working in our jails and prisons.

The Commission is fortunate to have support for this project from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR), the United Public Workers (UPW) Hawaii, the Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), and the cooperation of facility leadership. Although this will be an independent project to distribute and gain perspectives from staff, the HCSOC looks forward to working closely with UPW, HGEA, DCR, facility leadership, and staff on solutions.

Commission staff are currently working on the written report outlining findings and recommendations. The report will be released in January 2025.

Reentry Report

Consistent with the Commission's mandate to work with the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DCR) in monitoring and reviewing the comprehensive offender reentry program, HCSOC staff are currently working on a reentry report in accordance with the reentry portion of the Commission's mandate:

- 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. HRS §353L-3(b)(3)
- 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 people in custody on parole when the maximum terms have been served instead of delaying the release for lack of programs and services. HRS §353L-3(b)(4)

The Commission will compile the HCSOC's first reentry report, outlining findings, highlighting best practices, and offering recommendations. The report is due to be published in early 2025.

House Concurrent Resolution 23 Task Force

House Concurrent Resolution No. 23 ([HCR23 HD1 SD1](#)) requests the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission to convene a task force to examine and make recommendations regarding the Hawaii Paroling Authority's existing procedures for setting the minimum terms of imprisonment. Mark Patterson, HCSOC Chair, is chairing this task force.

The HCR 23 Task Force is required to do the following:

- Study whether parole system models used by other states might be suited for Hawaii.
- Examine and compare the minimum sentences issued by the HPA and, in certain instances by the courts, to determine whether there are significant differences.
- Recommend whether the administration of justice may be better served by removing the responsibility of setting minimum sentences from the HPA.

The [Council of State Governments](#) (CSG) has been supporting the HCR 23 Task Force. The CSG's Justice Center is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents state officials in all three branches of government. Their mission is to provide research driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

The Commission has dedicated a page on its website to the HCR23 Task Force: <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/hcr23-task-force/>. This webpage has information on the expectations of the task force, members, expected outcomes, partnerships, and meeting information. Meetings will be live-streamed and can be viewed on the Commission's [Facebook](#) page or [YouTube](#) channel.

The task force recently concluded its last meeting on September 12 after having research findings presented from the CSG and the Criminal Justice Research Institute (CJRI). A report on findings from the task force meetings and potential recommendations will be released soon.

Expenses for the Preceding Month – November

	Cost	Qty	Total	Notes
Office Equipment and Supplies			\$256	
Office Furniture			\$0.00	
General Office Supplies			\$0.00	
Staff and Commission Badges			\$0.00	
Staff and Commission Badge Holders			\$0.00	
Cell Phone			\$0.00	
Cell Phone Monthly Plan	\$172.87	1.00	\$172.87	
Wifi Hotspot			\$0.00	
Heroku Monthly Plan - Complaint Management	\$65.00	1.00	\$65.00	
Elastic Cloud Monthly Plan - Complaint Management	\$18.17	1.00	\$18.17	
Other Current Expenditures			\$0.00	
Inter-Island Correctional Facility Travel			\$548.72	
Airfare	\$137.18	4.00	\$548.72	Commission travel
Car Rental			\$0.00	
Daily Per Diem			\$0.00	
Lodging+Tax			\$0.00	
Ground Transportation			\$0.00	
Airport Parking			\$0.00	
Per Diem - Misc			\$0.00	
Mainland Correctional Facility Travel			\$0.00	
Airfare			\$0.00	
Car Rental			\$0.00	
Daily Per Diem			\$0.00	
Lodging+Tax			\$0.00	
Ground Transportation			\$0.00	
Airport Parking			\$0.00	
Memberships + Conferences			\$0.00	
NACOLE (National Assoc. for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement)			\$0.00	
National Association of Sentencing Commissions			\$0.00	
NACOLE Virtual Training			\$0.00	
Going Home Hawaii Reentry Summit			\$0.00	
Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice			\$0.00	
Airfare			\$0.00	
Car Rental			\$0.00	
Daily Per Diem			\$0.00	
Lodging+Tax			\$0.00	
Ground Transportation			\$0.00	
Airport Parking			\$0.00	
Baggage Fee			\$0.00	
TOTAL			\$804.76	

* All expenses reflect posted transactions procured

General Office Information

Mailing Address: Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission
 235 S Beretania Street, 16th floor
 Honolulu, HI 96813

Website: <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov>

Submit Testimony: <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/submit-testimony/>

Email: hcsoc@hawaii.gov

Social Media: [YouTube](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)

Monthly Meetings

This report will be discussed at the monthly Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission meeting held on December 19, 2024. The next monthly meeting is scheduled to occur on January 16, 2024, at the Leiopapa A. Kamehameha Building, 235 S Beretania St., Room 203, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813 and online via Zoom. More information can be found on the Commission's webpage here: <https://hcsoc.hawaii.gov/information/>.