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Office of the Ombuds for Corrections  
**Annual Report 2023**

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# Message from the Ombuds for Corrections

Please find the 2023 annual report of the Office of the Ombuds for Corrections.

The challenges within corrections continue to grow for staff, incarcerated people, and their loved ones. The Office of the Ombuds for Corrections continues to work hard to address these challenges by providing independent and impartial investigations, reports, and recommendations to resolve complaints and improve policies. The work of the office increases safety, wellbeing, equity, accountability, and transparency within corrections, promoting safer and more just communities for all Minnesotans.

This year provided additional opportunities for growth with the addition of new staff and process transitions. We continued to meet the challenges of being a small office with big tasks and had many successes in resolving complaints and changing correctional policies.

We have received and responded to over 514 complaints from incarcerated individuals, corrections staff, and concerned family and community members, and conducted over 60 investigations. Our office has also conducted several systemic investigations; worked with our stakeholder advisory group; completed a collaborative pilot project with the Department of Corrections to better communicate and support loved ones of incarcerated people, and developed an extensive report related to communication costs in facilities. This annual report provides details on our efforts and highlights a few resolution narratives.

At the close of 2023, the OBFC continues to fulfill its important statutory role of promoting “the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections.”

With appreciation for the challenges and with deep resolve to continue towards a more just Minnesota, I submit this document in compliance with Minnesota Statutes 241.95, subdivision 2, which requires the Ombudsperson to report annually on functions during the preceding year.

We look forward to more accomplishments and progress in 2024.



Margaret Zadra  
Ombudsperson for Corrections

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|--|-----------|
| <b>Message from the Ombuds for Corrections</b> .....     | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>General Office Information</b> .....                  | <b>2</b>  |
| Mission.....   | 2         |
| Jurisdiction and Role .....                              | 2         |
| Local Facility Jurisdiction .....                        | 2         |
| Budget.....  | 2         |
| <b>Complaints and Outcomes</b> .....                     | <b>3</b>  |
| Complaint Process .....                                  | 3         |
| Minnesota Prisons .....                                  | 3         |
| Local Facilities.....                                    | 3         |
| Staff Complaints .....                                   | 3         |
| Community Complaints .....                               | 4         |
| Complaints to the OBFC.....                              | 4         |
| Resolved Complaint Examples.....                         | 6         |
| <b>Systemic Investigations</b> .....                     | <b>9</b>  |
| Cost of Connections .....                                | 10        |
| Shower Accommodations .....                              | 10        |
| Transport.....   | 11        |
| Sexual Assault .....                                     | 11        |
| <b>Community Engagement and Education</b> .....          | <b>12</b> |
| Family and Friends of Incarcerated Group Pilot.....      | 12        |
| OBFC Advisory Group .....                                | 13        |
| Committees.....  | 13        |
| State Correctional Facilities Security Audit Group ..... | 13        |
| 2911 Rules Advisory Committee .....                      | 13        |
| <b>Legislative Recommendations and Request</b> .....     | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....                                  | <b>14</b> |

# General Office Information

## Mission

The mission of the Minnesota Office of the Ombuds for Corrections (OBFC) is, “to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections.”<sup>1</sup>

## Jurisdiction and Role

Minnesota statute grants the OBFC authority to receive and investigate complaints about any state or local corrections agency. The OBFC can accept complaints from incarcerated individuals in Minnesota, concerned family members, corrections staff, and community members. The OBFC can investigate individual complaints and systemic issues that the Ombuds determines need review, work to resolve them, conduct investigations, make recommendations to agency leadership and the Legislature, and publish reports.

The office is separate and independent from the Department of Corrections (DOC). Details on the authority and responsibilities of the OBFC can be found in Minnesota Statutes, [chapter 241](#), sections 90-95.

## Local Facility Jurisdiction

[Minnesota Statutes, 241.91](#) gives OBFC jurisdiction to investigate local adult and juvenile correctional facilities. However, the statute also requires that the similar services provided by Minnesota Department of Corrections Inspection and Enforcement (I&E) not be duplicated. The OBFC and the DOC have entered into an agreement, as required by statute, granting the DOC primary jurisdiction for local facility compliance complaints. The OBFC may investigate systemic and discretionary policy issues and make recommendations for changes.

## Budget

The OBFC has seven full time staff who receive, investigate, and resolve complaints regarding 11 prisons and 150 local adult and juvenile facilities statewide, with a typical daily population of over 17,000 persons and over 210,000 intakes and releases over the course of a year. However, for most of calendar year 2023, the office had only four FTE, which brought challenges, but also provided significant salary savings, so that no layoffs were necessary. Critical trainings and IT investments were funded.

The OBFC budget was \$753,000 for FY23 and \$ 1.1 million for FY24. All funding is from the General Fund. Given the important work and benefits of the office, the cost is minimal for a significant resource; for comparison, the OBFC budget equals about one tenth of one percent of the DOC budget.

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Statutes, 241.90 (2020), <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/241.90>.

# Complaints and Outcomes

A central focus for the OBFC is receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints from incarcerated individuals and others. Some complaints are quickly resolved or the OBFC provides resources and referral to the appropriate entity, and some are referred for deeper investigation or are used to inform future policy investigations.

## Complaint Process

Prior to filing a complaint, the OBFC requires incarcerated individuals to have reasonably pursued resolution of their issues through the internal administrative and grievance procedures at their facilities. This protects the integrity of that important agency grievance process as well as the legal rights of incarcerated persons. However, this requirement may be waived if there is not a process, or the process is not working as it should. Correspondence to and from the OBFC is protected, and staff of corrections agencies are not permitted to read it.

### Minnesota Prisons

Incarcerated individuals in DOC facilities use the OBFC's official form to file complaints via the mail. The OBFC complaint form is available in facility libraries.

### Local Facilities

The office has jurisdiction to accept complaints from incarcerated persons and residents of local correctional facilities, including all adult and juvenile facilities licensed by the DOC Inspections and Enforcement Unit. The local facilities page on the OBFC website at <https://mn.gov/obfc/localfacilities/> instructs individuals with complaints about local correctional facilities to follow facility grievance processes, contact appropriate local authorities, and contact I&E regarding possible violations of state law or promulgated rules before raising concerns with the Ombuds. The web page provides specific details for juvenile facilities and information for immigration detention as well.

### Staff Complaints

The OBFC is required by statute to focus on issues that impact the administration of corrections and may investigate complaints from staff about agency actions or policies that specifically and uniquely impact the administration of corrections. The OBFC requires that employees seek resolution through established agency processes but may investigate when these processes are not in place or are ineffective. The Ombuds refers staff to internal processes and procedures when complaints pertain to an agency employee's employment status or to law enforcement for any possible criminal matters. The OBFC has provided information for corrections staff on the office's complaint process and investigations.

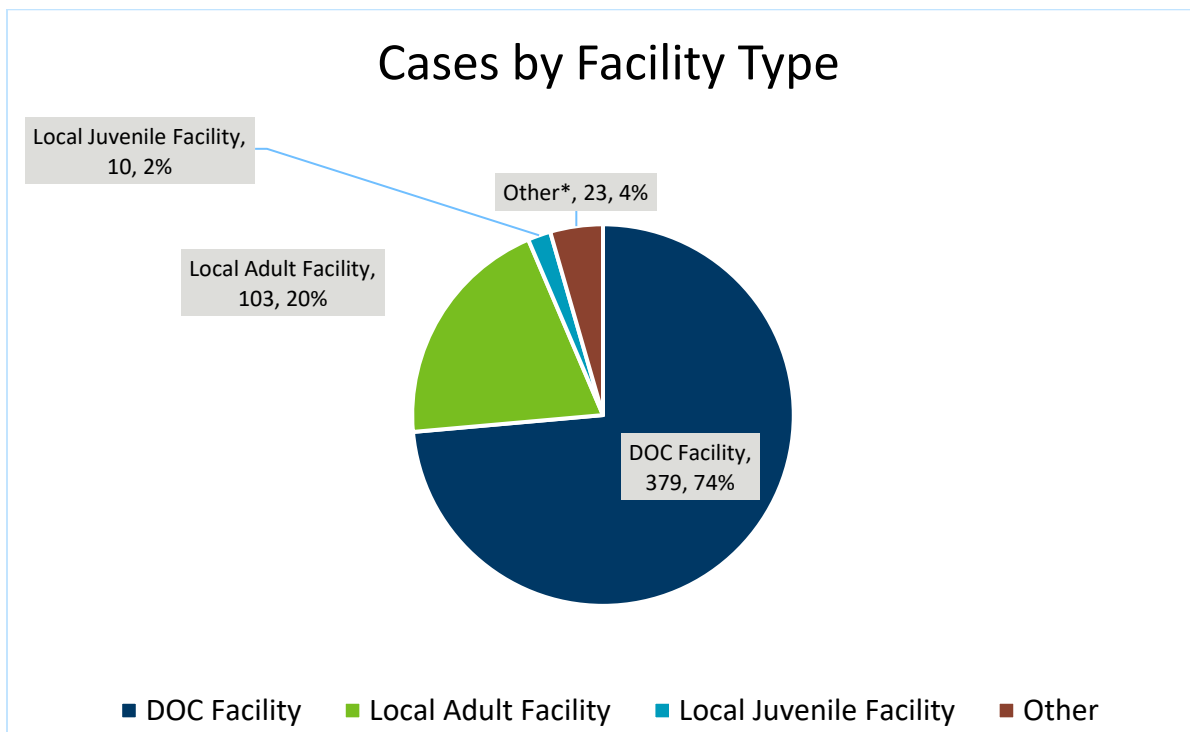
## Community Complaints

Family members, advocates, and others may file a complaint using the form available on the OBFC website or following other options for contacting the office as provided on the website. The OBFC will not conduct investigations on behalf of an incarcerated person without gaining their consent, unless the individual is unable to consent, or other unusual circumstances exist.

## Complaints to the OBFC

In the past year, the office handled more than 514 complaints. In response, the office has initiated investigations, compiled case-specific information, and worked to resolve issues as appropriate. In more than three-fourths of the cases from 2023, the OBFC was able to conclude preliminary investigations through early resolution. Early resolution includes providing information or resources, referrals to relevant agencies, or alerting facility to concerns and assisting in providing a resolution within a few days. The office conducted over 60 in-depth investigations. The vast majority of complaints received by the office are responded to and resolved within a week, and most investigations are resolved within 45 days. Occasionally more complex cases and systemic investigations take six months or longer to resolve, but all cases are resolved as timely as possible with the resources and capacity of the office.

Almost 75% of complaint cases were from or regarding DOC facilities. The remaining complaints were regarding local facilities or entities listed as “other.” “Other” includes entities not under OBFC jurisdiction such as complaints about federal facilities, public defenders, or probation or parole officers. Information about where to file those complaints is provided to complainants whenever possible.



Complaint subjects are listed below by facility type. Each complaint may include multiple complaint subjects so total of complaint subjects does not equal number of complaints per facility.

| <b>Number of Complaint Subjects by Facility Type</b> |                       |                               |                                  |              |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Complaint Subject</b>                             | <b>DOC Facilities</b> | <b>Local Adult Facilities</b> | <b>Local Juvenile Facilities</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| Accommodations including for aging and disability    | 31                    | 8                             | -                                | -            |
| Agency Communication                                 | 9                     | 4                             | 1                                | 1            |
| Assault: Assault by Incarcerated Person              | 12                    | 2                             | -                                | -            |
| Assault: Assault by Staff                            | 12                    | 11                            | 1                                | -            |
| CIP Denial   | 5                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Communication Costs (Phone and Video Calls)          | 10                    | 9                             | -                                | -            |
| Conditions in Facility                               | 20                    | 11                            | 1                                | 1            |
| COVID Policies and Practices                         | 2                     | 2                             | -                                | -            |
| Death Review   | 6                     | 5                             | -                                | -            |
| Dental Care  | 3                     | 2                             | -                                | -            |
| Discipline   | 42                    | 8                             | 2                                | -            |
| Discrimination                                       | 17                    | 2                             | -                                | -            |
| Early Release Denial                                 | 10                    | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Food Service   | 6                     | 5                             | -                                | -            |
| Grievance Process                                    | 28                    | 4                             | -                                | -            |
| Harassment: Harassment by Incarcerated Person        | 6                     | 3                             | -                                | -            |
| Harassment: Harassment by Staff                      | 35                    | 17                            | 1                                | 1            |
| Hearing and Release Unit (HRU)                       | 9                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Law Library Access or Policies                       | 3                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Legal Calls  | 2                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Legal Mail   | 2                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Library Access or Policies                           | 2                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Mail   | 9                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Medical Care   | 78                    | 31                            | 1                                | 4            |
| Mental Health Care                                   | 27                    | 22                            | -                                | -            |
| MnSTARR  | 2                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Other  | 27                    | 8                             | 3                                | 12           |
| Placement (Facility, Unit, or Cell)                  | 14                    | 5                             | 1                                | 1            |
| PREA Policy or Procedures                            | 6                     | 4                             | 2                                | -            |
| Privileges   | 7                     | 2                             | 3                                | -            |
| Programming  | 14                    | 1                             | 3                                | -            |
| Property   | 14                    | 2                             | -                                | -            |
| Religious Accommodation                              | 9                     | -                             | -                                | -            |
| Retaliation  | 6                     | 2                             | -                                | -            |

|                                  |    |    |   |   |
|----------------------------------|----|----|---|---|
| Staff Safety                     | 19 | 3  | 1 | - |
| Sexual Abuse and Harassment      | 10 | 6  | 1 | - |
| Step Down Management Program     | 2  | -  | - | - |
| Substance Use Disorder Treatment | 8  | 9  | 1 | 3 |
| Systemic                         | 22 | 19 | 3 | 3 |
| Transgender Policies             | 9  | 3  | - | - |
| Visitation                       | 16 | 2  | - | - |
| Water Quality                    | 4  | 1  | - | - |
| Work                             | 20 | -  | - | - |

Several items of note include significant increases in complaints related to accessibility, aging, health care, and staff safety. Accessibility complaints increased by 210% and medical complaints increase by 66%. However, we continue to see a decrease or no significant change in other areas where we have developed recommendations or worked in collaboration with facilities on those topic areas including grievances and sexual harassment.

The increased number of complaints OBFC has received related to accessibility, aging, and healthcare correlates with national trends. Nationwide, the average age of the incarcerated population is 39 and those over 55 years of age have expanded by a greater proportion than any other group. Older populations require more and increasingly complex medical care. Compared to three decades ago, older people comprise five times more of the prison population since that time. In practical terms, their level of acuity has increased, and this is exacerbated because research shows that incarceration accelerates aging and all of the health-related risks associated with aging.

Many facilities do not have the physical plant structure to meet the growing needs of medically complex and aging incarcerated population. Many of Minnesota’s aging corrections facilities were not designed to house geriatric populations or those with severe and persistent mental illness. The OBFC will have a report related to these concerns in the coming year.

### **Resolved Complaint Examples**

Cases are resolved by referring to the appropriate agency or process, providing information or referrals to resources, alerting staff to concerns, affirming agency actions, providing resolution through mediated processes, or through more in-depth investigation and recommendations. OBFC is often used by those who have not been successful resolving their issues elsewhere, often seeking information about processes that are confusing and intimidating. Providing information, education, and referrals to appropriate jurisdictions, as well as having thoughtful conversation with people who are often worried about loved ones is an instrumental part of the day-to-day work of the office and is valuable and necessary work.

The office prioritizes cases that address safety and wellness or affect many people. Cases are informally resolved whenever possible. Informal recommendations can be implemented more quickly and collaboratively. The office



balances the transparency of our work with the vulnerability of the populations we serve, while protecting sensitive, confidential and security data.

Ongoing work includes efforts to support challenges that corrections staff and incarcerated people face in a difficult and stressful environment, infrastructure and conditions of facilities, visiting and family communications, cost of confinement, and discipline.

Examples of resolved cases include the following:

### **Administrative Segregation Review**

OBFC received a complaint from an incarcerated person who reported being placed in administrative segregation without receiving an initial 24-hour review as required by policy. After review of information regarding this instance and DOC policy, OBFC determined policy had been followed, but the incarcerated person had not been informed of the review. The DOC agreed to ensure incarcerated persons promptly receive notice, resulting in clarity about timelines for administrative holds, and pre-hearing detention placements.

### **Disability Access**

An incarcerated person felt their accessibility needs were not being met in a restrictive housing unit. Concerns included wheelchair use, heavy doors, shower times and accessibility, an accessible bed, and toileting.

OBFC reviewed medical records, DOC policy, and current accommodations. Measurements of the toilet height, sink counter, and bed and door pressure showed they complied with ADA requirements. Staff held a care conference and additional accommodations were made to better support showering and transferring in and out of bed. Concerns were resolved and OBFC let the incarcerated person know to follow up with medical staff and the facility ADA coordinator should additional needs arise.

### **Information**

An individual was released from custody and is living out of state and sought an exemption from the Board of Pardons requirement that he appear in person, due to the distance and cost of travel. He stated he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to contact the Board. OBFC contacted the Board and their attorney stated there were no exceptions to the in-person requirement, but that in July of 2024, applicants for clemency will no longer have to appear directly before the Board and the Clemency Review Commission will meet more often. The statutes that govern the Clemency Review Commission once it is operational expressly allow applicants to “appear before the commission either in person or through available forms of telecommunication.” This individual was grateful for the information provided even though it was not the outcome he hoped to achieve.

### **Medical Emergency**

OBFC received a third-party complaint who felt the facility was not as responsive as they should be to an incarcerated person experiencing a medical emergency at the facility and was concerned about whether the person was safe. The OBFC was able to confirm the person was receiving care and doing better and although

could not share any information with the third-party complainant did explain our review process and what we would do next. They were relieved we could access the person and information. The office then reviewed overall processes with the facility. Informal recommendations were made and immediately implemented to prevent a similar situation and increase the safety and wellbeing of incarcerated people and staff.

### **Mental Health**

A family member called to ask questions about her son who was diagnosed with a serious and persistent mental illness and confined at a local jail. OBFC staff explained the care and services the jail provides. The caller was very relieved as she was worried would not receive an evaluation or medical care in jail. OBFC staff explained they would follow up regarding his care, but due to data practices constraints, would be unable to provide details. Mom said the conversation was "such a blessing" and that the unknown was so hard. Due to length of time at facility while awaiting a bed at a DHS facility and the vulnerability of this individual, OBFC met in-person with him to hear any concerns. OBFC was able to confirm they were alert, cognizant, and capable of advocating for their needs. Informal recommendations were made to the facility to better support his needs, and ongoing conversations with family regarding processes continued OBFC also reviewed concerns from jail staff related to residents with high mental health needs who are waiting for eight to ten months or longer for appropriate placement elsewhere. OBFC is reviewing this critical issue systemically.

### **MNSTARR**

An incarcerated individual reported that his MNSTARR score was inaccurately calculated, alleging racial bias as the basis for his complaint. A review of his application revealed an internal error used to calculate his MNSTARR score. This review resulted in an early resolution between the complainant and facility. The correction resulted in the incarcerated person's eligibility for work release and substance use disorder treatment at a minimum level facility prior to his release.

### **Mold**

An incarcerated individual was concerned there was black mold in a living unit. In response, the DOC hired the Minnesota Department of Administration to inspect the living unit which did not find black mold. It did, however, observe a common outdoor mold that could be removed by standard facility cleaning. OBFC conducted a review after cleaning; the mold appeared abated. Due to ongoing concerns, the DOC also hired a contractor to inspect the quality of the air ducts throughout the living unit, in particular the ductwork that supplied the food service area. OBFC confirmed this work is in progress and will continue to monitor the situation.

An additional facility had household mold in an area and incarcerated people were concerned about remediation. Once remediated, the areas and process were reviewed by OBFC staff and was found reasonable.

## Referral and Information

A family member contacted OBFC regarding multiple issues related to her son's treatment in jail. OBFC staff was able to provide information and refer the complainant to the DOC Inspection and Enforcement Unit which was able to assist. The family was grateful for the assistance and expressed to OBFC staff, "I finally feel like we have somebody listening and digging into what has been happening to not just my son, but possibly others inside that place. I really appreciate you for that."

## Visiting

An incarcerated person lost all visiting privileges for discipline unrelated to visiting. Staff worked with the warden to develop a plan to reinstate noncontact visits, then close contact visits, and work towards full visiting privileges. OBFC is reviewing visiting policy to examine recommendations for systemic improvements.

## Water Quality

Incarcerated individuals concerned about facility conditions, including water quality, engaged in a protest and refused to return to their assigned cells. Although the water is tested monthly, DOC requested the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) conduct additional water testing. MDH collected water samples from more than 80 sites within the correctional facility. The Ombuds office was present during the collection as an unbiased observer of the process. Results of the water testing showed that water coming into the facility and at all sample locations, met federal standards for the Safe Drinking Water Act and that all drinking water, as well as water used for cooking, should come from the cold-water spigot. MDH recommended that fixtures be cleaned and that systematic, facility wide flushing be conducted on a regular basis. MDH further recommended that the facility contract a licensed plumber to conduct an inspection and implement any recommendations. The OBFC continues to monitor concerns related to water at facilities.

# Systemic Investigations

The OBFC initiated numerous systemic investigations and reports informed by complaints or about issues initiated by the office. Systemic investigations are much more labor-intensive, and can take significant time to resolve, oftentimes not providing immediate resolution for individuals. However, systemic changes provide the greatest opportunity "to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections<sup>2</sup>" by "strengthening procedures and practices that lessen the risk that objectionable actions of the administrative agency will occur."<sup>3</sup> The following investigations, reports, and

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<sup>2</sup> [MN Statute 241.90](#)

<sup>3</sup> [MN Statute 241.93](#)

responses concluded in 2023 are examples of how the independent Office of the Ombuds for Corrections can help to improve our state's corrections policies and practices.

Many of these reports represent ongoing investigation and communication with relevant corrections leadership throughout the process to better ensure opportunities for influencing substantive change more quickly while research and investigation was ongoing as well as developing greater likelihood for sustainable adaptation of the recommendations.

## Cost of Connections

People incarcerated in Minnesota jails face challenges communicating with their loved ones due to the high cost for phone calls and a confusing and expensive array of technologies. Research is clear that incarcerated people who maintain strong family ties during confinement have lower rates of recidivism, leading to better outcomes, and safer communities. Because of the challenges facing families and the importance of maintaining family connections, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Corrections initiated an investigation examining the unconscionably high and unaffordable costs of phone calls in Minnesota jails. This report discusses the importance of affordable communication options for incarcerated people and their families; reviews current rates and the legal framework governing correctional telecommunications; and concludes with the following recommendations for reforms:

- Encourage no-fee services.
- Require no-fee calling when in-person visitation is unavailable.
- Protect in-person visiting.
- Address high phone rates for in-state calling to stabilize temporary rules from the FCC.
- Expressly clarify Public Utilities Commission over non-voice services.

## Shower Accommodations

OBFC released a report in February 2023 after receiving and investigating a complaint from a transgender individual related to lack of shower accommodations. After review of DOC Policy 202.045, we found the denial of shower accommodations unreasonable. OBFC found that that policy directing consultation with the incarcerated person was likely violated. The Ombudsperson for Corrections recommended the following:

- Accommodate complainant's request to shower without others being able to view them.
- Review Gender Identity Committee processes to ensure compliance with requirement to consult with incarcerated person and consider a mechanism for tracking consultation completion.
- Update relevant incarcerated people on policy changes so they can resubmit requests to the Facility Gender Identity Committee. In addition, the Facility Gender Identity Committee and Agency Gender Identity Committee should consider reviewing previous relevant denials, if they are not already doing so.

The DOC accepted the recommendations.

## Transport

OBFC received a complaint from an individual who was transported by DOC Central Transport from an out of state facility in which he made several allegations, including that he was transported without a seatbelt, was given insufficient restroom breaks, the temperature in the vehicle was too cold, and he went ten hours without being offered food and was given little water. There was insufficient evidence to substantiate many of the allegations; although, insufficient restroom breaks were likely probable. Overall, the OBFC found that DOC Central Transport staff are regularly figuring out logistically difficult situations with high numbers of transports in arduous and challenging situations with professionalism and creativity. There are, however, opportunities to better provide for staff wellness and incarcerated person safety. In consideration of staff safety, public safety, and human dignity of the incarcerated, the OBFC recommended to the DOC the following:

- Review and update processes to require transporting staff to maintain a log of activities.
- Review policy 301.095, processes, and training to better accommodate restroom breaks.
- Remind staff of DOC policy 301.095, F.6 regarding reimbursement of expenses.
- Consider inclusion of DOC Central Transport in a security audit, so that concerns related to adequate storage and security for vehicles is audited.
- Review video retention schedules, policies, and processes and include prioritizing this unit for deployment of officer worn cameras to better provide for staff safety and incarcerated person wellbeing.

The DOC accepted the recommendations.

## Sexual Assault

The OBFC received multiple complaints of sexual assault and initiated a broader systemic investigation. Confidential reports related to relevant cases were shared with the DOC and systemic recommendations were made based on ongoing review and collaboration. That investigation ultimately led to a public report to the DOC at the end of 2022, with a response from DOC in early 2023 who agreed to the recommendations. Highlights from the report are summarized below and the full report can be found at <https://mn.gov/obfc/reports/>.

The OBFC found that the overall process and investigation into the alleged incidents were thorough and reasonable. However, there are some additional findings and opportunities for better processes. Recommendations to the DOC include the following:

- Provide additional support and communication to staff and incarcerated people.
- Train staff on better communication with incarcerated people regarding processes.
- Prioritize officer worn cameras to ensure safety for population and staff.
- Provide additional reminders to staff about retaliation.
- Develop a framework for body scanner use.
- Review process to screen additional information from investigative interviews.

- Provide clearer and more consistent victim advocate education template for staff to utilize.
- Develop and utilize a clearer framework for trauma-informed care and the right to decline health services.

Additionally, the OBFC recommended that the Legislature prioritize additional resources to the DOC for responding to Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) reports. This was along with officer worn cameras was funded in the 2023 Legislative Session.

The OBFC is in regular review of DOC and local facility policies and provides informal recommendations for consideration. Recent policy and process reviews have included issues related to discipline, use of force, work release, transgender and gender nonconforming accommodations, religious and cultural support, medical and mental health, and staff trainings.

## Community Engagement and Education

### Family and Friends of Incarcerated Group Pilot

In 2021, the OBFC developed a report focusing on resources and supports available for families of people incarcerated in Minnesota prisons; barriers preventing families from navigating the system; and resources and programs that could strengthen families' ability to self-advocate. Findings included that existing resources and supports available to families are inadequate and that families want proactive and targeted resources to support them in navigating the system. The report entitled "Strengthening Families" can be found at: <https://mn.gov/obfc/reports/>

In responding to some of the concerns and needs highlighted within that report, the OBFC initiated a pilot project in May of 2022 in collaboration with the Department of Corrections designed to strengthen the ability of the loved ones of incarcerated individuals to provide positive support.

The pilot is open to those with loved ones at either MCF-St. Cloud or MCF-Rush City. The group meets online, on the second Wednesday of every month for the MCF-St. Cloud group. This group provides an overview of processes for those who may be new to having an incarcerated loved one, includes updates from facility staff, and provides an opportunity to ask questions. More information can be found on the MCF- St. Cloud facility page: <https://mn.gov/doc/facilities/st-cloud/>. The virtual group meets online on the third Wednesday of every other month for those with loved ones at MCF-Rush City. More information can be found on the MCF-Rush City facility page at: <https://mn.gov/doc/facilities/rush-city/>

This project continued throughout 2023, and a report and recommendations regarding this project will be available in the coming year.

## OBFC Advisory Group

As a major part of the effort to continue to build relations with key partners and prioritize feedback from those most affected, the office utilizes the OBFC Advisory Group which meets quarterly. The OBFC invited participation in this group from members with important perspectives on corrections issues. They provide input for the OBFC as it develops and refines policies and practices and carries out its work.

The 10-member group includes individuals who were formerly incarcerated, loved ones of currently incarcerated persons, corrections officers, and other prison staff. The group is informal in nature as state statute does not require that the Ombuds have an advisory group.

## Committees

### State Correctional Facilities Security Audit Group

The Ombudsperson is a member of the State Correctional Facilities Security Audit Group. The group creates security standards for state correctional facilities, reviews inspection reports, and provides recommendations to the Commissioner of Corrections. More information can be found at:

<https://www.lrl.mn.gov/agencies/detail?AgencyID=2486>.

### 2911 Rules Advisory Committee

The Ombudsperson is a member of the 2911 Rules Advisory Committee. [Chapter 2911 Rules](#) provide minimum standards for local facilities or jails throughout the state. The Department of Corrections is in the process of reviewing those standards through rulemaking. More information can be found at: <https://mn.gov/doc/staff-partners/doing-business-doc/rulemaking/chapter-2911-jail-facilities/>

# Legislative Recommendations and Request

In the 2023 Legislative session, several recommendations from OBFC reports were enacted including the following:

#### Officer Worn Body Cameras:

In its 2022 Report on Sexual Assault, OBFC recommended that the Legislature prioritize funding for a study to research and plan for body-worn cameras. The Legislature authorized \$2 million in fiscal years 2024 and 2025 to fund a pilot for body-worn cameras at prison facilities over the next two years.

#### Family Support Unit:

In its 2021 Strengthening Families Report, the OBFC recommended the Legislature fund DOC positions focused on family support, navigation, and engagement. The Legislature designated \$960,000 in the 2023 session to support a Family Support Unit.

### Ombudsperson for Corrections Removal for Just Cause

The Office of the Ombuds for Corrections sought legislative approval in 2023 to ensure removal of the Ombudsperson for Corrections only by just cause. The possibility of removal from office in retribution for carrying out an unpopular investigation or making a candid and critical report and recommendations, or for political reasons, can be a real or indirect threat to the Ombuds' independence. This was enacted and can be found here: [Minnesota Statutes 241.90](#).

## Conclusion

There continues to be significant challenges within corrections for staff, incarcerated people, and their loved ones. There are also essential opportunities to build a more effective, more equitable, more fair, and safer corrections system. The Office of the Ombuds for Corrections continues to develop these opportunities by providing independent and impartial investigations, reports, and recommendations to resolve complaints and improve policies. The work of the office increases safety, wellbeing, equity, accountability, and transparency within corrections, promoting safer and more just communities for all Minnesotans.