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Office of the Ombudsperson for Corrections

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<https://mn.gov/obfc/>

AT A GLANCE

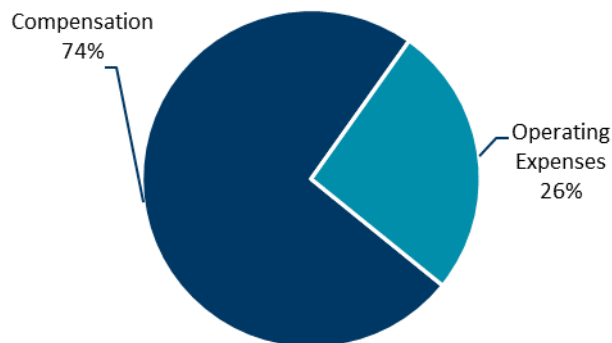
- Jurisdiction to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints regarding ten prisons and 150 local adult and juvenile facilities statewide, with a typical daily population of over 17,000 persons and over 210,000 intakes and releases over the course of a year.
- Eight full time staff.

PURPOSE

The statutory purpose of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Corrections (OBFC) is “to promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice in the administration of corrections.” The Ombudsperson for Corrections has the authority to take and investigate complaints from or about any Department of Corrections’ (DOC) staff or facility charged with the care and custody of incarcerated people and any regional or local correctional facility licensed by the DOC in Minnesota. The OBFC is neutral and independent. The OBFC works to resolve complaints, investigate, make recommendations, and publish reports. The OBFC is concerned with systemic and policy issues and so may also initiate systemic issue investigations. The goal is to provide for a safer and more just corrections system for corrections staff, incarcerated people, and all Minnesotans.

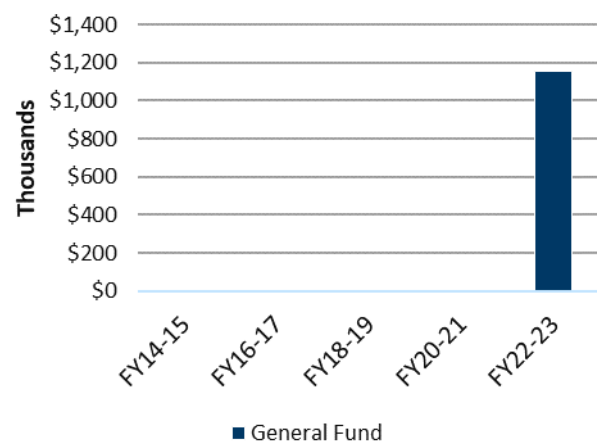
BUDGET

**Spending by Category
FY 2023 Actual**



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)

Historical Spending



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

Although the OBFC is neutral and independent from the Department of Corrections, when the office was newly recreated in the 2019 legislative session, OBFC’s funding was originally placed within the Department of Corrections budget. The Governor’s fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 budget separated the OBFC budget to ensure full independence and provide separation from the DOC. Beginning July 1, 2021 (FY22), OBFC became its own independent agency.

The OBFC has eight full time staff who receive, investigate, and resolve complaints regarding ten prisons and 150 local adult and juvenile facilities statewide.

STRATEGIES

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Corrections promotes the highest standards of corrections through the following strategies:

- **Receiving, Investigating and Resolving Complaints:** Provides an impartial and unbiased process for incarcerated individuals, staff, and community to share concerns about DOC and local facility actions and policies and have them investigated.
- **Providing Oversight:** Minnesota's correctional facilities confine thousands of incarcerated adults and juveniles under the supervision of state employees. Largely, the corrections system sets and manages the conditions of confinement and public access is highly restricted. The OBFC provides a way for the incarcerated and staff to voice concerns and complaints for impartial and transparent consideration.
- **Promoting Efficiency and Justice:** The OBFC independently draws conclusions, examines existing policies and procedures, identifies opportunities for raising overall standards, makes recommendations, and produces reports aimed at improving the corrections system to promote efficiency, justice, and fairness.
- **Providing Information:** The OBFC provides engagement, education, and information to incarcerated individuals, their family and loved ones, corrections staff, and the community.
- **Increasing Health and Safety:** The OBFC increases safety and health for incarcerated individuals, staff, and community members by:
 - Providing incarcerated individuals and staff an opportunity to address their complaints and concerns about unsafe or unhealthy situations and conditions.
 - Providing a productive option for incarcerated individuals' complaints who may otherwise take out frustration on staff.
 - Providing for systemic health and safety improvements.
 - Ensuring that rights are protected and that correctional programs and services promote rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, improve lives, and promote overall community safety.
- **Promoting Equity:** People of color are disproportionately represented in prisons and jails. Over 55 percent of male incarcerated people and 44 percent of female incarcerated people are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Addressing both individual and systemic complaints and issues advances equity and provides for greater accountability and greater transparency in addressing inequitable systems within and outside of corrections.

RESULTS

A central focus is receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints from incarcerated people, corrections staff, and community members. Many inquiries or complaints can be resolved quickly, and the OBFC is able to provide resources and referral to the appropriate entity. Some complaints are referred for deeper investigation by the OBFC or help to inform future policy and systemic investigations. Statutorily (as laid out in MS 241.95 <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/241.95>), the OBFC is required to develop an annual report at the end of each calendar year on the functions of the OBFC's office for transmission and review by the Governor and legislature.

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Early resolutions	Quantity	Complaints resolved within seven days or fewer.	330 from Calendar Year (CY) 2022	454 from CY 2023
Investigations	Quantity	Complaints that were investigated more deeply, and typically resolved within a few weeks to several months.	50 from CY 2022	60 from CY 2023

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Systemic	Quantity	Systemic concerns and investigations that are often ongoing. Systemic complaints are received from incarcerated persons, corrections staff, community members, and initiations from within the Office of the Ombudsperson. Complaints are tracked within the Ombudsperson's internal office database. At the end of each calendar year, an annual report is developed with public information related to the complaints, and the report is posted on the Ombudsperson's website.	39 from CY 2022	47 from CY 2023

M.S. 241.90-95 (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/241.90>) provides the legal authority for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Corrections.

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base		Governor's Recommendation	
					FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27

Expenditures by Fund

1000 - General	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137
Total	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137
Biennial Change				1,050		(4)		51
Biennial % Change				91		(0)		2
Governor's Change from Base								55
Governor's % Change from Base								3

Expenditures by Program

Ombudsperson for Corrections	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137
Total	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	455	434	681	939	880	908	898	945
Operating Expenses	113	149	245	338	220	192	220	192
Other Financial Transaction		2	1					
Total	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137

Full-Time Equivalents

4.09	3.89	5.81	7.75	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
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(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Forecast Base		Governor's Recommendation	
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
1000 - General								
Balance Forward In		92		178				
Direct Appropriation	659	663	1,105	1,099	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137
Transfers Out		100						
Cancellations		70						
Balance Forward Out	90		178					
Expenditures	569	585	927	1,277	1,100	1,100	1,118	1,137
Biennial Change in Expenditures				1,050		(4)		51
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				91		(0)		2
Governor's Change from Base								55
Governor's % Change from Base								3
Full-Time Equivalents	4.09	3.89	5.81	7.75	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2025 Appropriations	1,099	1,099	1,099	2,198
Base Adjustments				
Minnesota Paid Leave Allocation		1	1	2
Forecast Base	1,099	1,100	1,100	2,200
Change Items				
Operating Adjustment		18	37	55
Total Governor's Recommendations	1,099	1,118	1,137	2,255

Ombudsperson for Corrections

FY 2026-27 Biennial Budget Change Item

Change Item Title: Operating Adjustment

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	18	37	37	37
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	18	37	37	37
FTEs	0	0	0	0

Recommendation:

The Governor recommends additional funding of \$18 thousand in FY 2026 and \$37 thousand in each subsequent year from the general fund to help address operating cost increases at the Office of the Ombudsperson for the Department of Corrections.

Rationale/Background:

The cost of operations rises each year due to increases in employer-paid health care contributions, FICA and Medicare, along with other salary and compensation-related costs. Other operating costs, like rent and lease, fuel and utilities, and IT and legal services also grow. This cost growth puts pressure on agency operating budgets that remain flat year to year. This recommendation provides additional resources to help address these cost pressures and pay for agency operations.

Agencies face challenging decisions to manage these rising costs within existing budgets, while maintaining the services Minnesotans expect. From year to year, agencies find ways to become more efficient with existing resources. For FY 2026-27, agencies will need to continue to find additional efficiencies and leverage management tools to help address budget pressures. Holding open vacancies in certain programs or delaying hiring in other programs are examples of ways agencies manage through constrained operating budgets. Such decisions are difficult and must be weighed against a program's ability to conduct business with less staffing and its impact to service delivery.

Proposal:

The Governor recommends increasing agency operating budgets to support current services. For the Office of the Ombudsperson for the Department of Corrections, this funding will help cover expected growth in employee compensation and insurance, and other operating costs.

Dollars in Thousands

Net Impact by Fund	FY 26	FY 27	FY 26-27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 28-29
General Fund	18	37	55	37	37	74

Results:

This recommendation is intended to help the Office of the Ombudsperson for the Department of Corrections address rising cost pressures and mitigate impacts to current levels of service and information to the public.