

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Maine Correctional Center  
Report of the Board of Visitors for Calendar Year 2024

To: Legislative Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
Commissioner Randall A. Liberty  
Warden Ben Beal

From: Bradley J Fogg, Chair, Maine Correctional Center Board of Visitors

Date: 12 February 2025

In compliance with MRS Title 34-A, §3001-A. BOARDS OF VISITORS, The Board of Visitors to the Maine Correctional Center submit this Report to the Legislative Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

I wish to thank the members of the MCC Board of Visitors for their work this past year: Jeffrey Barkin M.D., James McBride, and Robyn Egan. Each has been instrumental in the ongoing review of the management at the correctional facility and helping to determine whether that management is consistent with the philosophy, mission and policy goals of the Maine Department of Corrections and the Maine Correctional Center. In meeting this obligation, each member of the Board has had the opportunity to visit the facility as they choose and attend regularly scheduled meetings with the facilities management team.

Members of the Board included in their visits: tours of the facility, discussions with staff members and meeting residents individually and in small groups. These meetings have proven very helpful to BOV members. The staff is friendly and receptive to our questions; and the residents are curious about our role and appreciate the opportunity to speak openly and share concerns.

The Board, at the moment, is in need of two members; one who is licensed to provide mental health services and one who is a formerly incarcerated person. (Note, this report does not exam the operations of the Southern Maine Women's Re-entry Program or operations of the Women's Center. The Legislature has created a separate Board for those facilities and programs. However, in our previous visits we did tour the Women's program and housing areas and found that any operational or management issue brought to our attention were promptly addressed).

#### Statement of Findings

We are pleased to report that the basic requirements of operating a correctional facility, protecting the public by preventing escape, providing for the safe custody and control of the residents, preventing the flow of contraband and providing for the basic

physical, dental, and mental health needs of those incarcerated at the Maine Correctional Center are being met. The physical structure of the facility is mostly new or completely renovated, clean and well maintained.

The Maine Model of Corrections having been implemented at this facility is coming to fruition, demonstrated by the lowered rate of recidivism to this facility. Further the successful implementation of the Maine Model has resulted in a reduction of physical altercations between residents, reduced need for physical intervention by staff, a reduction, if not the elimination, of restrictive housing, an increase in staff retention and wellness; and, in general, the humanization of the correctional environment. (Note, there were 6 assaults on staff during 2024, down from 97 only five years ago.)

Programs contributing to the residents preparation for successful release into the community include the following:

1. Medication Substance Use Disorder Programs (MSUD) and Recovery Services, including recovery coaching, medication assisted treatment, Alcoholics Anonymous and Smart Recovery programs.
2. Core programs to reduce recidivism include Cognitive Behavioral Intervention classes, i.e., Stopping Abuse for Everyone, Thinking for a Change, Anger Management, Criminal Addictive Thinking and Non-violent Communications.
3. Behavioral Health Services encompassing a range of interventions aimed at addressing mental health and substance abuse disorders.
4. Traditional educational and vocational courses. (note, any resident who does not have a high school education or a HI Set, must complete either before participating in work programs.)
5. OSHA 10 and 30, and other related Work Ready Courses
6. Education-related courses are available through college matriculation, on-line classes, Workforce Development classes through Washington County C.C. and more.
7. Religious service for numerous denominations are offered to all requesting them.
8. Enrichment activities including but not limited to guitar lessons, music theory, ISSA Certified Personal Trainer course, Yoga, and functional fitness, out-of-door organized activities and team sports
9. Some other groups and activities include peer mentoring, legal aid, and Mission Working Dogs.
10. The Restorative Practices Continuum program, looking at Relationships, Respect, Responsibility or the harm caused, Repairing the harm they caused and the Reintegration into the community.

We also find there has been a substantial increase in requests for medical and dental services. In the quarter previous to this report there were 1,175 sick call requests submitted. We attribute this overwhelming number of requests to the medical

acuity of the residents and of those committed directly from the county jail system. Increased medical utilization of services is a national phenomenon, representing COVID-related healthcare-related backlogs and increased acuity owing to delays in care, again reflecting a national phenomenon not at all unique to MCC. Each new resident arriving at MCC receives a medical screening and review of their medical/medications record received from the jails. There have been instances where no medical records were received at the time of admission, creating an additional burden on staff to track down the information-also delaying the administration of medications in order to confirm prescriptions. Further complicating MSUD is a lack of, if any, records of the new admissions participation in Methadone or Suboxone treatment programs. This prevents the proper review of prescribed medications and their possible interaction with Methadone or Suboxone in MCC's treatment programs; this could result in possible overdosing.

We find, however, that the medical, psychological and drug treatment programs are providing the residents with the essential services necessary in their efforts to improve their situation upon release. MCC has been guided by several accepted practices in this field of treatment. Previous audits by the American Correctional Association Accreditation Office have verified the needed services are in place.

The number of dental services request by residents was not immediately available. However, the day of our last December 2024 visit, the dental clinic had seen 40 residents – reporting an overwhelming number of requests yet to be addressed. Routine dental examinations, cleanings and extractions are performed on a regular basis. The addition of another part-time Dentist has made it possible to start a periodontal care program. The goal is to provide yearly preventative dental exams to each resident. Poor dental care and provider availability, prior to admission, are contributing factors to the current heavy workload.

Serious medical and dental procedures need to be sent out of the facility to see specialist. Residents are also sent out of the facility for X-rays and blood draws because of hard-to-find veins attributed in part to chronic health conditions and in some cases long-term drug use.

We found the number one complaint of residents is, idle time, "There's nothing to do." MCC continues to address this issue by providing access to leisure activities in the library, music room, technology and recreation areas in lieu of work that was once available. We have determined the number of available working jobs has been reduced due to a decrease in money in the Resident Benefit Fund. In short, there is no money to pay the residents, and fewer jobs to be had. This account had, in part, been funded by a 7% commission from the pay telephone system. That source of revenue was eliminated by the Legislature.

Vocational training programs are a shortcoming. Not all residents will be transferred to other facilities that offer these opportunities. Subsequent to this, the Department is exploring the reassignment of some programs and equipment to MCC. In

addition, MCC, working with the Maine Department of Education's Adult Ed Team, will be implementing a WorkReady Program, providing a highly structured simulated work environment to help prepare residents for release into the community and a job.

Industrial programs at MCC; its upholstery, print and industrial stitching shops, provide a valued education and vocational experience for those participating. Recently MCC started making bar soap for purchase by the residents as an alternative to that in the commissary. It is a quality product they also hope to sell in the Prison Outlet Store. Other industrial programs may be developed with the Department's hiring of a new Director of Industries who will work to coordinate the Departments resources in its entirety. This meeting is scheduled for this spring.

We also find there is an opportunity to improve given Legislative support in some areas of concern. Therefore:

1. Having identified the lack of prescription drug records or records of drug abuse treatment by means of Methadone or Suboxone; we recommend that Legislative action be taken which would require all providers of Methadone or Suboxone in Maine report, as part of a person's medical record, treatment a person has received. This will better allow MCC, or any medical practitioner, to conduct a thorough review of all prescription medications and their suitability or reactive status with methadone or suboxone to better prevent the possibility of accidental overdosing.
2. During the 2024 calendar year, medical records of some incoming residents received from county jails were incomplete or not provided. Further, we were notified that one person, upon admission, needed emergency medical care, having to be intubated and spent as much as 4 weeks in the hospital for wound care. We recommend that 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment medical treatment issues be addressed by the transporting agency and the Maine Department of Corrections be given the Statutory authority to refuse admission to its facilities using language such as; At the time of admission, The Department of Corrections shall receive and keep in its custody all persons who are lawfully committed to the Department of Corrections, unless the person is in need of emergency medical attention, in which case the transporting authority shall obtain medical attention for the person prior to the delivery of the person to the Correctional Center.
3. We recommend that the Department of Corrections be allocated funds necessary to purchase Vein Finder Technology for the suitable collection of blood samples by on-site medical staff. This technology increases the chances of successful vein access on the first attempt, reducing resident discomfort and the need for multiple

needle insertions. This will contribute to improved workflow efficiency, reducing procedure time and associated costs. It would further reduce the number of residents taken to a clinic or hospital environment for these necessary services.

4. We recommend new funding sources be developed, including, but not limited to, the reinstatement of a commission on resident payphone use. This would be used to pay residents in identified work positions previously eliminated by lack of funds.
5. We recommend that a community service work crew be authorized, allowing residents in a minimum-security status at MCC to be assigned jobs outside the secure perimeter, under the supervision of a Correctional Trades Instructor, or other correctional position. These crews could perform community service projects for other state agencies (Maine Wildlife Park, and state parks in the Portland, Auburn metro areas) and local non-profit organizations. This has been done in past years. We recognize there is a possibility of escape and exposure to contraband and its introduction into the facility. The reinstatement of this program would require a higher level of supervision and searches upon return to the facility. However, we believe the benefits of a significant increase of meaningful work opportunities for residents will improve residents' morale while proving a valuable benefit to the State and local communities.

In conclusion, the MCC Board of Visitors is pleased to meet with the Warden and his staff. The discussions are open and respectful, the exchange of information and ideas helpful to our perception and understanding on operations and conditions. We wish to state without equivocation or reservation that the Maine Correctional Center, its Staff and Managers, has proved its worth to the State and Citizens in housing and managing those residents within its authority. Maine Correctional Center is meeting its established goals and mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Barkin, M.D.

Robyn Egan, LSW

Bradley Fogg, D.SC, Chair

James McBride