

Unannounced Inspection Report – Barbara Griffin

Date of visit: December 31, 2024.

I arrived at the Allegheny County Jail at about 1:00 p.m. While I was waiting in the lobby for an escort, a mother and two small children arrived and they were greeted pleasantly by the officer at the door. I was welcomed by the warden's executive assistant Amelia Beadnell. We stopped for a few minutes in the Officers Dining Room and then I was escorted by corrections officers to Pod 1A, Pod 7E, and Intake.

The hallways on Levels 1 and 7 were clean and bright, with no unusual odors or sounds, and no obvious signs of disrepair.

I heard these concerns repeatedly from residents on both the child and adult pods:

- Too many lockdowns.
- Lockdowns are happening more frequently than is being reported to the JOB (some residents read the minutes).
- Quantity and quality of food is almost always poor. Not enough vegetables.
- Bottled water is not served with meals and residents resort to drinking water from the sinks in their cells, which some described as "murky" and foul tasting.
- Cold temperatures and not enough blankets or thermals.
- Not enough clean clothes and residents regularly have to put on dirty clothes after showering.
- Complaint forms and medical forms aren't available or don't get sent out when they are completed. (When I asked, the COs on both pods said that they don't keep the forms out on the desk because they are often taken and used for other purposes, but they are available upon request.)
- Demeaning comments from guards and medical staff (e.g., to a child, "I can't wait until you turn 18", and mocking of residents' medical conditions).

No one I talked to on either pod reported witnessing or experiencing physical violence in the past week.

7E—Male children's pod

I met with three boys. In addition to the issues above, they also expressed the following concerns:

- It's cold and they need more "whites" (especially thermals), but their only option is to purchase them.
- Only people on their visitors list can put money on their accounts, but it takes a week or longer to get someone added to the visitors list.
- They have been on "split recreation" for months as punishment for playing a game of splashing water on each other.
- They're not getting apple juice with meals anymore. Only milk, no water.
- No longer allowed to have Hot Cheetos because they can be made into mace (???).
- They need a new microwave; a CO broke the old one by putting keys in it (???).
- Phone calls are too expensive.

I looked in the showers and they appeared clean and mostly free from mildew.

1A—Women's Minimum/Medium Classification, Programming Pod

About 10 women lined up to talk with me. However, my conversations were cut short when lockdown began due to a shift change.

In addition to the issues above, other concerns expressed to me on this pod included:

- Biting gnats in the upper floor showers.
- Not consistently being able to charge tablets.
- Laundry sitting unwashed for long periods of time.
- Mold on food.
- Broken toilets and sinks, mold in showers.
- Inconsistent hot water in showers.
- Pod workers not getting incentives.
- Medication not being refilled on time, incorrect medicines given, doses missing.
- Not enough recreational activities.
- J.O.B. minutes not being posted timely.
- Lockdowns happening more frequently than is being reported to the JOB (residents read the minutes).

I looked in the showers on both levels and did not see gnats, but they look like they could use another cleaning (they were cleaned and painted in September 2024.)

Several residents praised Officer Jackson (saying they know what he expects from them, and they know what to expect from him). I also heard positive things about the HOPE Program, although some residents were not happy that non-HOPE participants were also on the pod and got the benefits of the pod while also sometimes causing problems.

A few residents asked me to follow up with their specific individual concerns, which I'll address separately with the J.O.B. liaison or appropriate jail staff. There were also complaints about not getting information about the status of their cases and not being able to see the UJS portal on their tablets.

Intake

Men awaiting arraignment were in two cells (IP1 and IP2), each with about 11 people. The cells appeared very crowded with 4-5 men sleeping on the floor and the others crowded together on benches. The officers said that they were in the cells because of the shift change and would be let out to the waiting room around 4:00 p.m.

I left the jail shortly after 3:00 p.m.

Submitted by Barbara Griffin on January 2, 2025