

Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board

Unannounced Inspection Report – Councilmember Bethany Hallam

Date of Inspection: November 21, 2025

Time of Arrival: 10:35 a.m.

Time of Departure: 1:50 p.m.

Purpose of Visit

I conducted an unannounced inspection of the Allegheny County Jail to follow up on requests and concerns from incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. My goal was to verify reported conditions, observe operations firsthand, and ensure that issues previously brought to the Jail Oversight Board's attention were being appropriately addressed by jail leadership and staff. In addition, I was there to review the records of the individual who had collapsed and was rushed to the hospital from the jail last Wednesday November 12, 2025 and speak to anyone who may have additional information about the circumstances surrounding her medical emergency.

Narrative Summary

When I arrived, Major Frank escorted me upstairs to the administrative offices to meet with Dr. Demko & Deputy Warden Martin to review the medical records, sick calls, and grievances for the individual who was rushed to the hospital last Wednesday 11/12. I reviewed very detailed medical records, in addition to the three sick calls the individual filed in the nearly 7 months she was incarcerated in the jail. No grievances had been filed by this individual. Dr. Demko and Deputy Warden Martin were extremely helpful in explaining the records, including test results and medications detailed in the records.

After finishing my review of the records, Sgt. Andrascik arrived to escort me to the infirmary on 5B to speak with an individual whose loved one had reached out to me and asked me to visit with her. This individual is in a wheelchair and has a boot on her left foot awaiting surgery that her doctor will not perform until she is released from incarcerated due to his concerns that she will not be able to adequately heal in the jail. She reported that she was scheduled to go to court on November 12, 2025, and was even taken down to the bullpen to await her transportation to court that day, but was ultimately told there was no transportation available for someone in a wheelchair and her court hearing would have to be rescheduled. She was understandably very upset by this, as she was expecting to be

home for the holidays and now will be spending the holidays in jail as her hearing was rescheduled to January 12, 2026 due to the lack of transportation available to get her to her November 12th hearing. She also reported that this morning her Gabapentin prescription was terminated, despite it being the only medication that helped her leg and foot pain. She stated that when she inquired of the medical staff why her prescription was terminated, she was told that Gabapentin was no longer being prescribed to anyone in the jail and everyone's prescription was being terminated, something I was later able to confirm with the medical staff.

Finally, I went to 6D which is the women's minimum-security pod. There I spoke with several individuals who witnessed the medical emergency from last week, and one individual who wrote to me asking me to visit her regarding issues with her dietary restrictions and the meals she has been provided. That individual is on a gluten free and lactose free diet and reported at least one meal out of the three meals she is provided each day has been inedible for her for the entire month she has been incarcerated. She reported that when the regular meal is gluten free and lactose free already, she is given an alternative meal and she doesn't understand why that is, and that sometimes she is given a regular meal even when the meal is not gluten free and lactose free. She also complained that she is regularly given plain ground beef as her meal, and that she has been provided that so often that she is no longer able to eat it. I confirmed these problems with the workers on the pod and the individuals responsible for serving food to the incarcerated individuals on that pod. Additional complaints include: mold in the hot water pot, women workers only receiving extra recreation as compensation for their work while the men receive commissary items, a lack of mop heads for cleaning, food trays often missing items and specialty trays being wrong, rooms flooding and damaged items not being replaced, dogs receiving bottled water when there was no water on the pod but the incarcerated individuals not being given water, and the grievance form box not being emptied for months.

I left the jail around 1:50 p.m.

Reflections and Follow-Up

During this visit, I heard consistent themes regarding cold cells, erroneous meals, and the lack of responsiveness to individuals' sick calls and grievances.

I plan to follow up on the following items:

- Court transportation issues: Confirm that individuals are not missing court due to transportation issues, especially because of their disability.

- Sick call process: Work with jail administration to determine if there is a better name for sick calls so that individuals do not think they are submitting sick calls when they are reporting a medical issue via the intercom to the officer on duty on their pod.
- Paper form collection: Ensure grievance forms and liaison request forms are being picked up from each pod and assigned to the appropriate department in a timely manner.
- Vaccine compensation: Review with other members of the board whether or not they are willing to provide a \$25 stipend to each individual who receives a flu shot each year, similar to the stipend for the COVID vaccine.

Submitted by:

Councilmember Bethany Hallam

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Date Submitted: 12/4/2025