

**District of Columbia
Corrections Information Council**



**District of Columbia
CENTRAL CELL BLOCK**

Report on Findings and Recommendations

May 5, 2022



District of Columbia Corrections Information Council

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About the District of Columbia Corrections Information Council

The District of Columbia Corrections Information Council (CIC) is an independent oversight body mandated by the United States Congress and the Council of the District of Columbia to inspect, monitor, and report on the conditions of confinement in correctional facilities where residents from the District of Columbia are incarcerated. This includes facilities operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the District of Columbia Department of Corrections (DOC), and private contractors.

The CIC reports its observations and recommendations to the District of Columbia Representative in the United States Congress, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Council of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, the Director of the BOP, the Director of the DOC, and the community.

Although the CIC does not handle individual complaints or provide legal representation or advice, individuals are still encouraged to contact the CIC. Reports, concerns, and general information from incarcerated DC residents and the public are very important to the CIC, and they greatly inform our inspection schedule, recommendations, and reports. However, unless expressly permitted by the individuals or required by law, names and identifying information of residents, corrections staff not in leadership, and members of the general public will be kept anonymous and confidential.

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Central Cell Block Profile

Dates of Inspection: April 5, 2022

Location: 300 Indiana Ave, NW

Average Stay: 24 hours

Rated Capacity: 110

Population on 4/5/2022: 40 (6 are women)

Introduction

Central Cell Block (CCB) is part of the DC Department of Corrections (DOC). When an individual is arrested, they are usually taken to a police precinct for processing. Afterwards, they are taken to CCB where they are reprocessed and temporarily housed in a cell. The next day, the individual attends court, either physically or virtually to determine if their release is appropriate. If not released, he or she is transported to the Central Detention Facility (CDF) to await further judicial proceedings.

The inspection on April 5, 2022 was premised upon assessing the current status of prior recommendations. The Corrections Information Council (CIC) previously inspected CCB on May 5, 2021, and made several recommendations, including to fix both video screens used for court appearances, ensure that all the cells are operable in CCB, hire more staff, and repair the source of regular flooding. Of these recommendations, CCB fixed the video screens and hired additional staff. At the CIC's initial inspection there were only eight employees on each shift. On the current inspection there were thirteen employees on the morning shift (5AM – 1PM), ten on the afternoon shift (1PM – 9PM), and twelve on the midnight shift (9PM -5AM).

The CIC provided the DOC with a draft version of this report for review of factual information and an opportunity to respond prior to publication. The DOC indicated that “DGS is responsible for all building maintenance, repair, fire suppressant system, and that the DOC is responsible for reporting issues that may arise from daily inspections, and/or in the process of daily duties.”

Key Findings

The CIC highlights the following:

Medical

- There is a machine to check temperatures at the entrance of the facility.
- There are four staff members on the day shift and four on the night shift. They work twelve-hour shifts.
- There are no psychiatrist or psychologist on site, but medical personnel can dispense certain mental health medications.
- Officers provide medical staff with an intake sheet that includes the primary language of limited or non-English proficient individuals.
- If there is a medical emergency, staff calls 911 and waits for an ambulance to arrive.
- All medical personnel for DOC facilities are contracted from Unity Healthcare.
- If an arrestee is positive for COVID -19, he or she is housed on the backside of CCB in a single cell and provided personal protective equipment.
- During the intake process, staff must ask arrestees if they have any medical issues.
- If an arrestee possesses mental health issues that CCB cannot address, the arrestee is sent to the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP).

Housing

Max Capacity: 110

Current Population: 40 (6 women)

- Male arrestees are housed on the bottom tier.
- Female arrestees are housed on the top tier.
- Transgender arrestees are housed depending on their chosen identity.
- Handicapped women are not currently housed at CCB. They must remain at the precinct.
- There are two safe cells equipped with cameras for those who pose a serious threat to themselves or others.
- Arrestees are currently housed alone in cells. During the weekend, double bunking may be required due to the rise in population.
- If the facility reaches capacity, arrestees are returned to their original police precinct before they are transported to court.
- There are no mattresses at CCB.
- Reportedly, there are plans to relocate the CCB.

Maintenance

- DOC is not responsible for maintenance at CCB. Department of General Services (DGS) is responsible for all maintenance.
- CCB has submitted work orders to DGS since 2021 for various maintenance issues. The issues are not yet resolved.

- There are 25 cells that are inoperable.
- There are three handicapped cells, but only two are functional.
- There is a terrible stench throughout the facility caused by plumbing issues and the sump pump.
- There are two handicapped lifts, but only one is functional.

Court

- There are two rooms for virtual court appearances, which contain a desk, chair, and a screen equipped with a camera.
- Only about half of the arrestees are physically going to court. The other half attend court virtually.
- Arrestees subject to District Court participate in their proceedings via phone.
- Lawyers are permitted to come into CCB to visit with their clients prior to their court proceedings.

Staffing

- There are five vacancies at CCB.
- Twelve officers, one of whom is bilingual, work the midnight shift (9PM – 5AM).
- Ten officers, two of whom are bilingual, work the afternoon shift (1PM – 9PM).
- Thirteen officers work the morning shift (5AM – 1PM).
- DOC is looking for an additional bilingual staff member to work the morning shift.

Food

- Food is delivered at 5AM and 6PM by Holder Enterprises.
- Food consists of cold cut sandwiches, juice, water, and potato chips.
- There are vegetarian and vegan options for those with dietary restrictions.

Recommendations

Based on the inspections of the CCB, the CIC makes the following recommendations:

- The CIC recommends that mattresses are issued in extraordinary circumstances.
- The CIC recommends that all maintenance issues concerning plumbing, cells, and handicapped assistance equipment be addressed in a timely fashion.*

* **DOC response:** “Department of General Services (DGS) is responsible for all building maintenance of CCB. DOC is responsible for reporting issues that may arise from daily inspections, and/or in the process of daily duties.”