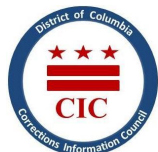


District of Columbia  
Corrections Information Council



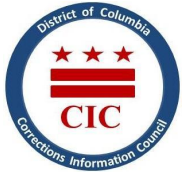
# USP Hazelton

## Report on Findings and Recommendations



*United States Penitentiary, Hazelton*

February 19, 2026



## District of Columbia Corrections Information Council

Charles Thornton, Board Chair  
Katharine A. Huffman, Board Member  
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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 D.C. 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 are kept anonymous and confidential.

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## USP<sup>1</sup> Facility Overview

### Facility Profile

<b>Dates of Inspection:</b> September 16-18, 2025	<b>Rated Capacity:</b> 1,213
<b>Location:</b> Bruceton Mills, WV	<b>Population:</b> 1,412
<b>Security Level:</b> High	<b>D.C. Code Offenders:</b> 135
	<b>Survey Respondents:</b> 66

### Introduction

USP Hazelton is part of Federal Correctional Complex Hazelton (FCC Hazelton), which includes Secure Female Facility Hazelton (SFF Hazelton), Federal Correctional Institution Hazelton (FCI Hazelton), and Federal Prison Camp Hazelton (FPC Hazelton). The FCC Hazelton complex is approximately 185 miles from Washington, D.C.

During the interview process, the captain did not authorize the CIC to conduct resident interviews in the legal visiting rooms, citing the facility's lockdown status. Multiple attempts by the CIC to engage with the captain regarding the matter were unsuccessful, and the issue remained unresolved; therefore, the CIC conducted interviews using the non-contact visitation phones. Two of the four phones were unavailable for technical reasons. Residents were required to submit their completed surveys to BOP staff in order to deliver them to CIC staff, rather than the standard protocol of submitting them directly to the CIC. Several residents expressed concerns regarding the confidentiality of their responses and potential staff retaliation.

On the second day, residents also reported that they were required to remove their shoes prior to entering the non-contact visiting rooms. Additionally, some residents were transported and subjected to waiting periods hours earlier than the scheduled CIC interview times. These factors contributed to delays in the interview process, and raised concerns about confidentiality and interview deterrents.

### Demographics

The D.C. resident population at the USP consisted of 135 male residents. Of the 66 respondents, two residents identified as Hispanic. Twenty-seven residents identify as Muslim, fifteen identify as Christian, eight identify as Other<sup>2</sup>, six identify as atheistic, and two identify as Jewish.

Eighteen residents have not finished high school, 38 residents have a high school diploma or GED, two residents have an associate's degree, one resident has a graduate degree, and one resident has not received any schooling. One resident noted that they received their GED while at the USP. Thirty-one residents have been at USP Hazelton for less than three years.

<sup>1</sup> United States Penitentiary

<sup>2</sup> This can include various religious sects including, but not limited to, native religions, Rastafarian, and Buddhism.

## Key Findings

### General

- During the opening meeting, staff reported that the facility undergoes an internal audit conducted by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Program Review Branch, in lieu of the former American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation process.
- The facility manages population movement by dividing it into two, color-coded sides: red or blue.
- Signage throughout the facility indicated that the USP was operating under a “minimal modification” status; however, BOP indicated that the signage was outdated.
- Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) signage was visible in the housing units and programming areas inspected by the CIC.
- There are frequent lockdowns, including on weekends and holidays. Many reported that lockdowns prevent access to programming and contribute to excessive confinement within their cells.
- Staff reported that lockdowns may occur in response to threats to staff safety pending investigation.
- Units are frequently placed on “pending SHU” status, which results in a lockdown for the entire unit while housing inmates who are awaiting placement in the Special Housing Unit (SHU).
- Several residents expressed concerns about unresponsive staff and unanswered grievances.
- Residents reported limited access to clean sheets, towels, and blankets, due to difficulties obtaining replacements or laundry exchanges due to ongoing lockdowns and understaffing.
- Because of the frequent lockdowns, residents spend most of their time confined to their cells, with minimal opportunities for recreation or out-of-cell activity.
- Multiple residents characterized staff as disrespectful and racially biased, reporting negative and discriminatory interactions with certain staff members.

### Housing

- CIC staff toured Unit A2 (CHALLENGE Program) despite the unit being locked down. Units at the USP have a capacity of 128 residents double-celled.
- Forty survey respondents stated they have experienced lockdowns more than six times per month. Seventeen respondents stated that some lockdowns last one to two weeks.
- There are 104 residents in Unit A2.
- The Chief Psychologist is the acting coordinator for the Challenge Program. The coordinator position has been vacant for approximately two years.

### Grievances

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- Fifty-one survey respondents referenced a lack of communication from officers regarding conditions and information on major facility-wide changes, such as lockdowns.
- Twenty-nine survey respondents stated that officers make racist remarks towards them. Fourteen of the 29 respondents indicated that staff members make racist remarks on a daily basis.
- Twenty-nine survey respondents stated that they have used the grievance process while at the USP (See Figure 1). Forty-one respondents stated that they have never used the grievance process at USP Hazelton. Fourteen residents stated that they never received a response to their grievance.

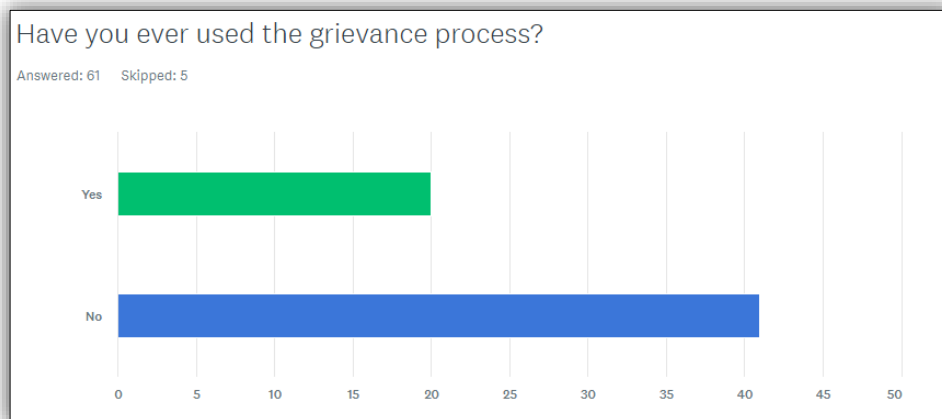


Figure 1

## Special Housing Unit (SHU)

In accordance with the CIC's current MOU with the BOP, the CIC was not permitted to enter the SHU during this inspection. Due to the USP's lockdown status during the inspection, wait times for resident interviews were extended because only two non-contact visiting rooms were available. This limited the CIC's ability to interview residents housed in the SHU who had requested to speak with the CIC staff.

- Regular units are sometimes placed on "pending SHU" status, resulting in punitive-style lockdowns for the entire unit. This occurs when the Special Housing Unit (SHU) is full, requiring some residents awaiting SHU placement to remain in general housing units.
- Twenty-one survey respondents stated they had been placed in the SHU at some point at USP Hazelton. Residents previously housed in the Special Housing Unit (SHU) alleged incidents of staff assaults and described the overall environment as hostile.
- BOP executive staff reported that they conduct rounds in the SHU once per week, while the chaplain and other department staff visit at least once per week.
- Many interviewed residents reported that the SHU is at full capacity.

- According to BOP staff, the SHU is overcrowded due to an increase in protective custody cases. All SHU residents are currently double-celled, a relatively new practice implemented to comply with suicide prevention efforts.

### Medical

- USP Hazelton is designated as a chronic care level 2 facility, serving residents with stable chronic medical or mental health conditions who are outpatient and require clinician evaluations at least quarterly.
- The medical department is not fully staffed. Currently, the medical department is 73% filled, and it has four vacancies.
- The medical department has one clinical director and one contracted medical doctor. The MD comes to the facility five days out of the week. The department is seeking two full-time doctors.
- There is a \$2 initial copay for services, but if someone has a reoccurring issue, they are not charged recurrently. Indigent inmates are not charged.
- USP Hazelton relies on two off-site hospitals for emergencies and other medical issues that cannot be managed on-site. Both hospitals are approximately 30 minutes away.
- Sick call for general population is done Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Thursday is reserved for the SHU.
- BOP staff stated that the medical department staff encounters approximately 25 sick call requests per day.
- Forty-six survey respondents stated that health services does not respond to sick call requests within 48 hours.
- Forty-eight survey respondents stated that they were “unsatisfied” with the medical care at USP Hazelton. Residents cited lack of responsiveness to medical emergencies and “not taking complaints seriously.”

### Mental Health Services

- The psychology department is currently operating at 50% of its authorized staffing levels. There are three psychologists on the FCC Hazelton compound.
- BOP staff stated that there is currently a moratorium on care levels 3 and 4 due to the current staffing shortage.
- Psychology services operate on the unit during modified lockdowns, but are paused during secure lockdowns.
- Psychology staff visits the SHU once per week.
- Individual therapy is available from the psychology department. Group therapy sessions take place in Unit A2 (CHALLENGE Program) only.
- Thirty-six survey respondents stated that they have been diagnosed with a mental health issue (See Figure 2).
- Twenty-four survey respondents stated that they are not receiving their mental health medication. Twenty-six respondents stated that they do not need mental health medication. Forty-six respondents stated that they do know how to request mental health services.
- BOP staff stated that the department offers classes focused on anger management, critical thinking, basic cognitive skills, and emotional self-regulation.

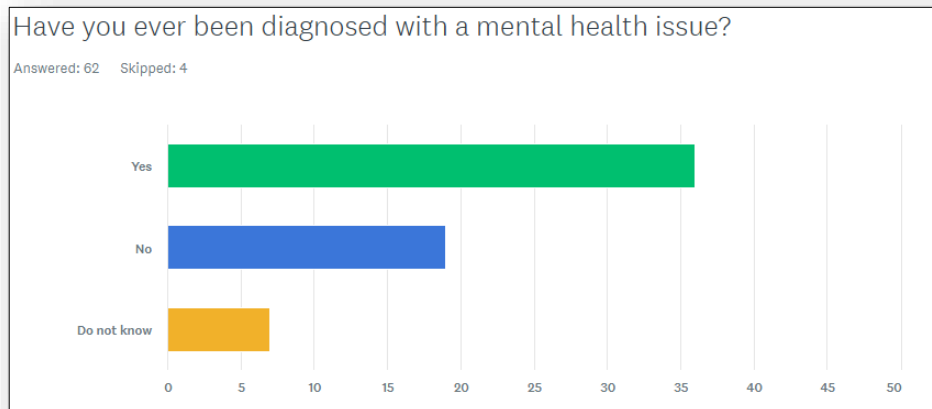


Figure 2

## Education & Programming

- USP Hazelton offers a one-year culinary program requiring a GED or high school diploma and completion of a ServSafe food safety course within the past three years.
- The education department offers GED and ESL classes. Classes are available from 8am-4pm daily.
- Additional educational offerings include access to the leisure library, post-secondary education (Adams State), ACE classes (resident-led), and access to the recreation areas.
- There are no specific special education courses offered; however, there is one special education teacher servicing FCC Hazelton, who may arrange accommodations for testing procedures. The facility is seeking another.
- Staff reported that the BARTON program, part of the Bureau of Prisons' literacy initiative under the First Step Act (FSA),<sup>3</sup> is available for residents with dyslexia. This program replaced the previous "Hooked on Phonics" curriculum.
- Residents enrolled in educational programming still participate in the regular GED program, and staff noted that approximately three residents have requested the GED program this calendar year.
- There are four law library computers available to residents. Residents can check books out using their ID's, but cannot physically enter the library.
- Due to staffing shortages and frequent lockdowns, programming is regularly delayed or unavailable and subject to lengthy waitlists when operational.

<sup>3</sup> Federal criminal justice reform law passed in 2018 that modifies sentencing and improves prison conditions for federal inmates

- Many residents identified frequent lockdowns and the limited availability of educational programming as their top concerns at USP Hazelton.
- Forty-four survey respondents stated that they are not participating in educational programs.

**Religious Services**

- There are four chaplains that serve the religious services department. The chaplains make weekly rounds in the SHU.
- The reentry coordinator manages volunteers who wish to come into the facility to lead religious services.
- During the inspection, the chaplain was not available, but CIC staff was able to observe the area where services are held.
- According to BOP staff, the Protestant and Muslim population is the largest in the USP. Twenty-seven survey respondents identified as Muslim. Fifteen respondents identified as Christian.
- Forty-eight survey respondents stated that they do not have access to staff or volunteer leaders specific to their faith (See Figure 3).

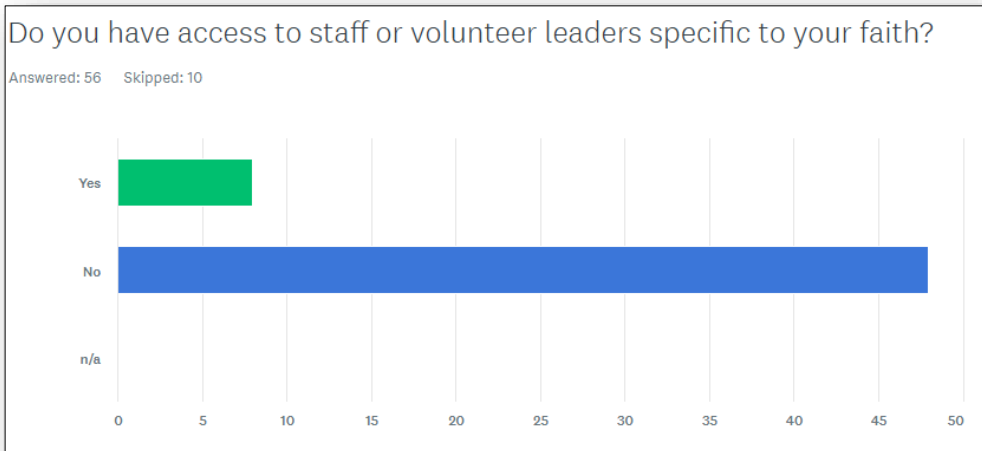


Figure 3

## Reentry

- The reentry programming coordinator stated that he stands on the mainline<sup>4</sup> daily and posts reentry information on TRULINCNS<sup>5</sup>; the coordinator provides resources for the entire FCC Complex.
- Twenty-two survey respondents are within 24 months of release. Two indicated that they have participated in release preparation programs and six have communicated with their unit team about release planning. Three had received DC reentry information, and eleven residents were aware of the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizen Affairs (MORCA).

## Recommendations

### Housing

- Limit lockdowns to the affected unit when only a single unit must be secured.
- Reserve facility-wide lockdowns for emergencies that impact the entire institution.
- Discontinue the use of "pending SHU" as a justification for unit lockdowns. Consider creating a specific housing unit for residents who are awaiting SHU placement.

### Medical

- The psychology department should develop and present opportunities for group therapy for residents housed in all units to foster a sense of community and support.

### Education and Programming

- Implement sustainable, alternative programming models to address persistent staffing shortages.
- Ensure residents maintain access to programs and credit opportunities during lengthy lockdown periods.

### Reentry

- The CIC recommends increasing awareness of D.C.-specific resources, including the D.C. Public Defender Service's Reentry Navigator.
- Encourage all D.C. residents within 24 months of release to connect with the D.C. Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens (MORCA) and the READY center.

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<sup>4</sup> The mass presence of residents near the chow hall before mealtimes.

<sup>5</sup> The Trust Fund Limited Inmate Computer System used by the BOP to provide inmates with monitored access to electronic communications.

## Appendix A: Methodology

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CIC and the BOP, the CIC notified the BOP on August 6, 2025 of its request to inspect FCC Hazelton. In the request, the CIC requested three inspection days to ensure adequate time to interview the large D.C. population at FCC Hazelton. Prior to the onsite inspection, the CIC contacted all D.C. residents via mail to inform them about the CIC's upcoming inspection and the opportunity for a confidential interview with CIC staff.

While planning for the onsite inspection, the CIC reviewed resident population and demographics, facility staffing, significant incidents, disciplinary records, education information, and administrative remedy filings and response numbers.

The CIC conducted an onsite inspection of FCC Hazelton on September 16-18, 2025. The CIC conducted a tour of the USP on September 16<sup>th</sup>, followed by resident interviews on September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Due to the facility's lockdown status and the resulting delays in resident movement, as well as the large DC resident population, the CIC was unable to complete all scheduled interviews. Additionally, the CIC was not able to interview residents housed in the SHU. Residents who were not interviewed received a thank you letter, informational resources, and an opportunity to return their surveys for inclusion in the data collection process. One completed survey was received within the 30-day response period.

The itinerary consisted of a tour of all areas to which residents have access (excluding the Special Housing Unit (SHU), discussions with staff, and confidential interviews with D.C. residents.

CIC staff compiled the surveys from the September site visit using SurveyMonkey, a business intelligence tool. Extended responses from the surveys were evaluated with comments from other communications to inform analysis and provide context in applicable sections.

In accordance with the MOU between the CIC and the BOP, the CIC provided the BOP with a draft of this report for a review of factual information and an opportunity to respond. The BOP response is provided in the appendix of this report.

