

Future of the O'ahu Community Correctional Center

Vol. 60 - New O'ahu Jail and Better Programs Needed

August 2025



Hawai'i Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Mission: The mission of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) is to provide a secure correctional environment for comprehensive rehabilitative, holistic and wraparound re-entry services, including culturally based approaches, to persons sentenced to our custody and care with professionalism, integrity, respect and fairness. Our goal is to reduce recidivism and enhance the safety and security of our communities.

What We Do: DCR carries out orders from the state courts to confine individuals in custody for a set period of time utilizing jails and prisons located within Hawai'i, at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu and in private contracted facilities on the continent. Jails, known in Hawai'i as Community Correctional Centers (CCCs), are located on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, Hawai'i and O'ahu and house pretrial detainees, misdemeanor offenders and others with a sentence of one year or less. CCCs also provide a pre-release transition function for prison inmates who are less than a year from their scheduled release. While some individuals in custody will remain confined for life, over 95 percent will serve their sentences and be released to the community.

Vision: DCR envisions a future when all its facilities provide safe, secure, healthy and humane environments for those in custody and staff. We are looking for a future based on better understanding the differing needs of offender populations, using therapeutic rather than punitive management techniques, ensuring racial equity and by promoting positive change so that fewer individuals are incarcerated in Hawai'i. However, aged and obsolete jails undermine DCR's ability to deliver such a vision and improving some facilities and replacing others are high priorities. Chief among those priorities is development of a new O'ahu jail on state-owned lands currently housing the Animal Quarantine Station in 'Aiea. Assisting DCR with O'ahu jail planning and development is the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) and a team of experts and advisors (the "New O'ahu Jail Project Team").

The New O'ahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC) project: Also known as the "New O'ahu Jail" or "New O'ahu Jail Project" to make clear that DCR is planning for a new jail and not a prison as we move forward with our development efforts.

Effective Rehabilitation Requires a New Jail and Better Reform Programs

Recent public discussions have put an emphasis on better reform programs over building a new jail to replace the OCCC but we need both in order to have a humane and effective corrections system. When PBS Hawai'i recently devoted its public affairs program "Insights" to the question of a new jail, most panelists agreed on one thing: It's not either a new jail or better programs to help people transition out of incarceration. A better facility and environment with space to properly implement reform programs will help those who are in custody and reduce recidivism.

OCCC has not had basic improvements in decades. *"The design of this facility does not meet the needs of a modern correctional facility,"* said OCCC Warden John Schell.

Trying to patch up the current decrepit Kalihi jail instead of building a new one will not only grow increasingly expensive, it will have serious, long-term negative impacts on the community, jail staff and those incarcerated there. Conditions at OCCC are so bad and antiquated, they get in the way of implementing the programs everyone agrees are necessary.

Guards do not have line-of-sight on prisoners they are meant to watch. There isn't space for separate populations to be kept apart – like those on probation or awaiting trial. Outside mental health or transition practitioners who might come into the jail to help prisoners do not have proper areas to do their work.

Though they are not widely recognized or honored by our community, the jail guards and staff are unsung heroes, working year after year in an antiquated facility. The staff deserves a safe, secure place to work and the promise that while things are tough at OCCC now, better days are coming. The jail is short of staff by about one-fourth of those needed for safe operation, and morale is understandably poor so the staff often call in sick instead of working their shift.



Conceptual rendering of new O'ahu jail and Community Transition Center

Effective Rehabilitation Requires a New Jail and Better Reform Programs (continued)

A new, modern facility will take advantage of state-of-the-art design and technology and require fewer people and be less expensive to operate. It will be more humane and safer for everyone, including guards and other staff; visitors and those in custody. And it will have the appropriate space and facilities to implement better reform programs.

Debate and discussion about the project – its size, shape and value – are understandable and healthy. Community involvement in our entire corrections system is necessary and has been a hallmark of the actual planning.

State Representative Della Au Belatti chairs the House Committee on Public Safety where she focuses on reforming Hawaii's correctional systems by strengthening reentry services statewide. On the "Insights" program she said, "We need to focus on what is before us, what we have already invested and the kind of planning we have already done...I believe the way we treat prisoners, inmates in our system, says a lot about what we are as a society. I believe that Hawai'i protects the most vulnerable."

Almost everyone who goes into jail or prison comes out eventually into our community. It is in our own public interest to try to make sure they come out no worse, and preferably better, than they entered. A new O'ahu jail is a necessary part of this process.

GED Graduation Ceremony Held for Inmates at Maui CCC

The Maui Community Correctional Center (MCCC) hosted a graduation ceremony on August 13, 2025, for five inmates who earned their General Education Development (GED) or High School Equivalency diploma while in custody at the facility. The event is the second GED/High School Equivalency graduation at MCCC which hosted its first in October 2024 for two graduates. The DCR partners with the Hawai'i Department of Education McKinley Community School for Adults – Moanalua campus for the program. Studies show that individuals who earn their GED while incarcerated are less likely to recidivate.

Vice Principal Kurt Ginoza issued diplomas to the graduates during the ceremony at the facility (one was not present because he has since been released from custody). DCR Director Tommy Johnson thanked MCCC Warden Liane Endo, education staff and community partners for their dedication and support.

"We are proud of all graduates for their accomplishments. This reflects the inmates' commitment to transform their lives," Johnson said. After the ceremony, DCR Deputy Director Sanna Muñoz congratulated the graduates and praised them for their focus and determination. "It was amazing to see their pride in this accomplishment and to learn that some of the graduates are interested in pursuing degrees in areas such as Hawaiian language, cybersecurity and culinary arts," she said.



Attendees at the graduation ceremony. Photo courtesy of DCR

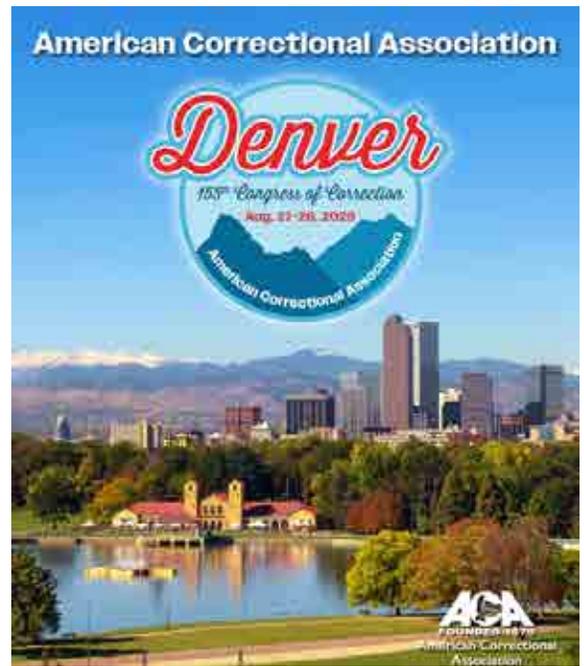
MCCC Warden Liane Endo congratulated the graduates for their achievements. "All of you have worked so hard and made that important investment in yourselves that will pay itself back many times forward," Endo said. DCR Corrections Education Program Manager Roseanne Propato said, "Today, we celebrate not just a diploma, but determination and resilience. Our graduates have shown that they have the courage to rise, to learn and to believe in a better future which is an inspiration to us all." Photos of the event are available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WPDq7wRaYS6qvnSqW_TMqQokkPNEGtg?usp=sharing.

New O'ahu Jail Team to Attend ACA Conference – August 21-26, 2025

From August 21-26, 2025, DCR officials and members of its project team will again be sharing plans for the new O'ahu Jail at the 155th Congress of Corrections sponsored by the American Correctional Association (ACA) in Denver, Colorado. Attending the Congress of Corrections offers an opportunity to impart information about DCR and the transformation taking place to Hawai'i's correctional system. It is also an occasion to share information about plans for the new O'ahu Jail and DCR's efforts to create a healing facility that is grounded in the values of the island culture. Team members will also attend workshops and panel discussions relevant to developing and managing the new O'ahu Jail.

Conference attendees are invited to visit Booth #769 in the exhibition hall where DCR officials and new O'ahu jail team members will be available to discuss the current status of plans for this public-private partnership (P3) project. Designers, constructors, financiers, product vendors and service providers are encouraged to meet and learn of the work being done concerning project delivery methods and financial and other commitments that will be needed to bring the new O'ahu jail to fruition.

Attending the conference is an opportunity to further reiterate the efforts to transform Hawai'i's correctional system and demonstrate the support by key Hawai'i officials for replacing OCCC with a new jail that reduces recidivism and promotes safer communities.



OCCC Warden Joins PBS Hawai'i Discussion about New O'ahu Jail

On June 27, 2025, OCCC Warden John Schell participated as a member of a panel discussion hosted by "Insights on PBS Hawai'i" discussing the new OCCC project. Warden Schell provided critical information as to why a new O'ahu jail is needed. Use the link to access the recorded discussion posted on the PBS Hawai'i website:

<https://www.pbshawaii.org/oahu-jail-update-insights-on-pbs-hawaii%ca%bbi/>



Panel members: John H. Schell, OCCC Warden; Kiki Walker, Reimaging Public Safety in Hawaii Coalition Member; Hawaii Representative Della Au Belatti; Christin M. Johnson, HCSOC Coordinator; and Yunji De Nies, PBS Hawaii Moderator



DCR Employees Recognized at Annual Service Awards Ceremony

DCR hosted its annual Incentive and Service Awards ceremony at the state Capitol on June 18, 2025. Over a dozen employees were honored for their outstanding accomplishments and dedication to public service that spanned 10, 20, 30 and 40 years. Honored guests in attendance included Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke, DCR Director Tommy Johnson, DCR Deputy Director Melanie Martin of the Administration Division, DCR Deputy Director Sanna Muñoz of the Rehabilitation Services and Programs Division, House Public Safety Committee Chair Rep. Della Au Belatti, along with DCR administrators and staff and friends and family members. DCR Director Tommy Johnson praised employees for their commitment and professionalism. *"Each of you are an inspiration and epitomize public service. I am honored to be working alongside you,"* Johnson said. During the ceremony, Johnson addressed attendees and thanked employees for their extraordinary work. *"The leadership team and I, we recognize your dedication and service and we appreciate it..."*, he added.

Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke also lauded employees for their hard work. *"The job that you have is not easy and you come to work on a daily basis with compassion, with care,"* Luke said. At the ceremony, Rep. Belatti, the keynote speaker, said, *"I know you go above and beyond every single day to keep our community safe, and resilient and thriving by doing some of those most difficult, grueling and often forgotten work of keeping our communities safe. This is not just a celebration of public service but those who work tirelessly behind the scenes and on the frontlines. This is about people who are ensuring the well-being of our citizens, both inside and outside of our prisons and jails,"* she added. Employees were honored in the following categories for their excellence in public service:

- 2024 TEAM (Team Excellence Award of Merit) of the Year: Lucille Garcia, Erica Pham-Lieu and Oriett Siangco of the Healthcare Division Health Information Unit Team
- 2024 Manager of the Year: Correctional Industries Specialist Kelli Miyasaki of the Hawai'i Correctional Industries
- 2024 Employee of the Year: Education Supervisor Marly Jane Nakamura of the Corrections Program Services Division – Education Services Branch.



Lucille Garcia, Erica Pham-Lieu and Oriett Siangco



Marly Jane Nakamura



The honorees will be nominated for the Governor's Award in their respective categories. Additional employees were also honored with a Sustained Superior Performance Award for their consistent, excellent work that surpass their normal duties and responsibilities: Clinical Services Branch Administrator Tina Agaran RN of the Healthcare Division, Hawai'i Correctional Industries Shop Supervisor Dylan-Joshua Cabalo, Administrative Assistant Jessie Macadamia of the Hawai'i Paroling Authority, Administrative Assistant Neichelle-Ann Tui of the Corrections Program Services Division and Human Resources Assistant Chanistee-Ann Uahinui of the Hawai'i Community Correctional Center. Photos courtesy of DCR with additional photos and videos available at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17MZjtkpSk8SybictuUxy1XzKncNJ9lw6?usp=sharing>



DCR employees receiving Sustained Superior Performance Awards from Director Johnson.

Incarcerated Fathers Reunite with Their Keiki to Celebrate Father's Day

The Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF) hosted a Father's Day – Keiki Day event in collaboration with Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers (KOKA) for 21 fathers, 45 children and grandchildren and 25 caregivers on June 22, 2025. Nearly 20 volunteers and 16 inmates assisted at the Hawaiian-themed event. For more than three hours, fathers spent quality time with their families talking, playing games, arts and crafts and ku'i kalo (poi pounding).

Ku'i kalo practitioners recently visited WCF to teach fathers the tradition of poi pounding. *"For the children to learn ku'i kalo from their fathers and connect to the Hawaiian culture is wonderful"*, said KOKA Executive Director Momi Akana. DCR Director Tommy Johnson said, *"Events such as Keiki Day help fathers maintain their bond with their children, as the men will one day reenter the community and reunite with their families. DCR supports family reunification."* Director Johnson also thanked WCF staff, volunteers and inmates for their efforts to organize a successful event.

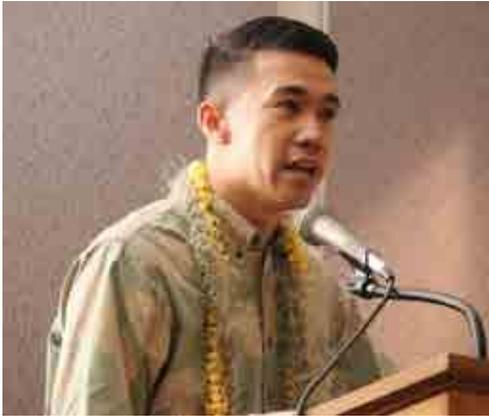
KOKA Director Akana described Keiki Day as one of the biggest Keiki Day events at a Hawai'i correctional facility that she has seen. Keiki O Ka 'Āina Family Learning Centers has been involved in Kid's Day events at the Women's Community Correctional Center for more than 20 years and in 2024, the WCF and KOKA began collaborating on Keiki Day events. This year, the Hālawā Correctional Facility and KOKA worked together on the facility's first Keiki Day event in April. *"When you see a day like today and the family connections, there's nothing but love and happiness happening out here,"* Akana said. *"Events like today do three things: they help reduce recidivism, they strengthen the bonds between the children and their dads, and they help dads be successful when they transition back into society,"* she added.



Keiki Day ended with a water balloon challenge at the recreation field where fathers and children smiled and laughed as they became soaked in water at the burst of balloons. Photos courtesy of DCR with additional photos and videos available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1c_j5ScRZwWLVHVIXeqqcTVpQM6OofSco?usp=sharing.



DCR Holds Graduation Ceremonies for New Adult Corrections Officers



Sen. Elefante addressing graduates

Sen. Elefante addressing graduates
The community appreciates the work that you will do and continue to do. Your role is vital in safeguarding the safety and well-being of our community." DCR Director Tommy Johnson added, "We are proud of every graduate that represents honor and integrity. They also represent a new generation of corrections officers who will become future leaders in the corrections field."

In addition to increasing the number of recruit training classes, DCR has broadened its recruitment efforts with radio spots, social media, bus ads and advertisements at movie theaters statewide. Recruit training comprises more than 300 hours of classroom instruction and physical training. Recruits learn a variety of subjects that include standards of conduct, ethics and professionalism, report writing, interpersonal communications, maintaining security, crisis intervention, security threat groups (gangs), mental health, first aid, use of firearms and self-defense tactics. All incoming classes receive Recruit Field Training along with Basic Corrections Training. During the final weeks of training, they go into the facility where they begin their jobs with guidance from their training sergeants.

During the July 14th ceremony Keynote Speaker Hilo Circuit Judge Peter K. Kubota also applauded the graduates. "You guys are great young men," Kubota said. "A lot of training, a lot of commitment, a lot of hard work and sacrifices from yourselves and your family members to get you there. All from our beautiful community of Hilo." It's a challenging and "very rewarding career that you're embarking on," Kubota said, noting that the new corrections officers join a team of ACOs across Hawai'i that are the foundation of DCR.



Director Johnson administering oath to new ACOs

Photos courtesy of DCR with additional photos and videos available via the following links:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1w5bzArGOqkxkQLUFvyK-HJjtorPV-wNo?usp=sharing>

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15cb7xDarE_aOK_6GlzWEs_MZ6j-tx1Xb?usp=sharing



Ceremony for Graduates of Windward Community College Landscaping Program

On July 18, 2025, the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) in Kailua hosted a graduation ceremony for eight women that completed the Windward Community College (WCC) Landscaping Technician Prep Program. The graduates are the first cohort from WCCC to earn a certificate of professional development in the program from the WCC Office of Career and Community Education. During the ceremony, DCR Director Tommy Johnson congratulated the graduates for their commitment and dedication. "They did a lot of work in such a short amount of time and they learned a lot about outdoor irrigation, about planting, pruning, all of those things that you need to be a successful landscaper," Johnson said. He also thanked WCCC staff, WCC officials, volunteers of the Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle and the inmates who participated in the program which is one of many innovative initiatives that DCR has started to help inmates successfully reintegrate back into the community.



Alberto Ricordi addresses the students

WCC Chancellor Ardis Eschenberg said, "Windward CC is so proud of our WCCC students and our strong educational partnership with DCR. Our shared students are empowered to grow and acquire skills through the collaboration and hard work of both our teams." In the 54-hour program, instructors taught students about landscape installation, maintenance and irrigation. In each topic, students engaged in in-class instruction and hands-on training.

Through the program, participants earned micro-credentials which recognize their proficiency in exterior landscaping. The course was developed in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience (CTAHR) Cooperative Extension and taught by an industry expert. WCCC Education Supervisor Kaha'e Maikai-Iakopo said the program has equipped the women with valuable knowledge and skills in the landscaping field. The students dedicated themselves to their studies, benefiting from the expertise of instructor Alberto Ricordi and his assistant, Wai Lee, along with the support of security staff, Sgt. Ashley Haku Kamelamela and Adult Corrections Officer Cyrusina Kahalewai. Inmate Kailey Duarte said the program equipped her with a lot of knowledge about landscaping. "Being able to be hands-on and be trusted to do that hands-on, it filled us with confidence. That's the kind of stuff that us women here need, to rebuild our confidence and how we think of ourselves," Duarte said after the ceremony.

WCCC Warden Ione "Noni" Guillonta applauded the graduates for demonstrating hard work and learning new skills. "(The program) is going to help them provide extra skills when they get out. We're looking at trying to have them have a pipeline into them finding jobs before they get out so it's an easier, smoother transition for them as they leave WCCC," Guillonta said. Maikai-Iakopo echoed Guillonta's sentiment. "This program has been meticulously designed to equip students for a successful career in landscaping, providing them with a significant advantage in the competitive job market," Maikai-Iakopo said.

According to DCR Corrections Education Program Manager Roseanne Propato, "These women have shown dedication, resilience and a willingness to grow, and we are proud to support them as they prepare for meaningful careers, whether it will be in landscaping, or other possibilities. They now have skills that they can take out into the community and share with their future neighbors. Their success reminds us that with access to education and support, second chances can lead to lasting change," Propato said. Photos courtesy of DCR with additional photos and videos available via the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bZUDmyluGNKGir3wX7EqKYhEibi52Tgr?usp=sharing>



Difference Between Jails and Prisons

While the terms “jail” and “prison” are often used interchangeably, they actually refer to two very different types of facilities that serve different purposes and function in different ways. When someone is accused of a crime and arrested, jail is usually the first stop in the criminal justice system, serving as the booking and holding location. Jails provide the secure environment needed for the temporary detention of individuals accused of a crime but who have not completed the trial process. Persons may also remain in jail if they could not meet conditions for bail or may not have qualified for bail. While some individuals remain in jail for a short while, minutes or hours, before being released, others may be held longer before they are released or transferred to another facility.

Jails are also used to house individuals who have been convicted of a low-level crime and received a short sentence (typically less than one year). Individuals convicted of a serious crime and who received an extended sentence (more than one year) are incarcerated in a prison. Think “short-term” and “long-term” with jail applying to short-term misdemeanor convictions and prison applying to long-term felony convictions.

In Hawai‘i, the jail population is under the jurisdiction of the courts and individuals in jail can only be released, placed in outside programs or assigned to other alternatives to incarceration by the courts. In contrast, a prison facility houses inmates that have been convicted and classified. Jails may oversee work release programs and some offer services designed to help the individuals change their behavior so they stand a better chance of avoiding a return stay. The difference between a jail and a prison may seem relatively minor on the surface, but there is a significant impact on the types of services that must be provided and how they are operated.



Length of Stay: Jails are used primarily for short-term detention.



Jurisdiction: Jails are typically operated by local law enforcement agencies.



Type of Offense: Jails are commonly used to hold individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or have been sentenced for minor crimes.



Programs and Services: Jails offer some programs and services aimed at helping individuals successfully re-enter society upon release.

We Want to Hear From You

DCR continually seeks input from community leaders and members about plans for the new O‘ahu jail and in response Project Team representatives attend meetings of the ‘Aiea Neighborhood Board #20, the ‘Aiea Community Association, and the Hawai‘i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission, as well as engaging with state and local officials, the media and others. In addition to reporting progress and accomplishments in advancing plans for the new O‘ahu jail, these forums are opportunities for DCR to seek input, advice and guidance from officials, stakeholders and the public. Contact the City and County of Honolulu, Neighborhood Commission Office for information about how to participate at an upcoming ‘Aiea Neighborhood Board meeting (Tel: 808-768-3710/email: nco@honolulu.gov); do the same for information about upcoming meetings of the ‘Aiea Community Association and how to participate (<http://www.aieacommunity.org>).

In addition to distributing newsletters to over 1,800 elected and appointed officials, government agencies, media outlets, volunteer groups and members of the public, DCR maintains the new O‘ahu jail website, **NewOahuJail.hawaii.gov**, which provides access to project-related materials, documents outreach efforts, and facilitates the public’s ability to offer ideas and suggestions or ask questions. Interested parties can also request to receive future announcements and notifications by submitting your contact information (name, affiliation if any, and email address) to: robert.nardi@wsp.com.





Citizens celebrate Hawai'i Statehood Day, August 21, 1959

Upcoming Activities

The following activities are anticipated in the months ahead.

<p>August 2025</p>	<p>Construction of a new housing unit continues at Maui CCC.</p> <p>O'ahu Jail team attends American Correctional Association conference (August 21-26, 2025)</p> <p>Public outreach and engagement continue with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association, and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.</p>
<p>September 2025</p>	<p>Construction of a new housing unit continues at Maui CCC.</p> <p>Public outreach and engagement continue with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.</p>
<p>October 2025</p>	<p>Construction of a new housing unit continues at Maui CCC.</p> <p>Public outreach and engagement continue with attendance at 'Aiea Neighborhood Board, 'Aiea Community Association and Hawai'i Correctional Systems Oversight Commission meetings.</p>

Interested in Learning More?

DCR distributes newsletters to more than 1,800 elected and appointed officials, government agencies, media outlets, volunteer groups and members of the public. For the latest information about the new O'ahu jail project, including project-related materials and FAQs, go to: **NewOahuJail.hawaii.gov**. To receive (via email) future announcements, newsletters, and other notifications, please submit your contact information (name, affiliation if any, and email address) to: robert.nardi@wsp.com.

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