

**REPORT ON THE
INSPECTION OF**

LORAIN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

INSPECTION DATE: DEC. 18, 2025



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INTRODUCTION

In the state's 2025-27 biennial budget bill, the 136th General Assembly created the Office of Correctional Facility Inspection Services (CFIS) within the Ohio Attorney General's Office. Established by Ohio Revised Code Section 109.39, CFIS – effective Sept. 30, 2025 – became the primary entity responsible for inspecting Ohio's state correctional institutions, privately operated correctional institutions and youth services facilities. Before that date, the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC), a joint committee of the General Assembly, was responsible for inspecting Ohio's correctional institutions and youth facilities. The General Assembly abolished the CIIC and re-constituted it as CFIS in the budget bill.

CFIS's duties are set forth in R.C. 109.39(A), which provides:

“There is, as a section within the office of the attorney general, an office of correctional facility inspection services. The office shall establish and maintain a continuing program of inspection of each state correctional institution used for the custody, control, training, and rehabilitation of persons convicted of crime and of each private correctional facility; any local correctional institution used for the same purposes; and any youth services facility. Each inspection shall include an evaluation of the inmate grievance procedure, compliance with meal requirements, at least one review of rehabilitative or educational programs, and any other compliance area the office determines is appropriate. Not later than the last day of January of each year, the office shall submit a report of its findings from the previous calendar year to the general assembly in accordance with section 101.68 of the Revised Code.”

CFIS is not required to provide a correctional institution or youth facility with advance notice of an inspection, pursuant to R.C. 109.39(A). In addition to its mandatory inspection duties, CFIS may assist the attorney general and correctional facility leadership in developing and evaluating programs to improve the condition or operations of the facilities it is required to inspect. R.C. 109.39(B).

Besides the CFIS inspections, each Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) facility undergoes an annual inspection and accreditation by the American Correctional Association (ACA) and an internal management audit (IMA). Although CFIS staff may review and refer to the ACA and IMA findings, CFIS inspections are separate and independent.

To institute the continuing program of inspection required by Ohio law, CFIS, shortly after its formation, began conducting an initial inspection of the DRC and Department of Youth Services (DYS) facilities that had not been inspected by CIIC in 2025. The initial inspections were designed, in part, to help CFIS familiarize itself with each facility, the warden and the staff. Further, each initial inspection allows CFIS to determine what additional data might be needed for future inspections and what inspection methodology is appropriate. This report details the initial inspection of Lorain Correctional Institution (LORCI).

GENERAL OVERVIEW

On Dec. 18, 2025, CFIS completed an initial inspection of LORCI. The office of Warden Jennifer Gillece Black had been notified the day prior that CFIS inspectors would arrive at 9 a.m. the next day. CFIS inspectors were on-site at LORCI for approximately four hours. The CFIS team consisted of Dr. James Wesson, chief of inspections, and Deborah Drummond, lead inspector.

LORCI is a mixed-security-level correctional facility for adult men in Grafton, Ohio. It opened in 1990 and is accredited by the ACA. LORCI is a reception center, a DRC facility that receives newly incarcerated adults and parole violators before those individuals are sent to the institution where they will serve the remainder of a sentence. LORCI has double occupancy per cell and is split into units. Each unit houses about 124 incarcerated persons (IPs), with a total maximum capacity of 1,089. On the day of the inspection, it housed 1,393. CFIS verified that LORCI had obtained the appropriate waiver from ACA to house more IPs than is set forth by its original capacity level. (Additional capacity may be achieved by, say, placing a bunk bed in a cell in place of a single bed.)

LORCI's most recent IMA was done on April 15-17, 2025. The annual audit is conducted by an independent auditor, who reviews a facility's compliance with ACA's 5th Edition Standards and the 2025 Ohio Standards and Observations, in preparation for the next ACA audit. All institutional work, industry, and vocational-educational programs are also audited.

In the 2025 IMA, LORCI was found to be in compliance with all 64 of the applicable mandatory ACA standards and 435 of the applicable 437 non-mandatory ACA standards. LORCI was in compliance with 71 of the 76 applicable Ohio standards. The table below illustrates LORCI's rate of compliance with ACA and Ohio standards over the past three years.

IMA Audit Scores	2025	2024	2023
ACA Mandatory	100%	100%	100%
ACA Non-mandatory	99.5%	99.3%	99.5%
Ohio Standards	93.4%	94%	92.8%

AREAS INSPECTED BY CFIS

Pursuant to R.C. 109.39, CFIS must inspect the grievance process, food services, and an educational or a rehabilitative program. In addition, R.C. 109.39 empowers CFIS to inspect any other area that it deems appropriate. While at LORCI, CFIS also inspected:

- Medical services
- Recreation area
- Library/Law library
- Visitation area
- Specialized housing
- Transitional Programming Unit (restrictive housing)

In advance of their arrival, CFIS inspectors asked LORCI staff to provide for the inspectors' review copies of the previous seven days of administrative duty officer (ADO) reports and the 15 most recent grievances. Upon arrival for the inspection, the CFIS team was greeted by Chris Miller, the warden's administrative assistant. After brief introductions in the warden's office, the inspection — led by Ms. Miller and Deputy Warden Roger Wright — began.

MANDATED AREAS OF INSPECTION

Grievance process

DRC's grievance process, governed by Ohio Administrative Code Section 5120-9-31, consists of three steps. It begins with an incarcerated person (IP) filing an informal complaint resolution (ICR) with the supervisor of the area in which the IP has a concern. The IP has 14 calendar days from the date of an incident to file an ICR. The inspector of institution services (IIS) has 14 days to respond and has an option to file an extension. If the complaint is not resolved or the IP is dissatisfied with the inspector's decision, the IP can file a grievance to the IIS within 14 days of the ICR response. Or, in cases in which an IP believes that the warden or the IIS was personally and knowingly involved in a violation of a law, rule or policy — or condoned such a violation — the IP can file a grievance directly to the chief inspector.

The institutional inspector investigates a grievance to determine whether any DRC policy, rule or procedural guideline was violated — and either denies or grants the grievance. If the IP is not satisfied with the inspector's decision, the IP can appeal it to the chief inspector. The Office of the Chief Inspector, housed within DRC's central office, makes the final appeal determination for every grievance that is appealed from the facility level. R.C. 5120.06.

Every IP is issued a tablet computer with access to ViaPath, the system through which IPs electronically file a grievance. Paper grievance forms are also available for those who prefer a manual process. The grievance process is designed to address IP complaints regarding any aspect of institutional life, whether the issue relates to the application of policies or procedures, conditions of confinement, or actions of institutional staff.

The LORCI staff was prepared for inspection of the grievance process on Dec. 18, 2025, but the institutional inspector was unexpectedly out of the office. CFIS postponed the grievance portion of the inspection until the inspector was available, returning to the facility on Jan. 6, 2026, to complete it.

CFIS focused on ensuring that the staff systematically logged and tracked grievances in ViaPath, that the staff responded promptly to grievances and that grievance responses met policy guidelines. CFIS also looked for any signs of retaliation against IPs who filed grievances, checked to ensure that the appeals process was accessible, looked for any trends with grievances, and reviewed grievance responses to ensure that the correct policy was cited and cited appropriately.

Between Nov. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2025, LORCI received 17 ICRs and/or grievances, a low number that CFIS attributed to several factors, including institutional resolution of issues before a complaint is filed and visibility of facility staff. Such proactive factors allow IP concerns to be resolved informally or at the kite level. A kite is a message sent by an IP through ViaPath that allows the area at issue to be resolved before an IP turns to the ICR process. Staff members have seven days to respond to a kite.

Regarding the grievances and ICRs reviewed by CFIS, the applicable time frames were adhered to and the responses appropriately quoted policy. All grievances and informal complaints were logged and tracked electronically via the DRC system. LORCI's grievance process ran efficiently, and in accordance with DRC policy.

Food services

The food-services area was inspected to ensure compliance with DRC Policy 60-FSM-02, Food Service Operations, and DRC 60-FSM-06, Safety and Health Protection for Staff and Incarcerated Individuals Assigned to Food Service.

Meal sampling

CFIS staff sampled a lunch consisting of creamy chicken macaroni, green beans, garden salad, French dressing, bread, margarine, and cinnamon sugar cake. Temperatures for all items were within acceptable guidelines, according to DRC Policy 60-FSM-02 Food Service Operations. The portion sampled met policy standards for taste, appearance and temperature, according to DRC Policy 60-FSM-02 Food Service Operations (hot foods served at or above 140 degrees, cold foods at or below 40 degrees).

Observations

The food-services area was clean and orderly, and the winter menu was posted. Incarcerated food-services workers were appropriately dressed in protective clothing (hair and beard nets, rubber gloves). Uniforms were neat and appeared to be clean. LORCI's food services offers the IN2Work program, designed to teach skills and provide certifications needed for careers in the culinary arts. Participants were actively engaged in meal preparation.

The kitchen tool room was inspected, and all tools were present and accounted for. Tools not present were replaced with a chit, which is an object placed on the peg where the tool should be. A tool control log was being used to indicate the individual to whom the tool was assigned, serving as a safety check. All tools were accounted for or in use, and there were no broken tools in the area.

The back dock area was free of debris and offensive odors, the storage area was clean and organized, coolers and freezers were neat and clean, the food-prep area was clean, and the serving lines were clean and organized. The dish room was clean and dish-cleaning water temperatures were in accordance with DRC 60-FSM-02. No rodents or pests were observed in the food-services area or on the dock.

Overall sanitation was appropriate, as proper disinfectants were being utilized to clean the area. CFIS verified completion of sanitation and hygiene training for food service and incarcerated staff to ensure compliance with 60-FSM-06. Safe Serv Certification was also verified.

CFIS spoke to eight incarcerated adults in the food-services area; none reported any major concerns.

Educational or rehabilitative program

DRC, through the Ohio Central School System (OCSS), offers educational programs designed to meet the needs of IPs. The programs include adult education courses, vocational training and technical training, all of which incorporate technology into the programming. Collectively, the programs are designed to enhance employability of IPs upon their release. On the date of the inspection, LORCI's academic and career programs included but weren't necessarily limited to:

- Education:
 - Adult basic education
 - General educational development (GED)

- Pre-GED
- Special education
- Certification/degree programs through Lorain County Community College
- Advanced job training through Ashland University and Sinclair Community College
- Career/Technical:
 - Robotics
- Apprenticeships:
 - Animal trainer
 - Cook
 - Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)
 - Janitor
 - Maintenance repair worker
 - Plumber
 - Welder

Upon review, LORCI's literacy and GED programs appeared to meet the needs of the incarcerated population. The facility's vocational training aligns with current job market demands. LORCI offers significant post-secondary educational opportunities to IPs, instructors have sufficient qualifications, and the educational materials and technology are current. Enrollment and attendance were being tracked and monitored by staff. IPs with learning disabilities were provided appropriate accommodations. No problems or issues were observed or reported.

NON-MANDATED AREAS OF INSPECTION

Medical services

CFIS toured the medical department and spoke to the staff. The department consists of a dental area, pill call area, examination rooms, two infirmary areas, and a 24/7 trauma room. There is office space to accommodate the medical staff (doctor, administrators and nurse practitioners) in both buildings. IPs were receiving medical treatment during the inspection; the area was extremely clean. There were appropriate health-care and preventative-care memos visible in the medical areas.

Recreation area

CFIS toured the recreation department and spoke with the director. The area appeared to prioritize the health of IPs; it was clean and well-maintained. Weight training and exercise equipment, a full-length basketball court, and an outdoor rec area were available. All equipment appeared to be in good working conditions; no issues were observed. Appropriate cleaning disinfectants were being utilized. The restrooms were inspected, with no sanitation issues to report. Toilets, sinks, and the water fountain were in good working order. No violations of DRC 77-REC-01, Recreation and Leisure Time Activities, were observed or reported.

Library/Law library

LORCI has a newly renovated library that includes a law library. The area was clean and organized. IPs visiting the library can access OhioMeansJobs.com, which provides specialized employment services, including re-entry resume support. The librarian was knowledgeable and expressed pride in her area. The general population of IPs had access to LexisNexis. Re-entry information was posted in the library, as were its hours of operation. No violations of DRC 58-LIB-01, Comprehensive Library Services, were observed or reported.

Visitation

The visitation area provided a setting that encouraged IPs to positively engage with their families, especially their children. There was a large play area for children's use during visitation. The visitation was clean and organized, with appropriate seating. A vending area was available for visiting family members to purchase snacks. Visiting hours at LORCI were 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. No violations of DRC 76-VIS-01, Incarcerated Person (IP) Visitation, were observed or reported.

Specialized housing

CFIS inspected Unit 9A, which is focused on rehabilitation through peer support and structured programming. The programming addresses substance abuse and behavioral issues through group therapy and a support system centered on personal development. The programming was appropriate, especially for parole violators serving a short time at LORCI for a parole violation. The unit was clean and orderly; no violation of DRC policies was observed or reported.

Transitional Programming Unit (TPU)

TPU, a restrictive housing area, was clean and orderly. Inspectors verified that IPs had access to their tablets. A peer-support team was present and actively engaged. Peer supporters are IPs trained by the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health to assist other IPs who may be in crisis. Peer supporters use their training and their shared experiences with mental-health and/or substance-use issues to assist other IPs. Support is provided within the housing unit – outside a clinical setting – and is meant to promote sustained recovery. Peer supporters also can become certified prior to release, enhancing their employability.

The unit offered adequate reading materials and religious services. Recovery services (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous) and mental-health programs were also offered. CFIS inspectors verified via the sign-in log, DRC 6011, that executive staff members were conducting rounds promptly, according to 50-PAM-02. No sanitation issues were reported or observed. Cells that were inspected were in appropriate condition.

CFIS reviewed several DRC 4118 reports, which are used to document each IPs essential daily functions, such as acceptance or refusal of meals, personal hygiene and recreational activities. A staff member signs or initials each DRC 4118 as an indication that these necessities/services have been provided. All such documents reviewed by CFIS were completed appropriately, including the dates, times, and staff initials documenting the care given. TPU was appropriately staffed with three officers, a sergeant, and a lieutenant. CFIS spoke to numerous incarcerated adults housed in TPU; no one reported any issues or concerns that would constitute a violation of DRC policy.

MISCELLANEOUS INSPECTION MATTERS

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in 2003 to provide for the analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape in federal, state, and local institutions. PREA also provides information, resources, recommendations, and funding to protect incarcerated people from sexual assaults and rapes in prison. PREA applies to all DRC institutions, including privately operated and juvenile correctional facilities.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSP), the law enforcement agency responsible for investigating criminal offenses inside correctional institutions, tracks sexual assaults using the PREA incident system. CFIS inspectors reviewed LORCI's PREA reports from the system and found no substantiated cases. PREA signs were appropriately posted throughout the facility (e.g. housing units, recreation, library, visitation, education, front entrance, and medical). Local rape-crisis center contact information was posted throughout LORCI.

Staff recruiting and retention

LORCI had a vacancy rate below 10%, a rate that does not reflect an immediate need to recruit staff.

Naloxone (Narcan) going-home kits

LORCI offered Narcan kits to IPs on the day of their release. Each kit contained two doses of naloxone and 10 fentanyl testing strips. The kits are stored in Harm Reduction Vending Machines, which are placed in a discrete area. LORCI was in compliance with DRC 10-SAF-20, Naloxone Safety and Health Procedures.

Administrative duty officer (ADO) reports

CFIS reviewed the ADO reports from the week before the inspection, which LORCI had provided upon request. Per DRC 50-PAM-02, Incarcerated Person (IP) Communication/Weekly Rounds, an ADO report must be completed daily by staff members tasked with completing inspection rounds. The designated rounds cover food services, visitation, a housing unit, the recreation area and any other area designated by the warden. Upon completion of the rounds, the ADO provides the warden's office a summary of his/her findings. The report includes the date and time of the rounds, areas visited, observations, concerns and recommendations. The ADO reports reviewed by CFIS were completed on time, in accordance with policy. No violations of 50-PAM-02 were observed or reported.

Security/Facilities

Each unit was staffed by two correctional officers, a case manager, a sergeant and a unit manager. Units were clean and organized. Restrooms were clean, with all showers, sinks, and toilets in good working order. Units had essential items, including a washer and dryer, ice machines, water fountains and microwaves – all in good working condition. Cleaning products and supplies were secured appropriately. Dayrooms had televisions and appropriate recreational games and activities.

According to the employee sign-in log (DRC-6011), executive staff members are conducting rounds according to policy. Fire evacuation plans were posted in highly visible areas. Unit team pictures were posted, as were programming information (e.g., staff/incarcerated adult facilitator, date and time of program) and informational memos (e.g., PREA, library, law library, recreation hours). None of the IPs interviewed during the inspection raised a concern that would constitute a violation of DRC policy. No safety or security issues were observed during the inspection.

CONCLUSION

On the date of the inspection, LORCI was immaculate. Administrative staff displayed a remarkable level of professionalism and correctional expertise. Staff were able to quickly and thoroughly answer any questions asked and demonstrated a firm knowledge of the institution's operations. The atmosphere fostered positive social behavior among the incarcerated adults and provided access to programs and vocational services designed to equip IPs for re-entry.



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