

**REPORT ON THE
INSPECTION OF**

NOBLE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

INSPECTION DATE: OCT. 27, 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 Noble Correctional Institution (NCI).

GENERAL OVERVIEW

On Oct. 27, 2025, CFIS completed an initial inspection of NCI. Warden James Forshey was notified on the Friday before that CFIS inspectors would arrive at 9 a.m. the following Monday (Oct. 27). CFIS inspectors were at NCI for approximately four hours. The CFIS team consisted of Dr. James Wesson, chief of inspections, and Deb Drummond, lead inspector.

NCI is a minimum-/medium-security level correctional facility for adult men in Caldwell, Ohio. The facility, with an open-dormitory style, has numerous units. Each unit houses roughly 240 incarcerated persons (IPs). The facility, which opened in 1996, has a maximum capacity of 2,600. On the day of the inspection, it housed about 2,400.

NCI's most recent IMA was done on March 18-20, 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. Noble Correctional Institution is scheduled for an ACA reaccreditation audit in 2027.

In the 2025 IMA, NCI was found in compliance with all 64 of the applicable mandatory standards, and all 434 of the applicable non-mandatory ACA standards. NCI was in compliance with 70 of the 76 applicable Ohio standards. The table below illustrates NCI'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	100%	100%	100%
Ohio Standards	92%	95.4%	94%

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 NCI, CFIS also inspected:

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

In advance of their arrival, CFIS inspectors requested that the staff produce copies of the previous seven days of administrative duty officer (ADO) reports and the 15 most recent grievances. Upon arrival at the facility, the team was greeted by Warden Forshey and his staff. After brief introductions in the warden's conference room, the inspection, led by Warden Forshey, 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 to file an ICR from the date of the incident. 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 decision, the IP can appeal the institutional inspector's decision to the chief Inspector. The Office of the Chief Inspector, housed within DRC's central office, makes the final determination for every grievance that is appealed from the facility level. R.C. 5120.06.

Each 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 this issue relates to the application of policies or procedures, the conditions of confinement, or the actions of institutional staff.

During the inspection, CFIS focused on ensuring that NCI is systematically logging and tracking grievances in ViaPath, the staff is promptly responding to grievances, and the grievance response is within policy guidelines. CFIS also looked for any indication of retaliation against any IPs who have filed grievances, checked to ensure that the appeals process is accessible, looked for any trends with grievances, and viewed grievance(s) to ensure that each response appropriately quoted the policy cited within the response.

CFIS reviewed 15 grievances. All time frames were met, and the responses appropriately quoted policy. There was no indication of retaliatory behavior by staff. Grievances and ICRs were appropriately logged and tracked in ViaPath. No noted or observed trends were documented within the grievances. The grievance process was readily available to IPs on their tablet. CFIS did not observe any violation of the ODRC grievance policy (5120-9-31).

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.¹

Meal sampling

During the inspection, the CFIS team sampled a lunch of whole-grain turkey sausage pizza, parsley macaroni, corn and carrots, garden salad, French dressing and a cookie bar. The portion sampled met policy standards for taste and appearance. Temperatures for all items served and for the portions sampled were within DRC policy 60-FSM-02 (hot foods at or above 140 degrees, cold foods at or below 40 degrees).

Observations

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

The kitchen tool room was inspected, and all tools were accounted for. Tools not present were replaced with a chit, an object placed on the peg to indicate where the tool should be. A tool control log was being used to indicate the individual to whom a tool was assigned, serving as a safety check.

The back-dock area was clean and free of offensive odors. The area surrounding the trash compactor was free of debris. No rodents or pests were observed in the food-services area or on the dock. Coolers and freezers were in proper working order. Storage areas were clean and organized. The dish room was clean; dish-cleaning water temperatures were in compliance with DRC 60-FSM-02.

Overall sanitation was appropriate, as proper disinfectants were being utilized to clean the area. CFIS verified completion of sanitation and hygiene training for food-services staff and incarcerated staff to ensure compliance with 60-FSM-06. Safe Serv Certification was also verified. CFIS spoke to eight IPs in the food-services area; none reported any concerns or issues that would indicate a violation of ODRC policy (60-FMS-06).

¹ All DRC policies referenced herein are available at: <https://drc.ohio.gov/about/resource/policies-and-procedures/3-policies-and-procedures>.

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 in the programming. Collectively, the programs are designed to enhance IP employability upon release. During the inspection, CFIS inspected NCI's educational and career tech programming, including:

- Education:
 - Adult basic education
 - General educational development (GED)
 - Pre-GED
 - Special education
 - Certificate and degree programs through Ashland University
- Career/Technical:
 - Carpentry
 - Construction technology
 - Horticulture
 - Plumbing
- Apprenticeships:
 - Animal trainer
 - Beekeeper
 - Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)
 - Janitorial
 - Landscape tech
 - Maintenance repair worker
 - Recovery operator

NCI has two canine programs. One is a dog-boarding program, which allows NCI staff to pay to board a dog. NCI staff members oversee the program and IPs work as apprentices in animal training, learning proper canine care, health, safety and behavior; kennel management; grooming techniques; and boarding responsibilities. IPs also learn customer service and communication, and how to market the program. The second program is a partnership with the Cambridge dog shelter, which allows IPs to house and train dogs in preparation for adoption.

During the inspection, the CFIS team focused on NCI's literacy and GED programs. The facility's vocational training aligned with the current job market; its post-secondary educational opportunities for IPs were adequate, as were its instructor qualifications; and its educational materials and technology were up-to-date. Inspectors also reviewed enrollment tracking and attendance tracking, and accommodations for IPs with learning disabilities. There were no problems. Overall, 743 IPs were actively enrolled in at least one program (career tech, GED, college, apprenticeship).

NCI's educational and vocational departments appeared to have a strong focus on preparing IPs for a successful return to society. The educational area was clean. Numerous IPs were observed actively working in the GED and pre-GED programs. The vocational area, too, was clean and organized. IPs were observed actively working in the carpentry and plumbing programs. The area appeared to have appropriate safety protocols in place. No DRC policy violations were noted or observed.

NON-MANDATED AREAS OF INSPECTION

Medical services

CFIS toured and inspected the medical department and spoke to staff. The department consists of a dental area, pill call area, examination rooms and an infirmary. There is office space to accommodate the medical staff (doctor, administrators and nurse practitioners). IPs were receiving medical treatment during the inspection, and the area was extremely clean. Appropriate health-care and preventative-care signage was posted in the medical area. The department was fully staffed and well-maintained.

Recreation department

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

Library/Law library

Noble Correctional has a large library, including a law library. The area was clean and organized. IPs were able to access the Ohio Means Jobs website in the library, which provides specialized employment services, including re-entry resume support. IPs had access to LexisNexis. The librarian was knowledgeable and expressed pride in her area. Re-entry information and hours of operation were posted. No violations of DRC 58-LIB-01, Comprehensive Library Services, were observed or reported.

Visitation area

The visitation area appeared to encourage positive interaction among IPs and family members, especially children of IPs, as well as other visitors. The area was clean and organized, with appropriate seating. A vending area was available for visiting family members to purchase snacks. Visitation was available five days a week (Wednesday–Sunday) from 8 a.m. to 11: 15 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. No violations of DRC 76-VIS-01, Incarcerated Person (IP) Visitation, were observed or reported.

Specialized housing

CFIS inspected Unit A1, a specialized unit focusing on rehabilitation through peer support and structured programming. NCI's programming centered on addressing substance abuse and behavioral issues through IP group therapy. The program had 75 participants.

The Unit A1 manager provided a tour, explaining that the group therapy emphasizes peer support and encouragement. IPs, facility staff members, volunteers and case managers lead the group sessions. The unit, which has an open-dormitory style, was clean, organized and well-maintained. No sanitation issues were observed or reported, with all toilets and sinks appearing in good working order. The unit was appropriately staffed with two officers, a sergeant, a case manager and the unit manager. The staff was professional in its interaction with CFIS. No violations of DRC policy were observed or reported.

Transitional Programming Unit (TPU)

The transitional programming unit (TPU), a restrictive housing area, was clean and well-organized. CFIS confirmed that IPs in the unit had access to their tablets. A peer-support team was actively engaged within the unit. These peer supporters are trained by the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health to help those who may be experiencing a crisis. They use their training and shared experiences with mental-health and substance-use issues to promote sustained recovery. Peer supporters can become certified before their release, enhancing their employability.

The unit had adequate reading materials. It offered religious services, recovery services (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous) and mental-health programs. The DRC 6011 log showed that executive staff were conducting appropriate rounds, as required by DRC Policy (50-PAM-02). No sanitation issues were found; the cells inspected were in good condition. The TPU laundry area was clean and organized, with proper cleaning products being used.

CFIS reviewed eight DRC 4118 reports, which document an IP's daily activities, including meals, personal hygiene and recreation. Each document was appropriately signed or initialed as verification that these necessities had been provided. All reports reviewed were completed correctly; dates, times and staff initials documented the items or services given. The unit was properly staffed with three officers, a sergeant and a lieutenant. None of the IPs with whom CFIS spoke raised any issues that would constitute a violation of DRC policy.

MISCELLANEOUS INSPECTION MATTERS

Prison Rape Elimination Act

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 prison sexual assaults and rapes. 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 reviewed NCI's PREA reports from that system and found no substantiated cases. PREA signs were appropriately posted throughout the facility (housing units, recreation, library, visitation, education, front entrance and medical services). Contact information for a local rape-crisis center was posted throughout NCI. No violations of DRC policy were observed or reported.

Staff recruiting and retention

NCI's vacancy rate was below 10% on the day of the inspection. Information regarding hiring events and job openings was posted.

Naloxone (Narcan) going-home kits

NCI 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. NCI was in compliance with DRC-10-SAF-20, Naloxone safety and health procedures.

Administrative duty officer (ADO) reports

CFIS reviewed the ADO (50-PAM-02) reports from the week before the inspection, which were provided in advance by NCI staff. An ADO report is completed daily by the designated executive staff member(s) tasked with completing inspection rounds. These rounds cover food services, visitation, housing units, 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 and in accordance with policy. No issues were noted. NCI was in compliance with DRC policy 50-PAM-02.

Security/Facilities

Units were appropriately staffed by two correctional officers, a case manager, a sergeant and a unit manager. Units were clean and organized. Restrooms were clean, and all showers, sinks and toilets appeared to be in good working condition. Units had essential equipment, such as washer and dryer, ice machines, water fountains and microwaves. Cleaning products and supplies were secured appropriately. Dayrooms had televisions and appropriate recreational games and activities. Fire evacuations plans were posted in highly visible areas. Unit team pictures and programming information (staff/incarcerated adult facilitator, date and time of program) were posted. A review of the DRC 6011 (DRC Sign in logbook) showed that facility staff members appear to be conducting rounds according to DRC 50-PAM-02. NCI has a koi pond on the grounds near its outdoor recreation area and a nearby sitting area for staff and IPs. No safety or security issues were observed during the inspection. NCI appeared to be fully staffed, and the officers' presence was observed. None of the IPs interviewed raised a concern that would constitute a violation of DRC policy.

CONCLUSION

Overall, NCI was very clean and impressive. Staff members demonstrated a high level of professionalism and correctional knowledge; they were able to answer all questions. The facility appeared to promote positive social behavior among the IPs. The facility's programming and vocational services had a strong focus on preparing IPs for a successful re-entry to society. The grievance process was being utilized effectively, allowing issues to be resolved at the lowest level.



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