

**REPORT ON THE
INSPECTION OF**

SOUTHERN OHIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

INSPECTION DATE: DEC. 4, 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 the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF).

GENERAL OVERVIEW

On Dec. 4, 2025, CFIS completed an initial inspection of the SOCF. Warden Cynthia D. Davis was notified the day before that inspectors would arrive at 9 a.m. the following day. CFIS inspector Dr. James Wesson was at the facility for roughly four hours.

SOCF is a maximum-security state prison for adult men located in Lucasville, Ohio, in Scioto County. The facility, which opened in 1972, has a capacity of 1,330 inmates. On the inspection date, the total IP population at SOCF was 1,320 inmates. SOCF is divided into units with single-cell occupancy.

The facility's most recent IMA took place on April 28-30, 2025. The annual audit is conducted by an independent auditor, who examines 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 internal management audit, SOCF was found in compliance with 61 of the applicable 64 mandatory ACA standards and 458 of the applicable 463 non-mandatory ACA standards. SOCF was in compliance with 69 of the 74 applicable Ohio standards. The table below illustrates SOCF's 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	98%	98%	98%
Ohio Standards	91%	95%	93%

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 the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, CFIS also inspected:

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

In advance of the inspection, CFIS requested that SOCF staff produce copies of the previous seven days of administrative duty officer (ADO) reports (50-PAM-02) and the 15 most recent grievances.

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 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 (IIP) 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 decision for every grievance appealed from the facility level. R.C. 5120.06.

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

Of the ICRs and grievances reviewed by CFIS, all responses were provided on time and according to policy. CFIS did not observe or hear about any retaliation against IPs who filed grievances. Staff members were logging and tracking complaints and ICRs via ViaPath, which was accessible on IP tablets. No violations of the Ohio Administrative Code were observed or reported.

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

CFIS staff sampled a lunch consisting of a turkey hot dog, barbecue pinto beans, spiced cabbage, white bread, a banana and iced carrot cake. 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).

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

Observations

The food-services area was clean and orderly; 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 clean.

The kitchen tool room was inspected, and all tools were accounted for. Tools not present had been 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 signed out, serving as a safety check. No violations of DRC policy were reported or observed.

Coolers and freezers were clean and in good working order. Storage areas were clean and organized. Food was properly labeled and dated. The dish room was clean; dish-cleaning water temperatures were in compliance with DRC 60-FSM-02. 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. The food-services area was using DRC-approved cleaning chemicals and disinfectants.

The back-dock area was clean and free of offensive odors. The area surrounding the trash compactor was free of debris. There was no sign of rodents or pests in the food-services area or on the dock. CFIS spoke with multiple IPs in food services as well as the food-services manager. No one reported any issues that would constitute DRC policy violations.

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. On the date of the inspection, SOCF's academic and rehabilitative programs included:

- Adult basic education (ABLE)
- General educational development (GED)
- GED (academic)
- Certificates and degrees from Sinclair Community College
- Community-service programs

Because it is a high-security prison, only a few IPs are permitted in the education area at one time. The few IPs present during the inspection were working with an instructor to complete GED courses. The IPs expressed a strong desire for additional programming, particularly the CDL program. SOCF has a driving simulator, but it has reportedly never been used. None of the IPs in the education area reported any issues that would constitute a DRC policy violation.

NON-MANDATED AREAS OF INSPECTION

Medical services

CFIS toured and inspected the medical department and spoke to staff members. The department has a dental area, pill call area, examination rooms, an infirmary area and a telemed conference room. There is office space to accommodate the medical staff (doctor, administrators and nurse practitioners). IPs were receiving medical treatment during the inspection; the area was extremely clean. Appropriate health-care and preventative-care memos were visible.

Recreation area

The recreation area was clean and organized. Available activities included basketball leagues and music room activities. The area appeared to prioritize IP health and was clean and well-maintained. IPs were actively engaged in activities. No maintenance issues were observed or reported; toilets, water fountains and sinks were in working condition. No violations of DRC 77-REC-01, Recreation and Leisure Time Activities, were observed or reported.

Library/Law library

SOCF's library, which includes a law library, was clean and organized. The library offers IPs access to the Ohio Means Jobs website, which provides specialized employment services, including re-entry resume support. General population IPs could also access LexisNexis. 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

On the day of the inspection, SOCF's visitation area was well-kept. The area provided IPs and their families with a setting designed to encourage positive interaction among family members, especially children. Children's books were available for use. There were vending machines for visitors to purchase snacks and drinks. SOCF offers in-person visitation from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays. No violations of DRC 76-VIS-01, Incarcerated Person Visitation, were observed or reported.

Transitional Programming Unit (TPU)

TPU, a restrictive housing area, was clean and orderly. IPs in the unit had access to their tablets. CFIS reviewed the unit's staff sign-in log, DRC 6011, which indicated that staff members were conducting rounds according to DRC Policy 50-PAM-02. No sanitation issues were reported or observed. The inspected cells were in appropriate condition; toilets and sinks were in good working order. Appropriate and approved DRC cleaning chemicals and supplies were secured. Religious and reading materials were available to IPs.

CFIS also reviewed multiple DRC 4118s, which are records of each IP's essential daily functions, including acceptance or refusal of meals, personal hygiene and recreational activities. Each DRC 4118 is signed or initialed by a staff member, as confirmation that these necessities were provided. All DRC 4118s reviewed were completed appropriately, including dates, times, and staff initials documenting the care provided. The TPU area was appropriately staffed. None of the IPs interviewed in the unit reported any issues or concerns that would constitute a violation of DRC policy. No violations of DRC policy were observed.

MISCELLANEOUS INSPECTION MATTERS

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

Congress passed 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 IPs from sexual assaults and rapes. PREA applies to all DRC institutions, including privately operated and juvenile correctional facilities.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol, the law enforcement agency responsible for investigating criminal offenses inside correctional institutions, tracks sexual assaults using the PREA incident system. CFIS reviewed SOCF's reports from that system and found no substantiated cases. PREA signs were appropriately posted throughout the facility (e.g. housing units, recreation, library, visitation area, education area, front entrance and medical services). Contact information for a local rape-crisis center was posted. No violations of DRC policy were observed or reported.

Staff recruiting and retention

SOCF's vacancy rate was greater than 10%. Information regarding hiring events and job openings was posted.

Naloxone (Narcan) going-home kits

SOCF 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. SOCF complied with DRC 10-SAF-20, Naloxone Safety and Health procedure.

Administrative duty officer (ADO) reports

The CFIS inspector reviewed the ADO reports (50-PAM-02) from the week before the inspection, which were provided by SOCF upon request. An ADO report is completed daily by the designated executive staff tasked with completing inspection rounds. The designated rounds cover the food-services area, visitation area, housing unit, recreation area, and any other area designated by the warden. Upon completion of the ADO rounds, the staff compiles its findings and submits a report to the warden's office for review. The report includes the date and time of the rounds, areas visited, observations, concerns and recommendations. The ADO reports reviewed by CFIS were completed promptly and in accordance with policy (50-PAM-02).

Security/Facilities

Units were appropriately staffed by 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 condition. Units had essential items, such as ice machines and water fountains. All were in working order. No maintenance issues were reported or observed. Fire evacuations plans were posted in highly visible areas. Unit team pictures were posted. Cleaning products and supplies were secured appropriately. A review of DRC 6011 (DRC Sign in logbook) showed that SOCF staff were conducting rounds according to policy (50-PAM-02). The presence of correctional officers was strong during the inspection. The CFIS staff inspected several housing units, all of which were clean and well-maintained. There were no security issues or DRC policy violations noted or observed.

CONCLUSION

SOCF stood out for its cleanliness. Staff members were professional, and answered the CFIS inspector's questions with ease. The facility's grievance process appears to function efficiently. Overall, CFIS did not observe any violations of DRC policy or note any other concerns



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