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**New Jersey Department of Corrections**  
**Response to the Office of Corrections Ombudsperson**  
**Bayside Prison Inspection Report**

June 2026

The New Jersey Department of Corrections (“NJDOC”) is in receipt of the June 2026 inspection report issued by the New Jersey Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson (“OCO”) concerning the general population at Bayside State Prison. The NJDOC thanks the OCO for its review, and appreciates the OCO highlighting the many successes of Bayside, to include out of cell time, rehabilitative programming, meaningful recreational activities and education and job opportunities. The NJDOC offers the following responses to the specific recommendations contained in the report:

**Recommendation:** Institute random custody officer checks for life saving equipment on housing units.

**Response:** It is our understanding this recommendation refers to the 911 tool. NJDOC policy throughout all facilities dictates that at least one unit officer is to have the 911 emergency tool on their person throughout the shift. This is enforced through area Sergeants inspecting Officer’s uniforms to confirm the 911 tool is present on a custody staff member’s person. Accountability for the 911 tool is also included in the housing Officer’s tour report. Following receipt of the OCO’s report, Majors were advised of the OCO’s observation and adherence to the policy was reinforced.

**Recommendation:** If reopening the Dining Hall is not possible at this time, consider allowing people to eat meals at tables in the day space, and in the courtyard area when the weather is nice.

**Response:** The dining hall was closed in or around 1997 for safety and security reasons following the murder of Officer Fred Baker by an incarcerated person. In 2025 the NJDOC conducted a study on whether it is feasible to reopen the dining hall. After considering all factors, it was determined that reopening the dining hall is not logistically feasible due to the constraints imposed by the physicality of the space, the prohibitive cost of transforming that space, the need for additional staff, and the negative impact on safety and security as a result

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of having large groups of incarcerated persons in the dining area at one time. Reopening the dining hall would also negatively impact the daily lives of the incarcerated population because, in running meal time scenarios, it became clear that far more time would be spent moving the population to/from the mess hall. This will result in significantly reduced time for an incarcerated person to attend programs, recreation and work opportunities. All of this makes reopening the dining hall infeasible.

The NJDOC reviewed the recommendation that incarcerated persons be permitted to eat meals at tables in the day space and in the courtyard area when the weather is nice. While the NJDOC appreciates the recommendation, due to safety and security reasons, it is not a feasible option. That said, as noted in the report, the NJDOC encourages the population to take full advantage of opportunities both within and outside of the housing units, including programs and training, recreation, family unification and medical/mental health services. The NJDOC deems these services vital for rehabilitation and reintegration and will continue to encourage the population to engage in them.

Recommendation: Conduct professional cleaning of kitchen equipment.

Response: The New Jersey Department of Health routinely inspects the Bayside State Prison kitchen area. The last inspection was completed on June 4, 2026, with the result being a satisfactory rating. To otherwise address the specific concerns, the kitchen's hoods are currently serviced every six months by an outside vendor. The NJDOC business office is presently seeking vendor bids to commence professional cleaning of the kitchen equipment twice per year.

Recommendation: Monitor housing unit logs for completeness by ensuring the notation of end times for facility movements and activities.

Response: Clear and complete log book entries are expected by the NJDOC. As a result, Supervisors and Administrators have been advised of the OCO recommendation and will ensure that logbook protocol is reinforced, including end times for movements and activities.

Recommendation: Conduct periodic "deep cleaning" of showers (as needed) to prevent build-up over time.

Response: The tier sanitation incarcerated person detail in each unit cleans showers daily with deep cleanings occurring biweekly. Based on the OCO recommendation, it would appear that this unit detail is not sufficient, and as such, the NJDOC is reviewing the ability to supplement the incarcerated person detail deep cleanings with periodic deep cleaning by an outside vendor.