



# Inspection Report

Bayside State Prison, General Population

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## Authors

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## Introduction

Bayside State Prison was first opened in February 1971 under the name of Leesburg. The initial capacity of 504 incarcerated people were housed across six 84-bed units in which each person had their own cell. When Bayside first opened its doors, *The Washington Post* reported this was “creative prison architecture without bars, designed to aid treatment and make the traumatic aspects of confinement as inconspicuous as possible.” In the architect’s words, “being confined is negative and ‘punishment’ enough, but the place of confinement need not be negative to be escape-proof.”<sup>1</sup>

In this inspection report, the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson (the Office) found Bayside achieves its design goal, providing out of cell time, rehabilitative programs, meaningful recreational activities, education and job opportunities in a setting that allows for increased movement of the population, fresh air, and abundant natural light.

The initial inspection revealed areas for improvement related to space to eat meals, cell size, mattresses, shower renovations, vent coverings and kitchen repairs. At the reinspection, the Office saw a considerable number of improvements being made. Bayside is replacing worn-out mattresses with new four-inch foam mattresses, rubber floor mats for the kitchen, adding barriers on the loading door to the kitchen, changing out shower curtains, cleaning several of the showers and replacing exhaust fans and vents in the showers.

In cell-to-cell interviews, most incarcerated people reported having basic clothing and linens and toilets and sinks in working order. During these interviews the Office facilitated a safety survey with positive findings: 87% of people responded they never witnessed a fight on their housing unit. A review of annual discipline incidents preceding the inspection confirmed a relatively small number of fights and assaults.

Incarcerated people selected as Tier Representatives for their housing units, were interviewed about living conditions and expressed positive feedback about the facility’s Administrators who meet with them monthly. Tier Representatives reported no complaints about healthcare services and voiced an interest in expanding educational offerings at the facility to include college courses. Currently, NJ-STEP college courses are offered at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, East Jersey State Prison, South Woods State Prison, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility, and Northern State Prison.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolf Von Eckardt. *The Washington Post*. *New Design Helps Point the Way to Prison Reform*, 1971.

## Inspection Overview

The Ombudsperson Office conducted an announced inspection of the General Population housing units and kitchen, and toured the medical clinic, laundry facilities, storage areas, and Deptcor Industries work spaces at Bayside State Prison on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and conducted a reinspection on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026.<sup>2</sup> During the inspection, 1,270 people were housed at Bayside State Prison which encompassed a minimum-security unit (320 people), a medium security compound that included General Population (GP, 814 people), a specialty unit dedicated to intake (130 people) and a few temporary placements (6 people). The office’s inspection included four of the five GP housing units (646 people) representing half of the facility’s total population.

The inspection involved record reviews, on-site observations, 126 cell-to-cell interviews (see Figure 3), and an anonymous survey about safety completed by 56 incarcerated people. The survey instrument is available on the Office’s website. Additionally, our staff held a roundtable discussion with seven Tier Representatives and spoke with staff members and custody officers assigned to the areas toured.

**Figure 1. Incarcerated people interviewed on each housing unit, October 6-8, 2025.**

Housing Unit	Occupancy	Number interviewed	% interviewed
A Unit	147	35	24%
C Unit	167	38	23%
D Unit	164	26	16%
F Unit	168	27	16%
Total	646	126	20%

The Ombudsperson Office scored the facility according to an objective inspection instrument developed by the Office, with input from the Department of Corrections, based on applicable laws, regulations, policies, and best practices. The facility’s score upon initial inspection was 77% and its score upon reinspection is 85%. This score reflects compliance with practice standards related to laundry and linens, communications, fire safety, and individual living conditions. It also reflects the consistent efforts by the facility’s Administration to take quick and ongoing corrective action. The most notable initial point deductions reflected the facility not meeting inspection standards related to:

- Space for individuals to eat meals.
- Measures to prevent birds from entering the kitchen, housing units, and bakery.
- Ratio of Kiosks. *Points initially deducted for not meeting the ratio of IPs to kiosks were rewarded during the reinspection with the implementation of new tablets in March 2026. Tablets are capable of communication types previously accessible via kiosks.*
- Unencumbered space in cells.
- Cleanliness of showers.

Photos of Bayside from the early 1970s from the New Jersey State Archives are included in this report along with present-day photos taken during the inspection. The scored inspection tool is published on the Ombudsperson website as an addendum to this narrative report.

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier in the year, on June 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, the Office also conducted summer heat monitoring.

## Housing Units

Inspection standards measure the incarcerated population's access to telephones, showers and paper remedy forms. The housing units are equipped with many telephones both indoors and outside in the day area. The outside day area is a courtyard in the middle of each of the housing units. An upper and lower tier of cells wrap around the courtyard.



*Bayside State Prison, housing unit, second floor view down the tier. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, October 7, 2025.*



*Bayside State Prison, housing unit, second floor view down the tier. Photograph published in The Consulting Engineer Journal, Oct. 1972*



*Bayside State Prison, housing unit day space. Published in Consulting Engineer Journal, Oct. 1972.*

The indoor day space in the housing unit (pictured above) was redesigned with limited seating, pay phones, and docking stations for video visits. The facility has an indoor gym area, weight room, and outside yards with more space for exercise. Bayside maintains a structured schedule that offers everyone indoor and outdoor recreation each day. This level of movement was positive to see during the inspection.

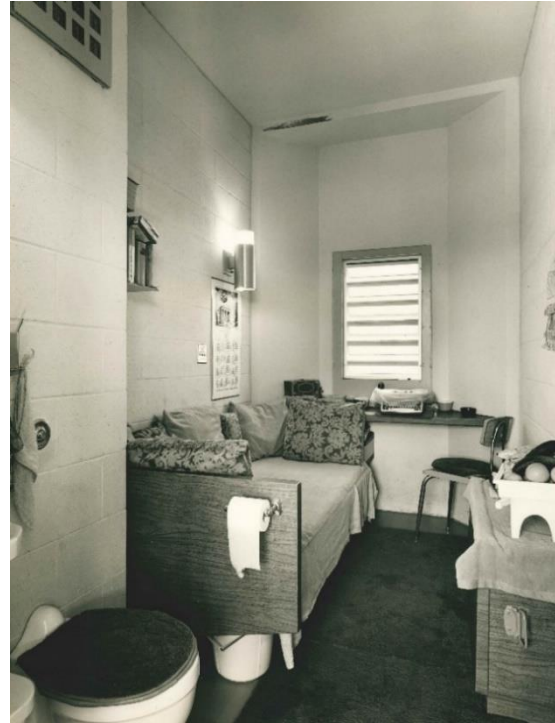
It was apparent to the Office that staff and incarcerated individuals put considerable effort into maintaining cleanliness. During the return inspection, the monitoring team even observed some improvement to the cleanliness of housing unit showers and found the common areas to be well organized and sanitized.

## Living Space

A 1972 photo featured in an engineering journal shows a cell designed for one person with wall light, table/desk, chair, cabinet and furnishings that normalize the space and aids cleanliness like the toilet bowl cover and toilet roll holder. By the 1980s, prisons offered, for purchase, amenities like television, radios, and refrigerators.<sup>3</sup> Incarcerated people today can still purchase a television and radio.

The cells, which now house two people instead of one, are 6.2 ft. x 11.3 ft. for a total of 70 sq. ft. of space, with furnishings leaving less than 20 sq. ft. of unencumbered floor space per person. Turning single-occupancy rooms into double-occupancy rooms, as shown here in photographs from 1972 and 2025, leaves each incarcerated person with significantly less storage and personal space. Cell-to-cell observations on the housing units revealed cells in various states of cleanliness and upkeep, some cells are immaculately clean and others less so. Each person had a pillow, at least one blanket, sheets and state issued clothing. The mattresses, however, were old and thin. At the return inspection, the Office observed new mattresses of better quality being delivered to the population. The transition to new mattresses will take time to fully implement facility wide.

As part of the inspection, the Office confirmed that contracted services were in place to mitigate rodents and insects, and the Office did not observe any pests in the housing units. All the units were equipped with fire extinguishers and officers were armed with Naloxone, there was a first aid box located on each unit and AED devices available throughout the facility. 911 rescue tools that would be utilized during a self-harm event were available on the housing units, but were not on any officer's person during their shift.



*Cell at Bayside State Prison. Photograph published in The Consulting Engineer Journal, Oct. 1972.*



*Cell at Bayside State Prison. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025.*

<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, *Evaluation of Facilities at Rahway, Yardville Bordentown, and Leesburg State Prisons*. (October 21, 1981).

## Mitigating Summer Heat and Winter Cold

The Office conducted monitoring of temperatures and heat mitigation efforts in the summer of 2025. Bayside State Prison does not have air conditioning, and during the Ombudsperson heat inspections of the facility on June 18th and 24th, housing unit temperatures taken inside cells and shared spaces recorded high temperatures ranging from 84- to 94-degrees Fahrenheit. The bakery reached a high of 116 degrees directly in front of the ovens, and as a result, the facility amended the work schedules to begin and end shifts earlier in the day to get ahead of the afternoon heat. The bakery has since been closed.

An Operations directive requires facility Administrators to take certain steps to mitigate excessive heat when indoor temperatures reach or exceed 86°F. These steps include, among other things, opening windows and making fans available to improve airflow, increasing access to showers, fluids, and ice. The facility bags and stores ice during the summers to help supplement ice machine production.

The Office found compliance with the directives for operable fans, educational flyers, open windows and increased access to fluids, but also found ice machines struggling to keep up with demand on the hottest days and inconsistent documentation of temperatures. In the summer months, periods of extreme heat are amplified by the windows on the housing units that wrap around the courtyards. What is usually a feature that brings in light and fresh air, during certain times of the year, may contribute to increased indoor temperatures.



*View of Bayside State Prison housing unit from the interior courtyard. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026.*

On the day of the reinspection on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026, outside temperatures ranged from a low of 3 degrees to a high of 39 degrees Fahrenheit. The housing units are heated, and individuals have the ability to open windows in their cells. Inside temperatures were recorded in the low 60s. In the winter months, the Administration authorized distribution of a second blanket.

## Kitchen and Food Service

Standards related to food preparation and meal service were inspected, and the Office had concerns related to kitchen sanitation. The open loading dock doors let in birds and cold air (kitchen temperatures during the January re-inspection measured between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit). Bayside addressed this concern and installed appropriate barriers on the loading dock entryway. However, birds were again observed in the kitchen during reinspection. The most recent Department of Health inspection dated November 6, 2023, noted “repeat deficiency” for the presence of insect or rodents. The Department is continuing efforts to prevent birds from entry.



*Bayside State Prison kitchen. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson on June 18, 2025, during the heat monitoring inspection.*



*Bayside State Prison kitchen. Photograph by Corrections Ombudsperson, October 8, 2025.*

Birds were also seen in housing units and the old dining hall, which is now used for storage. A considerable loss to the overall operations of the facility is the closure of the dining hall (pictured on p.8). This critical piece of infrastructure is not in operation, which has resulted in a practice of serving people all three meals in their cells. This means people sit on their foot lockers or on their beds to eat. The Department recently assessed whether reopening the dining hall would be viable, but found staffing and scheduling barriers as well as cost-prohibitive repair needs.

During the initial inspection, the Office observed lunch service. The incarcerated population expressed a desire for new menu items, less processed food and healthier options. Kitchen workers also reported wanting to prepare the food with fresh ingredients rather than have certain items prepared in advance at South Woods State Prison and then frozen for distribution. Logs showed 14.5 hours elapsed between dinner and breakfast, longer than the 14 hours permitted by policy.



*Bayside State Prison Dining Hall. Photograph published by The Consulting Engineer Journal, October 1972.*



*Bayside State Prison Dining Hall. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, October 8, 2025.*

## Purposeful Activity

The Ombudsperson Office reviewed education and programming data, work assignments, the facility's schedule, and seven days of handwritten logs tracking movement of the population and activities in the General Population housing units. The logs were comprehensive and noted the beginning of most movement types but did not always mark the end time. The main recommendation for Bayside record keeping is to ensure completed entries.

Passive recreation consisting of phones, showers, and cell sanitation is offered twice a day for 30 minutes each. Bayside offers a gymnasium with basketball, pickleball, and an adjoining weightroom which is accessible daily or every other day, and outdoor recreational space which is offered at least twice a day. Gym and outdoor recreation periods range from one to two hours.

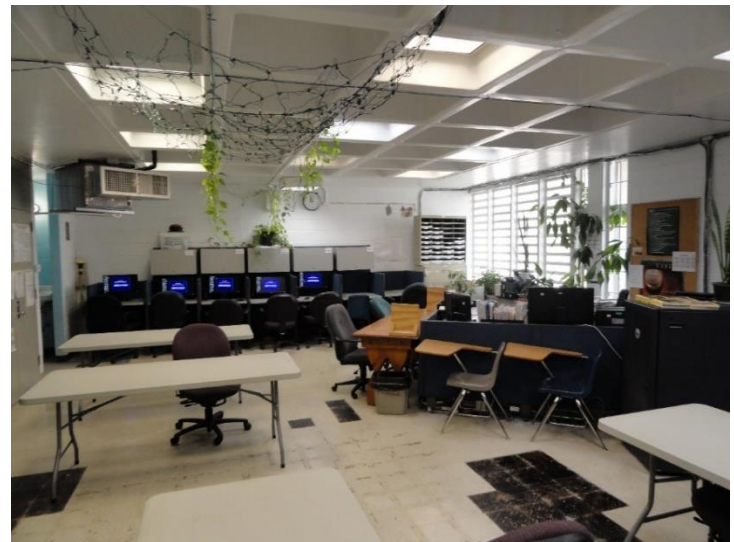
Schooling consists of Adult Basic Education (ABE) toward a GED credential, Career Technical Education such as horticulture, ServSafe certification, and career readiness. The Office reviewed daily attendance sheets for the week of the inspection and program data reported in the revised 2025 annual budget which reflected 117 individuals in ABE and 105 across vocational training programs.

Bayside runs religious services daily. During the week of the inspection, worship services were held for Protestant, Catholic, Native American, Jewish, and Islamic groups, along with other types of religious offerings like bible study, and prayer meetings. During the period of inspection, 179 people were in attendance at services.<sup>4</sup>

During the two weeks that program data was monitored by the Office, Bayside had 125 enrollments across five rehabilitative treatment programs: Cage Your Rage (CYR), Family Reunification (FRAT), Thinking for a Change (T4C), Road to Reentry (R2R) and Healthy Opportunities for Parenting Effectively (HOPE). (See Figure 2.) Bayside facilitates programming three days a week for an average of four hours each programming day.



*Bayside Weight Room and adjacent Gymnasium. Photograph by Corrections Ombudsperson, October 6, 2025.*



*Bayside State Prison, ServSafe Classroom. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, October 6, 2025.*

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<sup>4</sup> This number represents duplicate enrollees across multiple religious service types.

**Figure 2. Programing Offered at Bayside State Prison by frequency and duration for the current cycle.**

Program	Enrollees	Frequency	Length (mins)	Sessions per Cycle	Total Length (hrs.)
CYR	24	2x/week	90	10	15
FRAT	21	1x/week	90	6	9
T4C	34	2x/week	90	20	30
R2R	24	1x/week	90	6	9
HOPE	22	1x/week	90	10	15

The law library has recently been updated to improve computer access and legal file storage on USB flash drives. The law library is open seven days a week. The legal research computers with LexisNexis software are available five days a week. Paralegals and civilian staff are available to assist incarcerated people in their research. During the week of the inspection, a review of the law library logs showed 232 individuals appeared for the 234 scheduled appointments serving an average of 33 people each day. In addition, the adjoining reading library is also open five days a week (pictured below).



*Bayside State Prison reading library. Photograph by the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson, October 6, 2025.*

## Work & Wages

Job assignments for the General Population at Bayside include food service, teacher’s aides, paralegals, clerks, landscaping, barbers, food service, and positions in the canteen and storeroom. The Bureau of state use industries (DEPTCOR) is a correctional industries program which employs incarcerated people to produce goods and promote services. Bayside employs individuals in a license plate shop which produces all New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles license plates and until recently also in a bakeshop making bread for facilities across the state. Six out of ten individuals within the institution, however, have a job referred to as “cell sanitation.” Cell sanitation functions as a placeholder job for individuals who do not have a job assignment, those who are engaged in education or vocational activities, and those who are unable or unwilling to work. Given there are not enough job slots to keep everyone engaged for most of the day, cell sanitation as a job ensures everyone receives minimal pay each month to purchase basic hygiene products or commissary items.

The range of pay can vary from \$8.00 per week (\$1.60 daily rate, five days a week) to \$52.50 per week (\$7.50 daily rate, seven days a week). State regulations dictate how a person’s earnings are garnished and deducted for various purposes. At Bayside, 60% of the incarcerated population is paid a daily rate of \$1.60 for cell sanitation. Less than 20% are working for a daily rate of \$5.00 - \$7.50. (See Figure 3.)

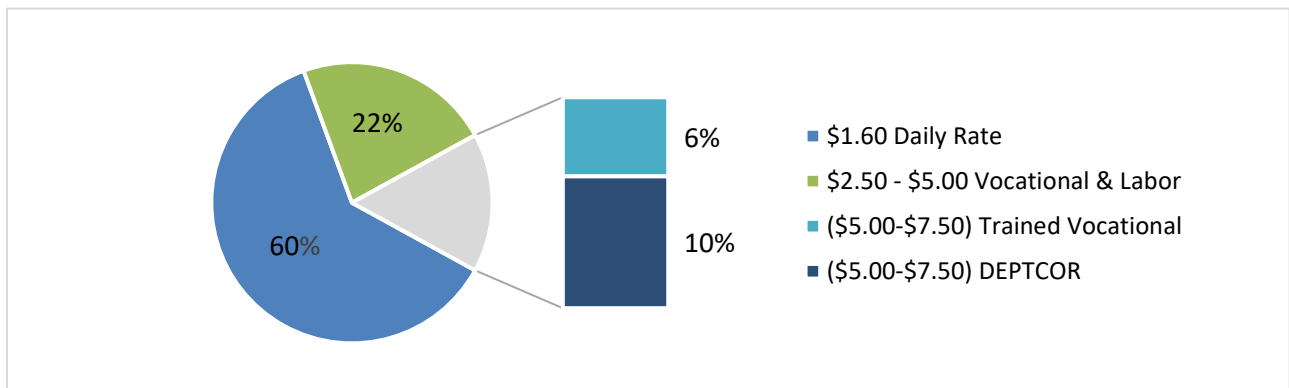


*Bayside State Prison, Deptcor License Plate Shop. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsman, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025.*



*Bayside State Prison, Deptcor Bakery. Photograph by Office of the Corrections Ombudsman, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025.*

**Figure 3. Bayside State Prison, Daily Wages for the General Population.**



## Institutional Violence and Discipline

Discipline data for the year prior to inspection (Aug. 2024 - Aug. 2025) reflected 810 total incidents at Bayside State Prison,<sup>5</sup> involving 521 unique individuals, 392 of whom were housed in General Population at the time of the incident. Fourteen percent of incidents in General Population involved fighting between incarcerated people or assaultive behavior directed at an officer or staff. Out of the 23 incidents of assault towards a staff member, two incidents involved bodily fluids. People engaging in violent offenses were five years younger, on average, than the rest of the facility's population. In a safety survey that the Office facilitated anonymously while conducting cell-to-cell interviews, 87% of respondents reported they never witnessed a fight on the housing unit and a majority reported always feeling safe from violence when they leave their cell or living area.

## Recommendations

Bayside Administration responded to the Office's concerns that were identified during the inspection and in some instances went above and beyond what was requested. The exchange of mattresses and installation of new shower exhaust fans, for example, exceeded the Office's expectations in terms of a response.

The Ombudsperson Office recommends that the Department of Corrections:

- Institute random custody officer checks for life saving equipment on housing units.
- 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.
- Conduct professional cleaning of kitchen equipment.
- Monitor housing unit logs for completeness by ensuring the notation of end times for facility movements and activities.
- Conduct periodic "deep cleaning" of showers (as needed) to prevent build-up overtime.

The Office was pleased to learn and is supportive of the proactive measures currently in progress:

- Replacement of exhaust fans/vent coverings in the shower areas.
- New mold resistant paint for the shower areas.
- Replacement of mattresses.
- Continued efforts to restrict birds from entering indoor environments through plastic barriers and audible bird alarms.

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<sup>5</sup> An incident is a single event resulting in one or more disciplinary charges.