



**NEW YORK CITY
BOARD OF CORRECTION**

September 8, 2023 PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

ATTENDEES¹

MEMBERS PRESENT

DeAnna Hoskins, Vice Chair

Dr. Rachael Bedard, M.D., Member

Robert L. Cohen, M.D., Member

Felipe Franco, Member

Jacqueline Sherman, Member

Jasmine Georges-Yilla, Esq., Interim Executive Director and General Counsel

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Kat Thompson, Chief of Staff

Howard Singer, Deputy Chief of Staff

Allie Robertson, Executive Director of Intergovernmental Affairs

Patrick Benn, Deputy Commissioner of Facilities and Fleet Administration

Frank Dwyer, Deputy Commissioner of Public Information

Ronald Edwards, Deputy Commissioner of Administration

Dr. Robert Gonzalez, Deputy Commissioner of Training & Development

Christopher L. Miller, Deputy Commissioner of Classification, Custody Management, and Facility Operations

James N. Saunders, Deputy Commissioner of Health Affairs

Mark Pauley, Senior Policy Analyst

Matthew Pascarelli, Assistant Commissioner

Adam Gonzalez, Correction Officer

Angela Gonzalez, Correction Officer

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS—CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Bipin Subedi, Chief Medical Officer/Senior Assistant Vice President

¹ Board Chair Dwayne Sampson and Board Members Jacqueline Pitts and Joseph Ramos were absent from this meeting.

Carlos Castellanos, Chief Operation Officer/Assistant Vice President
Nancy Arias, Chief Nursing Officer/Assistant Vice President
Jeanette Merrill, Assistant Vice President, Communications & External Affairs

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Solomon Acevedo, NYCPA
Ryan Acquulotta, Freedom Agenda
Richie Agostinoni, NY1
Antoinette Anderson, COBA
Ashaki Antoine, COBA
Conrad Blackburn, Bronx Defenders
Christopher Boyle, NYDS
Caroline Coyer, UCL
Bobby Cruz, NY1
Leyana Dessauer
Daniel Diaz, OMB
Jessy Edwards, WNYC
Kim Ellaxio
Octavia Ewart, Bronx Defenders
Ricky Farae
Natalie Fiorenzo, NYCDS
Alexa Foust, Columbia
Kelly Grace Price, City & State
Daiana Griffith, Bronx Defenders
Victor Herrera, Freedom Agenda
J. L. Hilaire, National Action
Michael Klinger, Bronx Defenders
Sarah Knight, Bronx Defenders
Casey Lajszky, NYC Council
Grace Ortez, Freedom Agenda
Scott Paltrowitz, HALT Society
Chaplain Dr. Victoria A. Phillips, Jails Action Coalition
Alice Sutter, HPA
Joshua White, NYCDS
Yonah Zeitz, Katal Center

Board of Correction Opening Remarks and Department of Correction Presentation on the Eric M. Taylor Center

Interim Executive Director (“IED”) Jasmine Georges-Yilla received a message from Chair Dwayne Sampson that he would not be attending the public meeting. While waiting for a quorum of members to be present, pre-recorded people in custody comments were played. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

The Department of Correction (“DOC”) presented on the Eric M. Taylor Center (“EMTC”). DOC Chief of Staff, Kat Thompson, introduced DOC staff present. Deputy Commissioner (“DC”) Patrick Benn presented explained the work completed on the visits floor at EMTC and shared that visits at EMTC are now open. Executive Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Allie Robertson, joined, stating that West Facility visiting space is now exclusively used for people at West Facility, where it had originally been shared by people visiting EMTC as well. The visiting floor’s capacity is 15 visitors at a time and is consistent with visiting hours at Rikers. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Vice Chair DeAnna Hoskins arrived and officially began the meeting. With the meeting officially started, and quorum reached, the Board could approve agenda items. Member Rachael Bedard moved to vote on the approval of the September 8, 2023 Board meeting agenda. Member Robert Cohen seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Member Bedard requested to add “psychiatric hospitalization for women” as an agenda item. The motion was unanimously approved. Member Jacqueline Sherman moved to approve the June 13, 2023 executive session minutes. Member Cohen seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

DOC resumed its presentation, noting that north yard repairs at EMTC have been made in-house. The Department is now waiting on the final paver contract, which is out for OMB approval. The Law Library Director met with the Assistant Commissioner of Facilities and developed a schedule that will allow for in-person visits starting Tuesday, September 12th. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Otis Bantum Correctional Center Update

Deputy Commissioner of Classification, Custody Management and Facility Operations, Christopher Miller began the presentation on the Otis Bantum Correctional Center (“OBCC”). OBCC opened on July 26, 2023 amid a five-step project. This involved rehousing approximately 2,650 people in custody and resulted in a net gain of 403 cells, 45 beds, and total capacity of 448 across Rikers Island.

The Anna M. Kross Center (“AMKC”) was officially shut down in August 3, 2023. Many of the people in custody in mental health housing from AMKC were moved to the George R. Vierno Center (“GRVC”). According to DOC, there was a net gain of 65 Program to Accelerate Clinical Effectiveness (“PACE”) beds and 87 Mental Observation housing (“MO”) beds across Rikers Island.

The Department is looking to build a new visiting room in West Facility to better accommodate that building. Intensive fencing has been added in the EMTC main yard and the OBCC main yard, tower, and annex yard – all with the goal of extending outside recreation opportunities. According to DOC, if the yards can be divided, it is easier to maintain order and allows for more people in custody to go outside at one time. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Board Members asked questions regarding the newly opened EMTC clinic. According to DOC, Correctional Health Services staffs the unit 24/7 with clinical staff while the Department staffs it with security staff. This clinic is meant to accommodate the EMTC annex and not pull medical staff out of the intake process.

DOC explained that the Step Up-Step Down units are a collaborative effort between CHS and DOC, so that CHS might evaluate people in custody who need increased mental health care. This unit might be where decapacitating individuals are reevaluated to decide if they will be housed in MO housing, PACE housing, or Clinical Alternative to Punitive Segregation housing (“CAPS”).

Deputy Commissioner Miller stated that the Department has created over 400 new beds on Rikers with these moves. The Department claimed that crowding is not an issue at all, that the moves are complete, and that transitions need time to play out to see if there are any operational challenges. Deputy Commissioner Miller believed there are better operational plans now than what the Department had at AMKC.

Member Cohen raised the concern that during his visit to OBCC, people in custody claimed to not be seen when requesting sick call. Deputy Commissioner Miller stated that the expectation is that everyone that requests a sick call for that day, will be seen that day. However, Deputy Commissioner did not specify if the expectation was being met and claimed the questioning by the Board was unfair.

Vice Chair Hoskins reiterated as follows: “I also want to make note on the record to follow up around the tracking system of how individuals who put in for sick call and how they are tracked that they are actually having sick call.” Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Rose M. Singer Center Enhancement Security Housing

Deputy Commissioner Miller presented on the Rose M. Singer Center (“RMSC”) Enhancement Security Housing (“RESH”). According to DOC, people in custody who commit acts of violence against staff or other people in custody are housed in RESH.

A Board Member asked a question about recreation access at OBCC. Executive Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Allie Robertson, assured the Board that people in custody have access to recreation every day at OBCC.

As to RESH, DOC report that it was populated on June 27, 2023. It has a total of seven housing units: five Level 1 units with a capacity of 160 and two Level 2 units with a capacity of 72. RESH operates a medical clinic, intake, visiting area, and general office all separate from the Rose M. Singer Center. DC Miller explained how the Department has taken steps to prevent detainees from obstructing locking mechanisms. Since populating RESH, there have been six slashing and stabbing incidents and there have been increased efforts to reduce violence. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Board Members asked questions regarding security measures at RESH. DC Miller stated that cell doors at RESH are “100% operational and secure” – and it was past Department staff not doing their job that created the security risks with cell doors. According to the Department, they continue to train staff, they have additional supervision of captains, and use a three-point search area. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Psychiatric Hospitalization for Women

Member Bedard drew attention to an issue that “apparently has been going on for months.” She stated that there are no beds available in the hospital system for women who are in need of acute psychiatric hospitalization. Chief Medical Officer (“CMO”) for CHS, Bipin Subedi, spoke on behalf of CHS. He clarified that any female who has an acute psychiatric need is referred to Elmhurst Comprehensive Psychiatry Emergency Program (“CPEP”) and is evaluated. These patients are not discharged back to Rikers Island until the hospital feels they are safe to return. CHS does not have a dedicated female inpatient psychiatric unit. CMO Subedi agreed that Elmhurst is not a substitute for an inpatient unit. CHS collaborates closely with Elmhurst.

Member Bedard noted: “If you have a woman who needs treatment over objection you don’t have a place to put that person.” To which CMO Subedi replied: “There’s not an infrastructure for a longer-term placement in a hospital.”

CMO Subedi explained that D11 is a unit at the Elmhurst Hospital Prison Ward. The unit is ready for patients on the clinical side. At any given time, patient numbers range from zero to low single digits at the Elmhurst CPEP.

DOC Deputy Commissioner for Administration Ron Edwards expressed that a staffing plan has been prepared. The Department is still working on construction to address security concerns and are mainly waiting on the infrastructure, but are otherwise ready to staff. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Other Updates

Member Cohen drew attention to the fact that for approximately the past six years at ESH, when people in custody both leave and return from the area, they get stripped searched. These people in custody also don’t have contact visits. Based on this, Member Cohen asked where the weapons people in custody obtain come from.

DC Miller stated: “Weapons didn’t come from anywhere. Individuals in custody have a lot of time to figure out how to create a weapon.” The Department conceded, however, that they have to get better at detecting weapons.

Member Cohen noted that there are many people who enter and leave the facility each day without being scanned or searched at all – DOC staff. DC Miller stated that was not correct. Member Cohen asked if staff are scanned, to which DC Miller responded: “We only have body scanners in two facilities. In those two facilities are random body scanners. Every individual that doesn’t go through a body scanner goes through a metal detection system and their property

goes through a line scan system...We have good systems in place. We are doing our best to detect contraband coming into these facilities and we have good processes in place as well.”

The Department explained further that EMTC is the next facility to have a body scanner installed, and every facility has a plan for scanner installation. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Public Advocate Comments

New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams gave a statement. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Motion by Vice Chair Hoskins

Vice Chair Hoskins motioned that as part of an agenda item moving forward, correctional officers and staff can speak on their own behalf, update the Board, and answer questions. Member Bedard seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Correction Health Services Updates

Chief Operations Officer (“COO”) for CHS, Carlos Castellanos, along with CMO Subedi, delivered CHS updates. Before DOC completed its move of mental health patients from AMKC to other facilities, CHS worked closely with the Department to ensure there was a safe transition, and that the other facilities had the appropriate infrastructure.

A significant number of PACE beds have been added, so that many individuals who are in MO units who need more acute care will have it soon. Thinking ahead, CHS stressed that developing a more appropriate mental health response is not just about bed space, but also about differentiating and expanding the type of mental health treatment offered because different people need different treatment.

CHS works with DOC to discuss the timing of treatment interventions versus programming interventions. This also includes the clinical versus programming substance treatment.

OBCC has limitations in holding space for sick leave both due to its pen size, and the fact there is only one entry and exit point. Sick call is a patient-driven process. The process to get people in custody to the clinic is on the DOC side. Should a person who requested sick leave not appear to the clinic for whatever reason, clinical leadership will look at that missed patient’s medical record and determine if the person needs to be seen immediately. This would be escalated to DOC, to bring the person who missed their sick call to the clinic. There is no closing out of appointments without medical review or escalation to DOC for that production.

Mental observation patients in OBCC are being seen for mental health needs at the facility. Sick call and medical follow-ups happen in the clinic. RESH is doing well on the clinical side, and production has improved. COO Castellanos confirms to Vice Chair Hoskins that CHS depends on DOC to deliver or communicate that a person in custody is requesting sick call.

According to CMO Sudebi, “For sick call we would rely on DOC to provide us with that information.”

CHS has an appointment list that is shared with DOC. There is some reconciliation that happens on the ground, but their own record-keeping is on the medical record. The sick call process is dependent on DOC's communications. Individuals can contact CHS without going through DOC if they have a clinical need through the Health Triage Line. CHS then notifies DOC who they need to produce. However, even then CHS is not communicating with that person directly on whether they refused to be seen — DOC communicates that to CHS.

Board of Correction Updates

IED Georges-Yilla delivered the Board's updates. Curtis Davis, 44, died as a result of a suspected unconfirmed suicide in GRVC on July 23, 2023. Donny Ubiera, 33, died of a suspected but unconfirmed overdose in GRVC on August 22, 2023. These deaths are being investigated. IED Georges-Yilla expressed condolences to Mr. Davis' and Mr. Ubiera's loved ones. IED Georges-Yilla also listed Department staff who passed away since the last Board meeting and expressed condolences to their loved ones.

As of this meeting, the total census of people in custody is 6,188. Broken down by facility, OBCC—1,189; Bellevue Hospital—51; EMTC—1,212; GRVC—885; North Infirmary Command, and NIC Infirmary Combined—280; RESH—178; RMSC—379; Robert N. Davoren Center—1125, VCBC—531, West Facility—78.

The Department reported to the Board that VCBC is set to close in October 2023. According to the Department: "The reason for this move is to centralize operations on the island, to more efficiently manage people in custody, and deploy staff and resources."

IED Georges-Yilla also discussed the next Board reports that are to be published. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Public Comment

Joshua White

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Natalie Fiorenzo

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Michael Klinger

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Antoinette Anderson

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Ashaki Antoine

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Dianna Griffith

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Zechaia Warteno

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Octavia Ewart

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Dr. Victoria Phillips

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Kelly Grace Price

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Leana Desour

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Victor Herrera

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Frances Gatellis

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Dr. Kim Illiano

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Eileen Maher

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Mary Lutz

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Veronica Vela

Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Motion by Vice Chair Hoskins

Vice Chair DeAnna Hoskins motioned to add an agenda item going forward, allowing 48-72 hours for the public to submit questions to the Board to ask the Department once the meeting agenda is posted. Member Bedard seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Vote to Enter Executive Session

Member Jacqueline Sherman motioned to go into executive session to discuss litigation and personnel matters. Member Bedard seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Board entered executive session. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Post Executive Session Update

Vice Chair Hoskins updated the public on what was discussed at the executive session. The Board discussed litigation and ratified prior issues around litigation.

The Board voted unanimously to appoint Interim Executive Director Jasmine Georges-Yilla as the permanent Executive Director of the New York City Board of Correction, effective September 8th, 2023. Watch this portion of the video [here](#).

Motion to adjourn

The Vice Chair motioned to adjourn the meeting. Member Felipe Franco seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the Board adjourned the meeting.