



**New York City
Board of Correction
July 14, 2026
Public Meeting Minutes**

Attendees:

Members Present

Felipe Franco, Interim Chair¹
Helen Skipper, Vice Chair
Hon. Barry A. Cozier (Ret.), Member
Dr. Lauren Stossel, Member
Frank Schneiger, Member
Jude Torchenaud, Member

Department of Correction (DOC)

Stanley Richards, Commissioner
Meg Egan, First Deputy Commissioner
James Conroy, Deputy Commissioner of Legal Matters/General Counsel
Molly Schaeffer, Deputy Commissioner of Policy and Strategy
James Boyd, Deputy Commissioner of Quality Assurance and Compliance
Miguelina Aristy, Assistant Commissioner
Robert Van Pelt, Assistant Commissioner of Preparedness and Resilience
Kathleen Zadzora, Assistant Commissioner of Health Affairs
Joseph Caputo, Acting Assistant Chief of Facility Operations
America Canas, Chief of Staff
Latima Johnson, Press Officer

NYC Health + Hospitals - Correctional Health Services (CHS)

¹ Interim Chair Franco appeared virtually due to inability to reach the meeting location.

Patsy Yang, Dr. PH, Senior Vice President
Jeanette Merrill, Senior Assistant Vice President of Communications and External Affairs
Carlos Castellanos, Chief Operations Officer/Deputy Executive Director
Nancy Arias, RN, Chief Nursing Officer/Deputy Executive Director
Zachary Rosner, Chief of Medical Service
Joseph Otonichar, Chief of Service, Mental Health
Nicole Levy, Director of Communications and Intergovernmental Affairs

Others in Attendance

Nishat Chowdhury, OPA
Avery Reed, OPA
Jeffrey Severe, OPA
Michael Klinger, BDS
Jennifer Parish, UJC
Leonard Simmons, MHLS
Alyssa Hurtado, NYCDS
Ariel Gilbert, NYCDS
Rebecca Carter, NYCDS
Chaplain Dr. Victoria A. Phillips, Visionary V Ministries and JAC
Ashley Aboreden, NYCDS
Absa Diop, NYCDS
Lauren Nakamura, Legal Aid
Margaret Broihier, Legal Aid
Vienna O'Brien, Legal Aid
Fran Geteles, JAC/HALT
Tarini, Osborne
David Torres, Osborne
Abby Fowler, Osborne
Tanya Krupat, Osbourne
Jeanette Bocanegra, Justice for Families
Daniel Bergner, NYT Magazine
Courtney Gross, NY1

Approval of July 14, 2026 meeting agenda

Interim Chair Felipe Franco called the meeting to order with a quorum of Board Members present. Interim Chair Franco joined the meeting remotely. Board Member Dwayne Sampson was not in attendance. Interim Chair Franco announced a new automated live caption feature available for the public meetings called Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Upon being moved and seconded, the Board members entered an executive session. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Following the conclusion of the executive session, the public session was reconvened. Upon being moved and seconded, the July 14 meeting agenda was unanimously approved. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Approval of the June 9, 2026 public meeting minutes

Upon being moved and seconded, the June 9 meeting minutes were unanimously approved. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Public comment period – People in Custody (PIC)

Seven pre-recorded comments from people in custody were played. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Executive Director update

Interim Executive Director Melissa Cintrón Hernández shared condolences with the families and loved ones of Department staff who have passed since the Board's June 2026 meeting. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

As of July 13, 2026, the approximate total census of people in custody was 6604. The census numbers by facility were as follows: BHPW (57), BHTU (0), EHPW (9), EMTC (1,382), GRVC (881), NIC (0), OBCC (1,444), OXTB (94), RESH-ESH (158), RESH non-ESH (467), RMSC (447), RNDC (1025) and WF (637). [See this portion of the video here.](#)

In June, Board staff conducted a total of 392 tours across 194 open housing areas. The Board received 366 complaints in May, and the most common issues raised involved health care, safety, visit appeals, environmental health, and food. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Interim Executive Director Cintrón Hernández shared that the Board would be attending the next meeting of the Visiting Working Group on July 17, 2026. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Interim Executive Director Cintrón Hernández also provided a recap on the Board's March 2026 Observation Aide Assessment report and recommendations, which evaluated the Department's compliance with suicide prevention monitoring and identified several persistent compliance gaps. [See this portion of the video here.](#) [The full report can be found on the Board's website.](#)

She also announced the launch of the Board's new self-injurious behavior dashboard, which is now live on the BOC website, to promote transparency regarding trends in NYC correctional facilities. [See this portion of the video here.](#) [The dashboard can be found on the Board's website.](#)

Interim Executive Director Cintrón Hernández then provided an update on the Board's rulemaking efforts, noting that the public comment period for amendments to mental health and health standards has been reopened until August 26, 2026. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

CHS limited variance request regarding psychotropic medication

CHS Chief of Mental Health Service Joseph Otonichar presented a six-month variance renewal request regarding the administration of psychotropic medication, which allows psychiatric providers to evaluate stable patients every 28 days rather than every 14 days to better align with community standards. Upon being motioned and seconded, the variance renewal was unanimously approved. [See this portion of the video here.](#) [The record of variance can be found on the Board's website.](#)

Commissioner Stanley Richards Opening Remarks

Commissioner Stanley Richards emphasized the Department's responsibility to build a correctional system that is safe, accountable, and rooted in humanity. He stated that every person within the facilities, including staff and those in custody, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, noting that these values are essential to achieving safety. He also acknowledged that transforming the Department requires consistency, discipline, and strong leadership at every level. Commissioner Richards highlighted several key milestones and updates such as the closure of North Infirmary Command (NIC) and expansion of therapeutic housing. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Department discussion of BOC's Observation Aide Assessment

Assistant Chief of the Criminal Justice Bureau and Facility Operations Joseph Caputo presented on the Board's Observation Aide assessment. Board Member Stossel questioned him extensively about the specific steps being taken to meet the Board's recommendations, specifically regarding the low number of aides in the EMTC facility and the lack of staff awareness regarding mandatory 15-minute tours when an aide is unavailable.

Vice Chair Skipper asked Assistant Chief Caputo for a full copy of the current training requirements and qualifications for instructors, expressing concern that the curriculum had not been revamped since 2004. The Vice Chair also noted the absence of observation aides in RESH. Board Member Frank Schneider asked Assistant Chief Caputo to identify the biggest obstacles to implementing these changes, to which he cited security risks involving unrestrained aides moving past restrained individuals and potential contraband concerns. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Department update on rollout of heat mitigation plan

Assistant Commissioner of Preparedness and Resilience Robert Van Pelt provided an update on the Department's 2026 heat action plan, detailing the agency's response to a historic heatwave. The Department's mitigation efforts included inspecting all cooling systems, distributing extra ice and water daily, and establishing direct lines of communication with defender organizations to

allow for real-time reporting of heat-related concerns. Assistant Commissioner Van Pelt highlighted recent infrastructure improvements, such as the rapid installation of cooling in two units at EMTC and the confirmation that all visiting areas are now air-conditioned. The discussion also addressed facility-specific data, noting that while RMSC and Bellevue are 100% air-conditioned, OBCC is currently at just over 50%. Responding to questions from the Board regarding midnight tour access and occupant feedback, Assistant Commissioner Van Pelt confirmed that water and ice are available to individuals in their cells upon request after 9:00 PM and committed to following up on the status of temperature comfort surveys. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Department update on clinic production dashboard pilot status

Deputy Commissioner of Quality Assurance and Compliance James Boyd provided an update on the Department's clinic production dashboard pilot, describing it as a collaborative electronic system with CHS designed to modernize the tracking of healthcare production in real time. Originally launched in November 2025 at NIC and expanded to the Bellevue Outposted Therapeutic unit in April 2026, the rollout began in GRVC on July 9, 2026. GRVC was selected for this phase due to its size and high volume of activity, which allows the Department to evaluate the dashboard's effectiveness in a more complex operational environment. To date, over 300 uniformed staff have been trained by certified instructors, and the Department plans to transition to electronic learning to standardize this training across all facilities.

Board Member Stossel inquired about the terminology used in the dashboard, specifically the distinction between scheduled and unscheduled visits. Boyd explained that while the 614# health triage line remains the primary method for requesting care, the dashboard allows officers to register sick call requests directly. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

CHS presentation on suicide prevention in City jails

Chief of Mental Health Service Joseph Otonichar presented on the agency's suicide prevention efforts, emphasizing that early identification and risk reduction are the core components of their clinical strategy. He explained that

while every individual is screened upon admission, mental health staff continue to perform suicide risk assessments during every subsequent clinical encounter throughout a person's incarceration.

The presentation detailed the suicide watch process, which is a clinical determination made by CHS that requires constant observation by a DOC officer and a minimum of twice-daily visits from mental health providers. Chief Otonichar noted that criteria for a watch include expressed suicidal ideation or instances of physical self-injury. To ensure safety, CHS coordinates with the Department to transfer these individuals from the general population to specialized mental health therapeutic housing units.

To improve real-time coordination, Chief Otonichar highlighted that CHS now provides the Department with a standardized automated suicide report three times daily. This report lists every individual currently requiring suicide watch, allowing DOC to accurately inform their staffing plans and ensure that a dedicated officer is assigned to every person at risk. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

CHS presentation on heat mitigation efforts

Chief of Medicine Zachary Warner provided an overview of CHS's heat mitigation efforts, specifically detailing the clinical process for identifying and protecting heat-sensitive individuals. Since 2025, CHS has utilized an automated system that screens all patients at intake for objective clinical criteria.

During the follow-up discussion, DOC officials clarified that while they aim to move designated individuals to heat-sensitive housing as soon as beds become available, patients are given the option to sign a waiver to remain in their current housing if they prefer to stay in their current location. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

Public Comment

The Board heard in-person public comments from Leonard Simmons, Vienna O'Brien, Margaret Broihier, Fran Geteles, Chaplain Dr. Victoria A. Phillips, and

Jeanette Bocanegra. The Board heard a virtual public comment from Delaine Dixon. [See this portion of the video here.](#)

The Board's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, September 9, 2026 at 1:00pm.