



OIG | OFFICE of the INSPECTOR GENERAL

Independent Prison Oversight

The California prison system, by its very nature, operates almost entirely behind walls, both literal and figurative. The Office of the Inspector General exists to provide a window through which the citizens of the State can observe that system and be assured of its soundness. By statutory as well as judicial mandate, our independent agency oversees and reports on several aspects of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.



Photograph of Correctional Training Facility, Soledad; courtesy of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Our History

Our statutory mandates are found in the Penal Code, sections 2641 and 6125 through 6141.

1994

California law first established our office. We initially served as an entity within the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency (now abolished), with our staff conducting investigations, reviewing policy, and performing management review audits of wardens and superintendents.

1998/99

Legislative hearings revealed widespread abuse in the State's correctional system. The Legislature responded by significantly expanding our responsibility for overseeing the State's correctional system, transforming our office into an independent entity with discretionary authority to conduct audits and investigations.

2004/05

Lawmakers expanded our duties to include the discipline monitoring process, warden vetting, and follow-up warden audits.

2011

Legislation restructured our agency and removed our authority to conduct discretionary audits and investigations; limited our oversight to specified areas; required that special reviews be authorized only by the Governor or the Legislature; and added the medical inspection process.

2019

Lawmakers reinstated our authority to conduct discretionary audits and also added a new mandate that we monitor the department's handling of inmate grievances and complaints concerning alleged staff misconduct.

What We Do

Employee Discipline Monitoring

- Evaluate the department's investigations conducted by its Office of Internal Affairs and assess the legal advice provided by department attorneys throughout the disciplinary process.

Critical Incident Monitoring

- Respond on-site 24 hours per day to critical incidents, such as large-scale riots, uses of deadly force, and unexpected inmate deaths at any of the State's 34 correctional institutions and to similar incidents in the community involving correctional staff.

Staff Complaint and Inmate Grievance Monitoring

- Monitor the department's handling of inmate grievances and complaints concerning alleged staff misconduct.

Blueprint Monitoring

- Review reforms the department identified in studies it conducted over the past decade.

Use-of-Force Monitoring

- Monitor the department's review process for use-of-force incidents.

Medical Inspections

- Evaluate the quality of medical care at adult institutions using a unique combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods.

Audits and Authorized Special Reviews

- Review departmental operations, policies, and procedures by self-initiated audits or by special reviews when requested by the Governor, the Assembly, or the Senate.

Complaint Hotline and Intake

- Maintain a statewide complaint intake process to address concerns from any individual regarding allegations of improper activity within the department.

Retaliation Complaint Reviews

- Review complaints of retaliation that departmental staff level against members of their management.

Ombudsperson for Sexual Abuse Complaints

- Serve as the ombudsperson for complaints related to the Sexual Abuse in Detention Elimination Act (SADEA), also referred to as the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA); review allegations of mishandled sexual abuse investigations within correctional institutions.

Chair of the California Rehabilitation Oversight Board

- Chair the board that provides public oversight of the department's rehabilitative programs.

Warden and Superintendent Vettings

- Conduct background and qualification reviews of warden and superintendent candidates.