



Amarik K. Singh, Inspector General

Shaun Spillane, Chief Deputy Inspector General

OIG | OFFICE *of the* INSPECTOR GENERAL

Independent Prison Oversight

March 2025

**The Office of the Inspector General's
Monitoring in 2025 of the
California Department of
Corrections and Rehabilitation's
Centralized Screening Process**
2025 Annual Report



Electronic copies of reports published by the Office of the Inspector General are available free in portable document format (PDF) on our website.

We also offer an online subscription service.
For information on how to subscribe,
visit www.oig.ca.gov.

For questions concerning the contents of this report,
please contact Shaun Spillane, Public Information Officer,
at 916-288-4212.

Connect with us on social media



Regional OfficesSacramento
Bakersfield
Rancho Cucamonga

March 10, 2026

The Governor of California
President pro Tempore of the Senate
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

Pursuant to California Penal Code section 6126(i), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for the contemporaneous oversight of staff misconduct screening decisions made by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (the department). The Centralized Screening Team is an entity within the department that initially reviews complaints the department receives containing allegations of employee misconduct and makes a screening decision. This report concerns the OIG's monitoring of screening decisions the department's Centralized Screening Team made in 2025. The OIG monitored the Centralized Screening Team's performance in making screening decisions based on whether complaints the department received contained a routine issue or allegations of staff misconduct toward an incarcerated or supervised person.

Effective January 1, 2025, the department implemented emergency regulations changing its employee discipline and grievance review processes, including its options for screening complaints submitted by the incarcerated population. Under the new regulations, the Centralized Screening Team is required to route each allegation within a complaint in one of five ways:

1. Claims challenging departmental policy shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a policy review;
2. Claims requesting a reasonable accommodation shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a reasonable accommodation review;
3. Allegations of staff misconduct which include complex issues requiring specialized investigation skills or resources shall be referred for an investigation;
4. Allegations of staff misconduct which do not include complex issues requiring specialized investigative skills or resources shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a routine review; or
5. Notwithstanding subsections (1) through (4) above, claims related to health care services or staff, excluding allegations of staff misconduct referred for investigation, shall be referred to the Division of Health Care Services.



From January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025, the OIG reviewed 15,998 of the 215,322 complaints screened by the department. The purpose of the OIG's review was to determine whether the Centralized Screening Team identified and routed allegations of staff misconduct to the appropriate entity within the department. The OIG assigned one of three overall ratings for each complaint received: *adequate*, *improvement needed*, or *inadequate*. Of the 15,998 screening decisions reviewed by the OIG, we determined 13,323 contained only routine allegations, and 2,675 contained allegations of staff misconduct. Of the complaints with allegations of staff misconduct, the Centralized Screening Team made *adequate* screening decisions in 1,872 complaints, or 70 percent. The OIG rated the Centralized Screening Team as *improvement needed* in 172 complaints or 6.5 percent, and *inadequate* in 631 complaints, or 23.5 percent.

If you have any questions on this report, please contact our office at 916-288-4212.

Respectfully submitted,



Amarik K. Singh
Inspector General

Contents

Illustrations	iv
Introduction	1
The OIG’s Monitoring of the Department’s Centralized Screening Team	3
The Centralized Screening Team Made Correct Initial Routing Decisions in 70 Percent of Grievances We Reviewed Containing Allegations of Staff Misconduct	5
The Centralized Screening Team Corrected 84 Percent of the Screening Decisions the OIG Disputed as Incorrectly Routed or Unaddressed	7
Agreements	8
Disagreements	10
While Monitoring Individual Screening Decisions, the OIG Identified and Raised Several Concerns With the Centralized Screening Team’s Processes	13
The Centralized Screening Team Does Not Always Update Amended Screening Decisions Within Its Primary Recordkeeping System, Which Leads to Inconsistent Screening Records in Different Departmental Databases	13
When Prison Staff Do Not Sufficiently Document Verbal Complaints and Complaints From Third Parties, and Do Not Respond to the Centralized Screening Team’s Requests for More Information, Some Allegations of Staff Misconduct Go Unaddressed	16
The Quick Reference Guide the Department Implemented to Aid Analysts With Their Screening Decisions Has Injected Subjectivity and Inconsistency in the Centralized Screening Team’s Decisions for Certain Allegation Types	19
The OIG’s Recommendations to the Department Regarding Its Centralized Screening Team	23
The Department’s Response to Our Report	25

Illustrations

Figures

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | The OIG’s Centralized Screening Monitoring Team Ratings Criteria | 3 |
| 2. | Excerpts Showing the Difference Between the Documentation in the Strategic Offender Management System and the Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue for the Same Grievance Record | 15 |

Tables

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | The OIG’s Ratings of the Centralized Screening Team’s Screening Decisions | 6 |
|----|---|---|

Introduction

Allegations of staff misconduct originate from written or verbal complaints against any employee of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (the department) that allege any violation of a law, regulation, departmental policy, or an ethical or professional standard. Any incarcerated person, supervised person, employee, or third-party individual or group can submit a complaint to the department alleging staff misconduct.

The Centralized Screening Team is responsible for screening all grievances, reasonable accommodation requests, and allegations of misconduct, and then routing the claims. The department maintains an allegation decision index that lists the most serious allegations of staff misconduct. The Centralized Screening Team uses the allegation decision index to determine whether to route a complaint or individual allegation to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit.

Effective January 1, 2025, the department implemented emergency regulations changing its employee discipline and grievance review processes, including its options for screening complaints submitted by the incarcerated population. Under the new regulations, the Centralized Screening Team is required to route each allegation within a complaint in one of five ways:

1. Claims challenging departmental policy shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a policy review;
2. Claims requesting a reasonable accommodation shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a reasonable accommodation review;
3. Allegations of staff misconduct which include complex issues requiring specialized investigation skills or resources shall be referred for an investigation;
4. Allegations of staff misconduct which do not include complex issues requiring specialized investigative skills or resources shall be referred to the Office of Grievances for a routine review; or
5. Notwithstanding subsections (1) through (4) above, claims related to health care services or staff, excluding allegations of staff misconduct referred for investigation, shall be referred to the Division of Health Care Services.

Grievances that fall under the first, second, and fifth sets of criteria are routed to the prison, parole region, or health care services. Grievances that fall under the third set of criteria encompass allegations more serious in nature listed on the allegation decision index, which are

routed to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit for a full investigation. Grievances that fall under the fourth set of criteria encompass less serious allegations of staff misconduct that are not listed on the allegation decision index and are assigned to a supervisor at the prison or parole region for a "routine review."¹

This report summarizes our monitoring of the department's Centralized Screening Team's screening decisions from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. Pursuant to California Penal Code section 6126 (i), the Inspector General "shall provide contemporaneous oversight of grievances that fall within the department's process for reviewing and investigating [incarcerated person] allegations of staff misconduct and other specialty grievances, examining compliance with regulations, department policy, and best practices." In this report, we use the terms *grievances* and *complaints* synonymously.

1. *Routine review* refers to the process used by the department to respond to allegations of staff misconduct that are not referred for an investigation. This process replaced the local inquiry conducted by a locally designated investigator.

The OIG's Monitoring of the Department's Centralized Screening Team

The OIG monitored the department's Centralized Screening Team's screening decisions by randomly selecting complaints and reviewing and researching records, documents, and departmental databases. We analyzed each screening decision based on the department's own criteria and assessed how the Centralized Screening Team processed each allegation within a complaint. If we found discrepancies in the screening process or disagreed with the screening decision, we elevated our concerns to the department. We also monitored Centralized Screening Team staff members while they conducted clarification interviews with incarcerated people to obtain information necessary to appropriately screen their allegations. The OIG assessed the performance of departmental staff and assigned an overall rating of *adequate*, *improvement needed*, or *inadequate* to each grievance we reviewed that alleged staff misconduct. Figure 1 below shows the criteria used to determine each rating.

Figure 1. The OIG's Centralized Screening Monitoring Team Ratings Criteria

<p><i>Adequate</i></p>	<p>The Centralized Screening Team identified and appropriately referred all allegations within the grievance.</p>
<p><i>Improvement Needed</i></p>	<p>The Centralized Screening Team identified and appropriately referred all allegations of staff misconduct but failed to identify additional routine allegations within the same grievance, resulting in an incomplete screening, or the Office of Appeals ordered a new grievance be opened to address a prior grievance in which the Centralized Screening Team failed to screen an allegation of staff misconduct correctly, resulting in a significant delay in investigation or supervisory review.</p>
<p><i>Inadequate</i></p>	<p>The Centralized Screening Team failed to identify one or more allegations of staff misconduct within the grievance, failed to refer an identified allegation of staff misconduct in accordance with departmental policies, failed to conduct a necessary clarification interview regarding a vague allegation of staff misconduct, or failed to identify an imminent risk within the grievance and make the required notifications.</p>
<p>Source: The Office of the Inspector General.</p>	

In an effort to review a greater number of complaints submitted to the department, and to focus our oversight on grievances that contain allegations of staff misconduct, effective July 1, 2025, we modified our review process. In previous reporting periods, we assessed every grievance we reviewed, including grievances that did not contain allegations of staff misconduct, and assigned a rating assessing the department's review of each grievance. Because the true risk in the grievance screening process is that the department will misclassify staff misconduct allegations as *not* constituting staff misconduct, we decided to focus our monitoring on the department's routing of complaints that we believe contain allegations of staff misconduct. Accordingly, moving forward, when we review grievances that do not include an allegation of staff misconduct, we do not assign a rating to the department's review of that grievance. However, when we determine that a grievance *does* contain an allegation of staff misconduct, regardless of whether the department made the same determination, we rate the department's performance. We retroactively applied this filtering system to the complaints we monitored from January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025, to ensure consistency and uniformity across the reporting period.

We use our assessment methodology, which is based on performance-related criteria, to determine ratings for each grievance we review. For complaints that include allegations of staff misconduct, we use an assessment tool consisting of a series of assessment questions to determine whether the Centralized Screening Team appropriately screened and referred allegations of employee misconduct and other related complaints.

We also produced and published to our website a select number of case blocks every month summarizing our assessment of significant grievances we reviewed. The case blocks include a summary of the complaint, the department's screening decision, and the OIG's assessment of the screening decision.

The Centralized Screening Team Made Correct Initial Routing Decisions in 70 Percent of Grievances We Reviewed Containing Allegations of Staff Misconduct

From January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025, the department reported² it received 215,322 complaints and completed screening 210,435³ complaints from incarcerated people, supervised people, and third-party individuals or entities. The department reported it made 257,994⁴ screening decisions in 2025 and routed those decisions as follows:

- 222,006 screening decisions were routed and returned to the prison, parole region, or health care services as routine issues.
- 11,704 screening decisions were routed to a prison, parole region, or health care services for a routine review by an assigned supervisor.
- 23,187 screening decisions were routed to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit for an investigation.
- 1,037 screening decisions were routed to the Office of Internal Affairs.⁵

As shown in Table 1 on the next page, the OIG reviewed and monitored 15,998 of 257,994 screening decisions the Centralized Screening Team made (6 percent) to determine whether the Centralized Screening Team routed allegations of staff misconduct to the appropriate entity within the department. Of the 15,998 screening decisions the OIG monitored, we determined 13,323 contained only routine allegations, and 2,675 contained allegations of staff misconduct. Of the complaints containing allegations of staff misconduct:

-
2. We received the data from the department on January 9, 2026.
 3. This number includes complaints completed in 2025, some of which were received before January 1, 2025. Additionally, many complaints received in the last days of 2025 were not completed until 2026.
 4. The department reported that one source document may contain multiple complaints.
 5. The Centralized Screening Team rerouted 1,037 complaints back to the hiring authority, which the hiring authority then referred to the Office of Internal Affairs because those complaints did not involve an incarcerated or supervised person, and the Centralized Screening Team only processes allegations of staff misconduct toward an incarcerated or supervised person. Per CCR, Title 15, section 3486.1 (b), "allegations of staff misconduct not involving an inmate or parolee" shall not be referred to the Centralized Screening Team. If a complaint is received by the Centralized Screening Team that does not include allegations involving misconduct toward an incarcerated or supervised person, the Centralized Screening Team shall refer the complaint to the hiring authority for disposition.

- The Centralized Screening Team made *adequate* screening decisions in 1,872 complaints, or 70 percent.
- We rated the Centralized Screening Team’s screening decision as *improvement needed* in 172 complaints, or 6.5 percent.
- The Centralized Screening Team made *inadequate* screening decisions in 631 complaints, or 23.5 percent.

Table 1. The OIG’s Ratings of the Centralized Screening Team’s Screening Decisions

Rating	Number of Grievances	Percentage
<i>Adequate</i>	1,872	70
<i>Improvement Needed</i>	172	6.5
<i>Inadequate</i>	631	23.5
Staff Misconduct Grievances	2,675	100
Nonrated Routine Grievances	13,323	N/A
Total Grievances Reviewed	15,998	N/A

Source: Analysis prepared by staff of the Office of the Inspector General.

The Centralized Screening Team Corrected 84 Percent of the Screening Decisions the OIG Disputed as Incorrectly Routed or Unaddressed

When the OIG reviews a grievance that contains an allegation of staff misconduct and disagrees with the Centralized Screening Team's screening decision, OIG staff contact the Centralized Screening Team with an explanation of our disagreement and a recommendation to amend its screening decision to align with departmental policy or conduct a clarification interview. Typically, our disagreement stems from identifying allegations of staff misconduct that the Centralized Screening Team either did not address at all or did not refer to the appropriate entity within the department. In instances where we discover a number of deficiencies in one complaint, we make a more general request that the Centralized Screening Team conduct a complete rereview of the complaint and ensure all elements are addressed and routed appropriately. However, we also screen grievances to ensure the Centralized Screening Team identifies and addresses any serious risks⁶ presented within the complaint and makes required notifications to ensure the risk is addressed expeditiously. If the Centralized Screening Team agrees with the OIG's recommendations, we complete our assessment. If the Centralized Screening Team disagrees with the OIG's dispute, we ask the Centralized Screening Team to provide further explanation or information, which we then take into consideration. If we still disagree, we elevate our dispute to the Centralized Screening Team's management for further consideration. If the OIG and the Centralized Screening Team cannot come to an agreement, we each process the complaint as we see fit.

Of the 2,675 complaints containing allegations of staff misconduct the OIG monitored, we disputed 613 screening decisions, or 23 percent. Of those 613 decisions, the Centralized Screening Team agreed with us and conducted a clarification interview, amended its decision, or both in 517 instances, or 84 percent. The Centralized Screening Team disagreed with our recommendations in 96 decisions we elevated. In five of the 96 disagreements,⁷ the Centralized Screening Team failed to respond to the OIG at all. In two of the 96 disagreements, the Centralized Screening Team agreed with us but did not correct its incorrect decision because by the time it processed our dispute, a letter based on the incorrect decision had already been sent to an incarcerated person. The department told us it would be inappropriate to open a new log number to address the complaint correctly because the incarcerated person *might* submit an

6. Examples of a serious risk the department is expected to identify include, but are not limited to, statements of feeling suicidal or homicidal, specific safety concerns with another person, release date discrepancies within 90 days of an incarcerated person's earliest possible release date, and an incarcerated person's possession of a weapon.

7. The OIG counted these as the Centralized Screening Team disagreeing with us because it ultimately disagreed with correcting the agreed-upon deficiency.

appeal. Below are examples of screening decisions we disputed and the Centralized Screening Team's responses to those disputed decisions:

Agreements

- An incarcerated person alleged, in part, an officer made “inappropriate advances” and “passes” at the incarcerated person. When the incarcerated person rejected the officer's advances, the officer allegedly became upset and issued him a rules violation report. The incarcerated person alleged the officer made recordings of him for personal use on a mobile phone.

The Centralized Screening Team failed to identify the allegations against the officer at all, interpreting the complaint as the incarcerated person being dissatisfied with a prior response without filing an appeal, and rejected the complaint. After the OIG disputed the screening decision, the Centralized Screening Team conducted a clarification interview, wherein the incarcerated person alleged the officer asked whether the incarcerated person liked men and stated, if so, they “could do stuff” another time. The incarcerated person also alleged the officer recorded the incarcerated person using a mobile phone as the incarcerated person begged for help. After the clarification interview, the Centralized Screening Team referred the allegations against the officer to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit for investigation into allegations of staff sexual misconduct, endangering the safety of an incarcerated person, and overfamiliar behavior.

- An officer allegedly told two Hispanic incarcerated people to “do their business on Blacks but get down when told, so [the officers] could shoot the Blacks,” and to “get down” if an incident occurred because the tower officers “shoot real good, and we prefer to shoot the Blacks.”

The Centralized Screening Team referred the allegations to the prison for a routine review even though the allegation decision index requires referral of allegations of creating a motive or opportunity for one incarcerated person to harm another, endangering incarcerated people by violating policies and training, and racial discrimination to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit. After the OIG disputed the screening decision, the Centralized Screening Team appropriately referred the allegation of endangering the safety of incarcerated people to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit.

- A staff member allegedly told an incarcerated person, “We should go find some shade and make out.” The incarcerated person alleged this statement made him uncomfortable.

The Centralized Screening Team referred the allegation to the prison for a routine review. The OIG disputed the screening decision and recommended a referral to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit due to the allegation of staff sexual misconduct, the complexity of the case, and extensive documentation already completed by staff at the institutional level. The Centralized Screening Team agreed, citing a third instance involving the same staff member, and referred the staff sexual misconduct allegation to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit for investigation.

- In another case, staff allegedly imposed a forfeiture of credits on an incarcerated person based on an overdue rules violation report and disciplinary hearing, thereby causing an improper extension of the incarcerated person's release date. The department initially issued the incarcerated person a rules violation report for threatening to strangle an officer. To impose a credit forfeiture under departmental regulations, the department was required to conduct the disciplinary hearing within 30 days of June 17, 2024, the date the district attorney's office informed the department it would not file charges against the incarcerated person as a result of the incident. The department did not conduct the hearing within the 30-day timeline. On March 11, 2025, 267 days after the department received notification from the district attorney's office and just 15 days before the incarcerated person's release date, prison staff applied a forfeiture of credits to the incarcerated person's release date based on the pending rules violation report, pushing the incarcerated person's release back 150 days. The incarcerated person filed a complaint on March 18, 2025, regarding the extension of her release date based on the almost-one-year-old rules violation report.

The Centralized Screening Team reviewed the incarcerated person's grievance regarding this issue and routed the complaint as a routine policy claim. Prison staff rejected the rules violation report allegation as anticipatory because the rules violation report had not been adjudicated. However, the Centralized Screening Team failed to consider whether the rules violation report not being adjudicated was pertinent to the incarcerated person's complaint regarding the imposition of forfeiture of credits that delayed her release from prison. The Centralized Screening Team failed to identify an imminent release date violation and failed to consider that the prison did not conduct the rules violation report hearing within 30 days of receiving notice from the district attorney's office. The OIG disputed the Centralized Screening Team's decision and explained the department had failed to conduct the rules violation report hearing within 30 days of receiving notice from the district attorney's office and did not serve the incarcerated person a notice of release date change until March 12, 2025. The Centralized Screening Team corrected its

decision and referred the allegation for a routine review of staff misconduct not on the allegation decision index. As a result of the OIG's involvement in disputing the inappropriate screening decision and separately contacting prison officials, prison staff conducted the incarcerated person's disciplinary hearing for the rules violation report on May 7, 2025, 324 days after the notification from the district attorney's office and 44 days after the incarcerated person's scheduled release date. The incarcerated person was released on May 13, 2025, 50 days beyond her original release date.

Disagreements

- A supervising cook allegedly retaliated against an incarcerated person by issuing him a rules violation report after the incarcerated person submitted a staff misconduct complaint against the supervising cook.

The Centralized Screening Team routed the allegation back to the prison as a routine policy claim even though the allegation decision index requires referral of allegations of retaliation for reporting staff misconduct and for using the grievance process to the Office of Internal Affairs' Allegation Investigation Unit. After the OIG disputed the screening decision, the Centralized Screening Team disagreed with our recommendation and claimed the supervising cook would not have known that the incarcerated person submitted a staff misconduct complaint against him and that the rules violation report was not retaliatory because it was submitted within regulatory time frames. The OIG disagreed with the decision because the issuance of a rules violation report could be filed within the allowable time frame *and* be retaliatory, as alleged by the incarcerated person.

- A registered nurse allegedly sexually assaulted a paraplegic incarcerated person by digitally penetrating him during a diaper change.

The Centralized Screening Team failed to identify the allegation that a registered nurse digitally penetrated another incarcerated person as staff misconduct. After the OIG disputed the screening decision, the Centralized Screening Team disagreed with our recommendation and claimed that the incarcerated person who is paraplegic and has no feeling below the waist, explained he did not feel the finger penetrate him and had based his allegation of sexual assault on pressure he felt in his abdomen. After elevating our disagreement a second time, the Centralized Screening Team's management rejected our recommendation again, and upheld the original determination that no staff misconduct occurred without providing any further explanation of its position.

- An officer allegedly referred to an incarcerated person as “the Black guy,” rather than by his name or bunk number.

The Centralized Screening Team routed the allegation to the prison as a routine policy claim rather than as a routine allegation of staff misconduct for unprofessionalism. Following the OIG’s elevation, the Centralized Screening Team agreed to refer the allegation against the officer for a routine review the same day. However, the Centralized Screening Team failed to process the agreed-upon change, and prison staff sent the incarcerated person a decision letter based on the incorrect screening decision. The OIG followed up with the Centralized Screening Team about its failure to make the agreed-upon changes multiple times. The Centralized Screening Team eventually reported to us it could no longer correct its original decision—which it had agreed was incorrect—because it had already sent a decision letter to the incarcerated person. When the OIG questioned why the Centralized Screening Team would not open a new grievance log record to correct the mistake as usual, it reported opening a new record “was not appropriate.” Centralized Screening Team staff stated, “We can open a new log number for a missed claim but not to elevate an existing claim,” because the incarcerated person *might* file an appeal. However, the Centralized Screening Team’s own inaction is what led to the letter being sent before the correction could be made.

- An officer allegedly conducted an unclothed body search of an incarcerated person in the middle of the dayroom, without affording him any measure of privacy.

The Centralized Screening Team routed the unclothed body search allegation back to the prison as a routine policy claim despite departmental policy requiring unclothed body searches be conducted “in an area that allows the [incarcerated person] to preserve some measure of dignity and self-respect.” Following the OIG’s dispute, the Centralized Screening Team agreed to refer the allegation to the prison as staff misconduct not on the allegation decision index, citing policy that, “whenever possible, unclothed body inspections of incarcerated persons shall be conducted outside the view of others.” However, the Centralized Screening Team failed to process the amended screening decision, and when the OIG followed up, the Centralized Screening Team indicated its decision would stand. When the OIG questioned which decision would stand—the initial routine policy claim or the amended routine allegation of staff misconduct—the Centralized Screening Team failed to respond at all. Ultimately, despite acknowledging the alleged conduct violated policy and rose to the level of staff misconduct, the Centralized Screening Team processed the allegation as a routine policy claim.

(This page left blank for reproduction purposes.)

While Monitoring Individual Screening Decisions, the OIG Identified and Raised Several Concerns With the Centralized Screening Team's Processes

Although we perform our monitoring of the Centralized Screening Team's performance by reviewing individual grievance screening decisions, our contemporaneous monitoring model provides a holistic view of the overall process. With this ability to view the process from start to finish, we are able to differentiate between isolated incidents and trends that expose a flaw in the process. During the 2025 calendar year, we identified and brought three process concerns to the department's attention along with recommendations for improving those processes.

The Centralized Screening Team Does Not Always Update Amended Screening Decisions Within Its Primary Recordkeeping System, Which Leads to Inconsistent Screening Records in Different Departmental Databases

In September 2025, the OIG noticed a change in the Centralized Screening Team's process following screening decisions we disputed, wherein the Centralized Screening Team agreed with the dispute and agreed to amend its original decision. Specifically, the Centralized Screening Team began updating its decisions in its Strategic Offender Management System database but not in its Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue database, the latter being the Centralized Screening Team's primary data entry system. Of the OIG's 178 disputes of screening decisions between September 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, 20 (or 10.5 percent) resulted in inconsistent screening records. For example:

- Staff allegedly delayed delivering court documents to an incarcerated person for three months and opened the legal mail envelope outside of his presence.

The Centralized Screening Team routed the mail allegations back to the prison as a routine policy claim rather than as an allegation of staff misconduct for violating legal mail policy and interfering with the incarcerated person's access to the courts. Following the OIG's dispute, the Centralized Screening Team referred the allegation to the prison as a routine allegation of staff misconduct. However, the Centralized Screening Team only updated its

screening decision in the Strategic Offender Management System and did not update its decision in its primary screening database, the Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue. As of the date of this publication, the Centralized Screening Team still has not updated its decision in the Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue, which inaccurately reflects that it referred the allegation as a routine policy claim.

Figure 2 on the next page highlights excerpts of the final documentation in the Strategic Offender Management System versus the Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue for the same grievance record pertaining to an allegation that staff opened an incarcerated person's legal mail outside his presence, which the department regularly refers as staff misconduct not on the allegation decision index.

The OIG expressed concerns with the department documenting conflicting decisions for the same complaint across its databases—intentionally refusing to correct an incorrect decision in its primary screening database—and we noted the complications this would cause when the department compiles end-of-the-year data depending on which database is used. Departmental officials responded that the process change occurred because of a system upgrade on August 31, 2025, and they knew it caused discrepancies between the two databases.

The OIG recommends the department accurately update all screening decisions and document corrections consistently across its databases. If the Centralized Screening Team changes a screening decision, the change should be correctly captured in each location where the decision is reflected.

The OIG also recommends the Centralized Screening Team correct all screening decisions it agrees are incorrect even if the department already issued a decision letter. A decision letter based on an incorrect screening decision, and therefore an incorrect review of the allegations, is not an appropriate reason to ignore the need to correct the Centralized Screening Team's original error.

Figure 2. Excerpts Showing the Difference Between the Documentation in the Strategic Offender Management System and the Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue for the Same Grievance Record

Current Decision Documented In Work Queue

Item	St.	SOMS Claim Detail	Incident D	Dsc.Inmate	Dsc.Staff	StaffM...	DtStfM
1		1 Mail		09/07/2025			

Misconduct Determination

No

Claim: [001] Mail

Claim Summary: Claimant states that they are not getting their mail on time. - routine no staff misconduct

Group: Offender Services

Category: Mail

SubCategory: Legal Mail

Decision Index Category:

Decision Index SubCat.: (n/a)

Incident Details

Incident Date unknown:

Date Discovered by Inmate: 09/07/2025

Date Discovered by Staff:

Staff Misc Later Discovered:

Date Misc Later Discovered:

Extended Time: 0 days

Determined Staff Misconduct: No

Potential Noncompliance w/ARP/CRP:

Current Decision Documented in SOMS

Action Date: 09/16/2025 Action Time: 11:54:20

Action Type: Grievance Screening Completed

Action by Staff Name: [REDACTED]

Screened For

RA Conflict: No Reason:

Rejection: No Reason:

Redirect: No Reason:

Reassigned: No Reason:

No Jurisdiction: No Reason:

Pending Legal Matter: No Reason:

Identified as Staff Misconduct: Yes

Claimant states that they are not getting their mail on time. - routine w/ ASM

Source: The Office of Internal Affairs database.

When Prison Staff Do Not Sufficiently Document Verbal Complaints and Complaints From Third Parties, and Do Not Respond to the Centralized Screening Team’s Requests for More Information, Some Allegations of Staff Misconduct Go Unaddressed

When an incarcerated person makes a verbal complaint or the department receives a verbal or written complaint from a third party, hiring authorities are required to document the complaint in the department’s Allegation of Staff Misconduct Tracking System Work Queue database so the complaint can be reviewed by the Centralized Screening Team. The department refers to this type of complaint as a “direct entry.” Direct entries include a brief synopsis of the allegation along with any attached source documents that include details about the allegation. Source documents can vary from staff-authored memorandums addressing alleged staff misconduct, a videotaped interview summary following a use-of-force incident, and correspondence from citizens or the incarcerated population.

Upon receipt of a direct entry, the Centralized Screening Team reviews the source documents and any notes entered by prison staff to determine whether the complaint contains an allegation of staff misconduct. If the Centralized Screening Team identifies an allegation of staff misconduct in the complaint, it either refers the complaint to the Office of Internal Affairs’ Allegation Investigation Unit for an investigation or returns it to the prison as a routine allegation of staff misconduct. If the Centralized Screening Team determines the allegation does not contain an allegation of staff misconduct, it routes the complaint back to the prison to be handled as a routine matter.

In some instances, a complaint might not contain sufficient information or detail to allow the Centralized Screening Team to make an informed screening decision. Should the Centralized Screening Team determine a complaint does not contain sufficient information to render a screening decision, departmental policy requires the Centralized Screening Team return the complaint to the prison and request more information. If a complaint is returned by the Centralized Screening Team, the hiring authority’s designee is responsible for monitoring the work queue for any entries that were marked as “returned to the institution.” Within three business days of the direct entry being returned from the Centralized Screening Team, prison staff are required to address the entry and update or add additional source documentation needed for the Centralized Screening Team to render a screening decision.

During the course of our monitoring, we found that the Centralized Screening Team is not required to follow up with the prison when prison

staff do not provide additional information and documentation within three days. This has been an infrequent but recurring issue since the inception of the OIG's monitoring of the Centralized Screening Team. However, we asked more questions about the process after discovering seven such cases during one two-month period in which prison staff either failed to add any additional information regarding the complaint or failed to respond at all. This inaction by prison staff, combined with the lack of a requirement for additional follow-up by the Centralized Screening Team, has resulted in incomplete decisions and, at times, no decision at all. Of the seven cases mentioned above, in two instances the Centralized Screening Team returned the cases back to the prison and requested additional information. Because prison staff failed to provide the requested information, the Centralized Screening Team never made a screening decision regarding the allegation.

In one case, prison staff created a direct entry that did not include a summary of the allegation or a source document for review. Instead, the entry only noted, "Allegation of Staff Misconduct." The Centralized Screening Team returned the entry to the prison and requested source documentation or additional information to render a screening decision. Subsequently, prison staff failed to upload any documentation and provided no additional details regarding the direct entry. Because of the prison's lack of compliance with policy and the lack of a requirement that the Centralized Screening Team follow up when it does not receive a response, a decision was not rendered by the Centralized Screening Team for the case, which created an opportunity for an allegation of staff misconduct to remain unaddressed.

Similarly, in a second case, prison staff created a direct entry that noted an incarcerated person made an allegation of unreasonable force but did not provide any specific information about the unreasonable force. The Centralized Screening Team sent the complaint back to the prison and requested more information regarding the specific allegation that was initially reported to staff that led to the direct entry. Prison staff failed to respond to the Centralized Screening Team's request and provided no further information regarding the unreasonable force allegation. The Centralized Screening Team did not render a decision for the case, and the case was not referred as an allegation of staff misconduct despite the incarcerated person's allegation of unreasonable force.

The department's policy that requires the Centralized Screening Team to request additional information when a complaint does not contain sufficient information to render a decision, and the subsequent requirement that prison staff respond within three days serve an important purpose in the complaint screening process. However, the department currently lacks a mechanism to ensure prison staff respond to all the Centralized Screening Team's requests for clarifying and additional information, causing the department to lose track of some complaints. If a claim regarding staff misconduct is already vague in

nature and the request for additional information is unfulfilled, serious staff misconduct can potentially be left unreported, uninvestigated, and ultimately, unaddressed.

The Quick Reference Guide the Department Implemented to Aid Analysts With Their Screening Decisions Has Injected Subjectivity and Inconsistency in the Centralized Screening Team's Decisions for Certain Allegation Types

Centralized Screening Team management created resources to aid staff in deciding how to process a complaint. In the past, the department provided a Centralized Screening Team “Handbook” to members of the Centralized Screening Team regarding roles and responsibilities and other topics. On January 1, 2025, the department implemented the Quick Reference Guide for the Centralized Screening Team to use in its decision-making process.

The Quick Reference Guide defines staff misconduct as behavior that results in a violation of law, regulation, policy, or procedure, or actions contrary to an ethical or professional standard. It defines behavior as the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others. The guide also provides questions to consider when determining how a complaint should be processed:

- Does the complaint contain specific information regarding an overt action by staff?
- Is the incarcerated person's complaint a disagreement with policy?
- Is the incarcerated person's complaint based solely on conjecture or their feelings?

The document is a good resource for determining whether allegations qualify as staff misconduct. However, prior to implementation, we pointed out a few areas of concern related to the guide, which the department did not address prior to implementation. Specifically, we had concerns about downplaying the clarification interview process, the vague and subjective nature of considering “buzz words,” and the arbitrary determination that after 90 days, staff would not generally engage in retaliation. Since the implementation of the Quick Reference Guide, the department has responded to our concerns telling us that it was not its intent to downplay the clarification interview process, and that staff should consult with their supervisors and management if there is any doubt about whether a clarification interview is appropriate. However, we believe the Quick Reference Guide, as currently worded, gives rise to inconsistent and sometimes erroneous decisions, as discussed below.

Departmental regulations direct the Centralized Screening Team to conduct a clarification interview if needed to make a screening decision. The clarification interview is an important component of the screening

process that allows the screener to gather specific details to ensure the correct routing decision is made. However, the Quick Reference Guide makes little reference to the clarification interview process and notes staff misconduct is “not likely” if the claim “lacks specific details regarding alleged misconduct to understand the nature of the complaint.” The only reference to the clarification interview process in the guide is in the last sentence, which reads in part that “when in doubt,” staff should “consult with a manager and/or schedule a clarification interview.” In the OIG’s opinion, the guide implies that a clarification interview is unnecessary when, in the opinion of the analyst, an incarcerated person makes an allegation that lacks sufficient details.

The Quick Reference Guide also indicates staff misconduct is unlikely if the claim alleges retaliation “after a long separation of time between events (generally more than 90 days).” This assumption fails to consider that staff members may not become aware of the complaint filed by the incarcerated person for a long period of time. Incarcerated people often delay in filing grievances, and the employee disciplinary process often takes several months to complete. The department has fixed an unnecessary 90-day limit and has directed its Centralized Screening Team that actions beyond that time frame are “not likely” to constitute retaliatory staff misconduct.

Lastly, the guide includes the following directions about “buzz words”:

It is not sufficient for a claimant to use buzz words (“discrimination,” “retaliation,” etc.) without any specificity (adequate detail) that enable screening staff to support the connection between the behavior and the alleged staff misconduct. Read the claim without the “buzz” words and see if the contents would support the allegation.

Aside from “discrimination” and “retaliation,” the department does not identify other words it considers as buzz words. In the past, the department also referred to “harassment” as a buzz word. However, in response to an OIG inquiry, the Centralized Screening Team indicated it does not maintain an exclusive list of terms it considers buzz words. The Quick Reference Guide indicates an incarcerated person’s use of a buzz word in an allegation may not be sufficient to support staff misconduct unless there is “adequate detail” to support the alleged behavior. Although it is reasonable to expect details to support an allegation of staff misconduct, the guide does not provide any example of what is or is not an adequate level of detail. Without specific guidance, the Centralized Screening Team member is given broad, subjective discretion when determining whether the supporting information is sufficient to qualify as an allegation of staff misconduct. The OIG disputed multiple decisions in which we found the incarcerated person provided adequate details to support allegations of discrimination

or retaliation, but the Centralized Screening Team responded with the following:

As of January 1, 2025, CST has been utilizing the Staff Misconduct Quick Reference Guide to screen grievances with more consistency and accuracy. Based on review of this grievance, the CST screener removed the buzz words of discrimination to determine that this is a routine issue.

The three examples below illustrate how the Quick Reference Guide's instruction regarding buzz words has resulted in the Centralized Screening Team rejecting allegations that we believe contained sufficient factual support to warrant investigation.

- An incarcerated person alleged an officer allowed incarcerated people of a specific race to receive haircuts while discriminating against other incarcerated people of a different race by not allowing them to receive haircuts. The incarcerated person further alleged the officer's racial bias caused racial tension in the building. The Centralized Screening Team referred the allegation to the prison as a routine policy claim. Following the OIG's dispute and recommendation to conduct a clarification interview, the Centralized Screening Team cited the Quick Reference Guide and the screener's removal of the buzz word "discrimination," which resulted in its classification of the allegation as a routine policy claim and declined to conduct a clarification interview.
- An incarcerated person alleged officers discriminated against him by failing to provide him with clean laundry because he is Black, while they only provide clean laundry to Hispanic incarcerated people. The Centralized Screening Team inappropriately summarized the claim, only indicating the incarcerated person did not receive clean towels. Following the OIG's dispute about the allegation of discrimination and recommending a clarification interview, the Centralized Screening Team upheld its decision based on the Quick Reference Guide, and the screener removing the buzz word "discrimination." However, the grievance read:

Only Hispanics get new towels also, or new laundry... We also need more clean clothes for everyone, not just Mexicans. Also, the title 15 and [department operations manual] states you have to speak a language that common to everyone. We are being disrespected in Spanish all the time, us Blacks by C/Os. We request they only speak English so we can stop getting disrespected please. It's too much.

- Even with the removal of the buzz word, the incarcerated person described, with specificity, how officers treated one race

differently than another. However, the Centralized Screening Team did not consider the example to be “adequate detail” warranting staff misconduct or a clarification interview.

- On July 26, 2025, an officer allegedly retaliated against an incarcerated person for previously filing complaints against the officer by setting the incarcerated person’s hot meal tray aside to get cold. The Centralized Screening Team referred the claim to the prison as an allegation of routine staff misconduct. Following the OIG’s dispute, the Centralized Screening Team upheld its decision based on the Quick Reference Guide, explaining the incarcerated person did not provide context on how the officer’s alleged actions were retaliatory and that the allegation was based on a buzz word. Again, applying the same logic, the OIG read the incarcerated person’s complaint as:

C/O [last name redacted] then refused to bring my medical diet. Instead under camera C/O [last name redacted] informed me I do not get s**t. C/O [last name redacted] refused to feed me out of retaliation ... C/O [last name redacted] purposeful with a malice intent allowed my diet food to sit on a locker and get cold for over 10–15 min ... C/O [last name redacted] is doing this because I have filed numerous grievances against C/O [last name redacted].

Despite the removal of the buzz word, the information provided by the incarcerated person not only explained the officer’s alleged actions, but also provided the basis for the alleged actions. However, the Centralized Screening Team claimed the example did not contain “adequate detail,” or warrant a clarification interview to gather more information about the officer’s retaliatory actions.

The OIG's Recommendations to the Department Regarding Its Centralized Screening Team

- The OIG recommends that the department ensure when the Centralized Screening Team agrees with a dispute—by the OIG or another stakeholder—it takes the appropriate steps to correct the screening decision if the incarcerated person has not already filed an appeal and regardless of whether the department already issued a decision letter based on the incorrect screening decision. If an appeal exists, the department should ensure the appeal is processed in accordance with the correct screening decision.
- The OIG recommends that the department end its process of inconsistent recordkeeping across departmental databases. If the Centralized Screening Team amends a screening decision, it should ensure the change is accurately documented in each location where the decision is recorded.
- The OIG recommends that the department issue clear directives and expectations for staff who submit verbal allegations of staff misconduct, monitor and enforce the three-day response requirement when the Centralized Screening Team requests additional information from prison staff, and develop a process requiring the Centralized Screening Team to follow up on requests returned to the prison to ensure it renders a decision for every allegation of staff misconduct.
- The OIG recommends that the department improve the Centralized Screening Team's Quick Reference Guide by:
 - Introducing and better emphasizing the regulatory requirement for a clarification interview before detailing scenarios in which the department considers staff misconduct to be “not likely” (e.g., when allegations lack specific details);
 - Removing the implication that retaliation is unlikely to occur more than 90 days after an incident or including a reference that retaliation should be considered on a case-by-case basis and may occur a long time after an event due to the length of time it may take to interview the subject of an investigation or complete the investigation into a prior allegation of staff misconduct against the staff member; and
 - Developing a more thorough and complete list of applicable buzz words to ensure consistency in the screening process. Because the Quick Reference

Guide only provides examples of two buzz words (i.e., discrimination and retaliation), it is unclear how the Centralized Screening Team or any other stakeholder could reasonably determine which words a screener should ignore when screening the complaint.

The Department's Response to Our Report

Docusign Envelope ID: C23277D7-505B-4BDC-A734-900A9B007603

STATE OF CALIFORNIA – DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

PO Box 942883

Sacramento, CA 94283-0001



3/2/2026

Ms. Amarik Singh
Office of the Inspector General
10111 Old Placerville Road, Suite 110
Sacramento, CA 95827

Dear Ms. Singh:

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), thanks the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for the opportunity to review the draft report titled *The Office of the Inspector General's Monitoring in 2025 of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Centralized Screening Process*.

CDCR shares OIG's commitment to ensuring that screening decisions are made timely using complete, accurate, and fully informed information. The Department acknowledges the differing perspectives presented in the report regarding the specific cases referenced; however, based on a comprehensive review of applicable policy and the totality of the information available, the Department reached conclusions that do not align in all instances with OIG's assessment.

Regarding the OIG's concerns about the accuracy of the Work Queue, it is important to clarify that the Work Queue serves solely as a screening tool for Centralized Screening Team (CST) staff and is not the Department's official electronic repository for grievances. The official electronic repository is the Strategic Offender Management System (SOMS). After initial screening, grievances continue to be processed by other stakeholders within SOMS until final resolution. For these reasons, the Work Queue is not updated after initial screening. Instead, grievances are updated throughout their lifecycle in SOMS. Given the multiple pathways a grievance may take following screening, maintaining real-time updates in the Work Queue would require significant technological effort and cost, making it impractical at this time.

CDCR acknowledges the OIG's concerns regarding institutional staff not sufficiently documenting verbal complaints. CDCR has established a workgroup with respective stakeholders to clarify and update our process, expectations, and electronic systems.

Further, in October of 2025, CST implemented a process to obtain non-specific information at intake, utilizing electronic systems and clarifying interviews to resolve information that is vague or incomplete. This process has been valuable in ensuring appropriate information is obtained for all complaints including third-party, identifying duplicate or subsequent source claims, and making appropriate routing decisions.

The Department's Response to Our Report (continued)

DocuSign Envelope ID: C23277D7-505B-4BDC-A734-900A9B007603

Amarik Singh, Office of the Inspector General
Page 2

Related to the feedback received regarding the CST Quick Reference guide, CDCR reached agreement with Plaintiffs' Counsel to utilize the guide. While we appreciate the OIG's input regarding the guide and will consider it as we continue negotiations with Plaintiffs' Counsel, we maintain our stance on interpretation and use of the guide.

The CST is composed of trained analytical staff responsible for reviewing incoming allegations and determining appropriate routing based on policy, electronic records, and relevant case information. Supported by subject matter experts in institutional operations, health care, and professional standards, CST analysts apply specialized training and operational knowledge to make consistent, well-reasoned screening decisions.

It is essential that CST is empowered to make screening decisions based on the information available and the unique circumstances of each case. Allegations often arise within complex institutional and program environments, requiring careful consideration of operational realities, applicable regulations, and system-wide impacts. Providing CST with the authority to exercise informed judgment ensures timely, consistent, and operationally sound decisions.

If you have any questions, contact me at (916) 323-6001.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Jeffrey Macomber
5957F5D0C55F473...

JEFF MACOMBER
Secretary

The Office of the Inspector General's Monitoring in 2025 of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Centralized Screening Process

OFFICE *of the*
INSPECTOR GENERAL

Amarik K. Singh
Inspector General

Shaun Spillane
Chief Deputy Inspector General

STATE of CALIFORNIA
March 2026

OIG