



Incarcerated-Person Advisory Council Meetings, July–December 2025

The Office of the Inspector General’s (the OIG) Intake Processing Unit (Intake) receives complaints from the incarcerated population and the public. To assist with the review of complaints, Intake staff actively work to gain knowledge of local and department-wide issues by attending periodic meetings with incarcerated-person advisory councils (IPACs) at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s (CDCR or the department) prisons. IPACs “serve to advise and communicate with the warden and other staff those matters of common interest and concern to the incarcerated general population (The California Code of Regulations, Title 15, Section 3230(a)(1)).” Typically, IPACs meet quarterly with the warden and monthly with members of the warden’s management team, including a facility captain and other supervisors.

During the six-month reporting period of July 2025 through December 2025, we met with IPACs at 11 prisons to educate council members about the OIG’s mission and to solicit input. We also provided an OIG Fact Sheet to explain our work and how to reach us, including through a confidential quick-dial number from either a phone designated for use by incarcerated people or a State-issued tablet.

Further, we conducted optional meetings with chapter presidents, vice presidents, or other representatives of

the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) and California Correctional Supervisors Organization (CCSO) to learn about prison operations and any concerns these custody-staff employee organizations wanted to bring to our attention.

Below are the prisons OIG Intake staff visited. In this report, we present some of the common issues IPACs raised regarding matters of concern to the incarcerated population or with departmental processes, along with general issues raised by union representatives.

Prisons Visited

- Avenal State Prison (ASP)
- California Correctional Institution (CCI)
- California State Prison, Los Angeles County (LAC)
- Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF)
- Correctional Training Facility (CTF)
- High Desert State Prison (HDSP)
- North Kern State Prison (NKSP)
- Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP)
- Pleasant Valley State Prison (PVSP)
- Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJD)
- Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP)

Topics of Interest

1. Grievance and Appeals Process

Intake staff review complaints filed directly with our office by incarcerated and supervised people, departmental employees, and other stakeholders. Typically, we encourage incarcerated and supervised people to complete the department’s grievance and appeals process for resolution at the lowest level before contacting the OIG.

In 2025, the department combined the grievance (CDCR Form 602-1) and reasonable accommodation request (CDCR Form 1824) forms into one form. Thus, incarcerated and supervised people submit a grievance or reasonable



Photo 1. Grievance and Appeals drop-box and Employee and Officer Recognition Slip drop-box, Salinas Valley State Prison.





accommodation request on CDCR Form 602-1/1824 to the Office of Grievances (OOG) at the local prison. This form is also used for submitting an allegation of staff misconduct. If complainants are dissatisfied with the OOG's response, they may submit an appeal to the Office of Appeals (OOA).

After complainants receive a response from OOA, their administrative remedies are exhausted. Moreover, there are no time limits for filing grievances alleging staff-on-incarcerated-person sexual misconduct and incarcerated-person-on-incarcerated-person sexual violence.

IPAC representatives notified OIG staff of several concerns with the grievance and appeals process. The most common issues were:

- A. Grievances involving allegations of staff misconduct were processed by the OOG and Centralized Screening Team (CST)¹ as routine grievances (i.e., no investigation was conducted).
- B. Appeals were designated as "timed out" or "time expired" by the OOA, which meant appeals staff were unable to conduct a review of the appeal and respond appropriately within 60 calendar days of receiving the appeal.
- C. Soon after incarcerated people filed grievances identifying misconduct by departmental staff, staff searched or "tossed" their cells to look for contraband or property.

Although the OIG's Intake unit has reviewed complaint issues in each of the above situations, when OIG staff requested examples of grievances that had been filed regarding the above issues, IPAC representatives were unable to share any specific information to support these claims. We recommended the IPAC encourage those who have been impacted by the issues to first exhaust their administrative remedies, and if dissatisfied with the department's response, to then contact our office.

2. Rules Violation Reports

If minor misconduct is identified, departmental staff may provide verbal counseling to an incarcerated person or a "counseling-only" rules violation report (RVR), which does not result in penalties or losses of privileges or credits. Departmental staff may also issue RVRs to incarcerated people involved in misconduct that is not minor, such as administrative (e.g., misuse



Photo 2. Inside of a cell with an upper bunk bed, California Men's Colony.

1. The department's Centralized Screening Team (CST) is the team responsible for screening all grievances, reasonable accommodation requests, and allegations of staff misconduct, and then routing the claim for handling.



of food, use of vulgar or obscene language) or serious (e.g., homicide, violence against other people, threat to kill or assault people) offenses. The most egregious and serious offenses could be prosecuted as criminal offenses (misdemeanor or felony). RVRs are adjudicated via a hearing and may include interviews of witnesses, and the review of video evidence, if applicable. If found guilty by a senior hearing officer, incarcerated people may receive a credit loss (e.g., time added to their sentence) and loss of privileges (e.g., no phone, canteen, or yard recreation access for a period of time). If incarcerated people disagree with the RVR decision, they may file a grievance disputing the decision and an appeal if they are dissatisfied with the grievance response.

Several IPAC representatives shared both positive and negative comments about the RVR process. The comments included the following:

- Due process violations were alleged involving incarcerated people being held past their release date. During our on-site visit to one prison, IPAC representatives alleged that CDCR had been improperly holding an incarcerated person in the facility past his scheduled release date. The OIG determined there was a pending rules violation report against the incarcerated person for possession of a deadly weapon that had not yet been adjudicated. If found guilty of the rule violation, the person's release date could have been extended. In these situations, the department is permitted to retain the incarcerated person past their scheduled release date while it adjudicates the rules violation report. On the day of our visit, the OIG notified the warden of the allegation. Although the department still had another 15 days to adjudicate the rules violation report, the warden instructed the senior hearing officer to conduct an expedited review in light of the concerns the IPAC representatives raised. After performing the expedited review, the senior hearing officer found the incarcerated person not guilty of possession of a deadly weapon and dismissed the RVR in the interest of justice. The incarcerated person was subsequently released to parole supervision on August 19, 2025, seven days after our on-site visit.
- Departmental staff had issued RVRs for being "under the influence of an intoxicant" or "under influence of a drug" based strictly on an officer's observation and not based on a drug or urinalysis test. The IPAC alleged that in one instance, an incarcerated person was having a medical-related seizure, but an officer deemed the incarcerated person as being "under the influence." We informed the IPAC that the incarcerated person should exhaust all administrative remedies and, if dissatisfied with the department's response, should contact our office.
- In February 2025, the department found an incarcerated person guilty of being under the influence even though it failed to conduct a drug or urinalysis test, and issued the incarcerated person an RVR. In May 2025, the OIG raised our concerns about this decision to a warden. In July 2025, departmental management notified the OIG that departmental staff may utilize circumstantial evidence when an incarcerated person may be under the influence of alcohol or some other intoxicant. Thus, if an incarcerated



person exhibits behaviors of slurred speech, disorientation, and dizziness, a senior hearing officer could accept these behaviors as sufficient evidence to find the incarcerated person guilty of being under the influence.

- IPAC representatives praised the audio-video surveillance system and body-worn cameras available at many prisons for providing the evidence needed to effectively resolve erroneously issued RVRs.

3. Positive Outcomes and Other Feedback

During our visits, IPAC representatives, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), and the California Correctional Supervisors Organization (CCSO) shared positive outcomes and feedback at their respective prisons.

IPAC Representatives

- Several IPAC representatives praised the range and quality of rehabilitative programs at several prisons. At one prison, representatives shared that a captain and sergeant both provided great leadership and responsiveness to issues, such as ensuring broken showers were fixed in a timely manner. The same representatives also described visiting facilities as being “excellent” and noted that yard crews work hard to maintain a positive environment. The representatives shared they have recreational options such as sports and fitness equipment, which support their overall well-being. Moreover, they commended food and kitchen managers for listening to incarcerated people’s concerns and providing quality meals with limited resources.
- At another prison, IPAC representatives shared positive comments about sergeants and lieutenants who were approachable to the incarcerated population and assisted in handling concerns at the local level. At a second prison, representatives were thankful for the opportunities provided by a community resource manager who helped arrange food sales by ordering food, such as pizza, on a quarterly basis from a chosen vendor. These representatives also expressed gratitude for an officer who was in charge of the gym and brought many new sports programs to the prison.

Union Representatives’ Updates

- From September 2025 through January 2026, the department implemented a new cell-search application to record all findings made during cell searches. Housing unit officers will utilize tablets to take time-stamped photos of the following: interior of the cell prior to the start of a search; any items removed from the cell; and condition of the interior cell upon conclusion of the search. This documentation may then be used as evidence for grievance responses or rules violation reports.



- In 2025, the department established a contract with a new vendor, Securus Technologies, LLC, for its State-issued tablets. ViaPath Technologies, the previous vendor, will continue to provide services until all new tablets have been issued. In January 2026, the department activated the new Securus tablets at its fire camps and began distributing them to prisons in February 2026.² According to the department, the change to Securus tablets will reduce costs for families while maintaining access to educational, rehabilitative, and entertainment content.
- At one prison, the union representatives praised the warden's leadership and communication practices, which contributed to a strong relationship between frontline staff and management. For example, staff appreciated a new post-and-bid process and staffing adjustments due to Assembly Bill 109 (known as the Public Safety Realignment Act). Moreover, prison management planned to host an all-staff holiday celebration (in December 2025) for the first time in six years.
- On June 19, 2025, the department amended its allowable property regulations to establish a process for departmental staff to register their personal mobile phones and wearable technology to bring them into the secure perimeter of the prison.

General Follow-Up

The OIG will continue to meet with incarcerated-person advisory councils and union representatives to obtain a firsthand perspective on prison issues and any systemic concerns.

2. The department's planned prison facility rollout schedule for its tablet transition, as of February 25, 2026 can be found at this link: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/family-resources/tablets/>