



Amarik K. Singh, Inspector General

Shaun Spillane, Chief Deputy Inspector General

OIG | OFFICE *of the* INSPECTOR GENERAL

Independent Prison Oversight

August 2026



Audit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Food Programs and Services Within California's Prisons

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August 10, 2026

Mr. Jeff Macomber
Secretary
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
P.O. Box 942833
Sacramento, California 94283-001

Dear Mr. Macomber:

Enclosed is the Office of the Inspector General's (the OIG) report titled *Audit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Management of Food Programs and Services Within California's Prisons*. California Penal Code section 6126, subdivisions (b) and (c) authorize the OIG to initiate audits of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (the department) policies, practices, and procedures. In this audit, the OIG assessed the department's effectiveness in meeting the dietary needs of the incarcerated population and evaluated whether health and safety guidelines were being met. The department follows policies and procedures outlined in the Department Operations Manual (DOM), and the department's Food Services Handbook.

We completed an in-depth review of the department's policies and procedures pertinent to the food programs and services at four California prisons. We performed walk-throughs of the kitchens of the four prisons we selected to verify that departmental requirements were being met regarding employee performance, hygiene, food safety, sanitation, infrastructure, environmental maintenance and safety, and standard operating procedures. We performed detailed testing on menu calculations and logs kept for scullery machines, work orders, utensils, and pest control. Our observations found several deficiencies at three of the prisons we reviewed including sanitation issues such as improper food storage practices, and equipment issues such as scullery machines that did not properly sanitize food trays and utensils. Kitchen workers did not always follow proper hand hygiene practices, and several cooking surfaces were not clean, which increases the risk of foodborne illness. However, at Central California Women's Facility, we found very few deficiencies regarding sanitation and hygiene and note it as an example of how a kitchen in a prison setting should be maintained. Our auditors also found that two prisons had significant challenges with equipment that was not operational, and challenges with getting that equipment repaired. In some cases, work order requests were not completed until weeks, months, or even years after prison staff requested equipment repairs. Prison staff informed us that equipment repairs were regularly delayed due to budget constraints and challenges in timely receiving replacement parts. We also found that the department did not consistently maintain logs for equipment and utensils used by incarcerated kitchen workers, and prison staff did not adequately follow up when missing equipment items were not returned. In some cases, kitchen equipment was missing



for several days or was never found. Moreover, prison staff did not maintain consistent logs for scullery machines that sanitize food trays and utensils to ensure the machines reached proper temperatures to clean and sanitize items. When staff recorded on scullery logs that the equipment did not reach the required temperatures, we did not find evidence that staff had taken any action to ensure the items were sanitized.

In general, we found that the department had been providing the incarcerated population with meals that met all the population's caloric needs. However, we found food waste at the four prisons we visited. Lastly, we reviewed the department's adherence to religious and medical specialty diets in the four prisons we reviewed. Although the department provides these diets as required, we found some of the prisons could improve controls to ensure the incarcerated population adheres to the requirements of religious personal ethical diets because these meals cost significantly more than the regular meals the prison provides, and the higher costs are not accounted for in prisons' food budgets.

Following the publication of this report, we request that the department provide its status on implementing our recommendations at intervals of 60 days, six months, and one year from the date of the audit.

Sincerely,



Amarik K. Singh
Office of the Inspector General

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Introduction

California Penal Code section 6126(b) authorizes the Office of the Inspector General (the OIG) to conduct audits of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (the department) policies, practices, and procedures.

We initiated this audit to review and evaluate the department's food services program. As part of our audit we assessed whether the department's food programs and services comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines. We conducted on-site fieldwork to evaluate sanitation and hygiene practices, verified compliance with caloric and nutritional standards, assessed the overall quality of food, reviewed quarterly religious personal ethical diet audits, and observed how meals are prepared and distributed. We conducted on-site visits at California State Prison, Sacramento (CSP-Sacramento) in September 2025 and October 2025, California State Prison, Corcoran (CSP-Corcoran) and Central California Women's Facility in October 2025, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in December 2025. Our audit covered the period from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2024.

Background

The department's food service program must comply with state regulations and departmental policy to ensure prison meals are healthy, nutritious, well-balanced, safely prepared, and offered in a clean, sanitary environment.

In addition, departmental policy requires prisons to serve meals in an orderly manner, taking food flavor, texture, temperature, appearance, and palatability into consideration. Regulations also generally require the department to provide three meals each day, two of which must be served hot. Prisons may vary the two-hot-meals-per-day requirement to accommodate religious observances, religious meals programs, and prison emergencies.

Food Service

The departmental food administrator (food administrator) is the chief policymaker for the department's food services program. The food administrator monitors meal programs throughout the State to ensure the department follows state regulations and policies regarding meals. Some of the food administrator's additional duties include developing food service policies for the incarcerated population's feeding programs within the prisons; assisting prisons in acquiring personnel, food, equipment, and supplies; ensuring compliance with food safety standards; and performing audits of prison food service programs. The food administrator is responsible for nutritional analysis of the

department's menus ensuring proper nutrition and caloric intake for the incarcerated population. However, the food administrator relies on the chief dietitian to analyze the menu to ensure nutritional adequacy.

According to the department, the food administrator prepares a statewide standardized menu based on acceptable nutritional standards identifying all food items with specific nutritional requirements, which is then approved by the chief of dietary services. The food administrator and the chief of dietary services make sure each menu's nutritional content meets the recommended dietary allowance, the caloric needs of the incarcerated population, and dietary reference intakes as established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Science.

The department distributes menus based on a 13-week quarter-long cycle. The menu schedule runs sequentially from Week 1 through Week 6, then repeats the same menus for Weeks 7 through 12. At Week 13, the full cycle restarts with a fresh Week 1 to cover the end of the quarter.¹ After menus are distributed, each prison orders any necessary items needed to fulfill that menu from California Correctional Training and Rehabilitation Authority (CALCTRA)—a self-supporting, customer-focused business that produces goods and services for the various departments of the State of California and other governmental entities—or another approved contractor from a quarterly delivery schedule.² The department is CALCTRA's largest customer accounting for \$177.1 million or 62.2 percent of all sales in fiscal year 2023–2024. If CALCTRA offers the items needed, the department must purchase them from CALCTRA. CALCTRA then delivers the ordered items multiple times a week to each prison. However, if CALCTRA does not have an item, the department may use an approved contractor. If it is not possible to use an approved contractor, the department may seek delegated purchasing authority from the California Department of General Services.

The department's 31 prisons each operate their own food service departments staffed by a variety of incarcerated people and civil service food service employees. Correctional food managers at each prison recruit, hire, and train employees to function in a correctional environment. Each prison employs one dietitian who is responsible for conducting nutrition assessments, consultations with patients, and meetings with on-site staff and regional administrators as needed.

If a prison has problems obtaining any of the items on the menu, food managers at the prisons can make changes to the menu and

1. Prior to July 2023, prisons were given PDF versions of the menus and were responsible for calculating their needs on a four-week cycle.

2. Senate Bill 157 was approved by the Governor on September 17, 2025. The bill renamed the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) as California Correctional Training and Rehabilitation Authority (CALCTRA).

seek appropriate substitutions. The registered dietitian at the prison ensures the incarcerated population receives the proper number of macronutrients and micronutrients. The dietitian also ensures that any necessary substitutions have similar calorie counts.

Kitchens in Prisons

The department faces many challenges relative to food services, including its limited food budget; limited kitchen infrastructure consisting of compact kitchens, which not only limit the methods in which food can be prepared but also lack appliances commonly found in commercial kitchens; the tight regulation of knives and other kitchen tools, which makes on-site food preparation more challenging; and staffing difficulties influenced by concerns about safety and the public stigma of working in a correctional environment. These challenges limit the way food in a prison setting can be prepared.

Food in prisons can be prepared in three ways: (1) a cook-serve system in which the food is cooked and served on the same day; (2) a cook-chill system in which up to a three-day inventory of cooked food can be on hand; or (3) a combination of these two methods. Cook-serve kitchens are divided into functional production areas that include a main production floor, a vegetable preparation room, a bakery, a butcher area, storerooms, refrigerators, and freezers. The food is typically cooked 30 minutes before serving time and placed on serving trays, which are standardized metal containers used in commercial kitchens for cooking, storing, and serving food. Trays are then added to the serving line from which each incarcerated person is served.

The cook-chill system is a departure from the cook-serve method; kitchen staff prepare several days' worth of entrées to be stored in a blast chiller that initiates a rapid cooling process. The blast chiller reduces the food temperature to less than 41 degrees Fahrenheit within two hours by rapidly circulating cold air.³ The food is stored in the blast chiller until it is served. In the cook-chill system, components of a meal may be produced either on two different days or on two different shifts on the same day. When the meal is ready to be served, it is transported to a rethermalization unit, which is a specially designed oven that uses forced air to speed up the heating process, similar to a convection oven.

All four of the prisons we reviewed—CSP-Sacramento, CSP-Corcoran, Central California Women's Facility, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility—have cook-chill kitchens. The majority of prisons statewide utilize the cook-chill system to prepare some entrées and side items up to three days prior to service.

3. In this report, hereafter, temperatures will be expressed in Fahrenheit and abbreviated using standard scale references, e.g., 41°F.

The department offers several food options and a variety of menus for different types of diets including more than 14 menus for medical diets and four religious personal ethical diets. According to the department, the average cost per day of serving each incarcerated person in the department's prisons was \$4.85 per person during the audit period. However, the department only provides each prison a budgeted allotment of \$4.45 per person per day.

During our review period, from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2024, the department served approximately 92,563 incarcerated people three meals a day. Throughout this time, as depicted in Figure 1 on the next page, the department accommodated an average of 1,513 individuals with kosher diets, 1,028 individuals with religious meat alternative diets, 541 individuals with vegetarian diets, and 250 individuals with plant-based diets. In total, approximately 3,332 incarcerated individuals requested a religious personal ethical diet during the review period. Over the same time period, the department also served an average of 14,433 incarcerated individuals a medical diet, which may include the heart-healthy diet typically served at the department's medical treatment centers. These incarcerated people are served prepackaged meals similar to what the greater population receives.

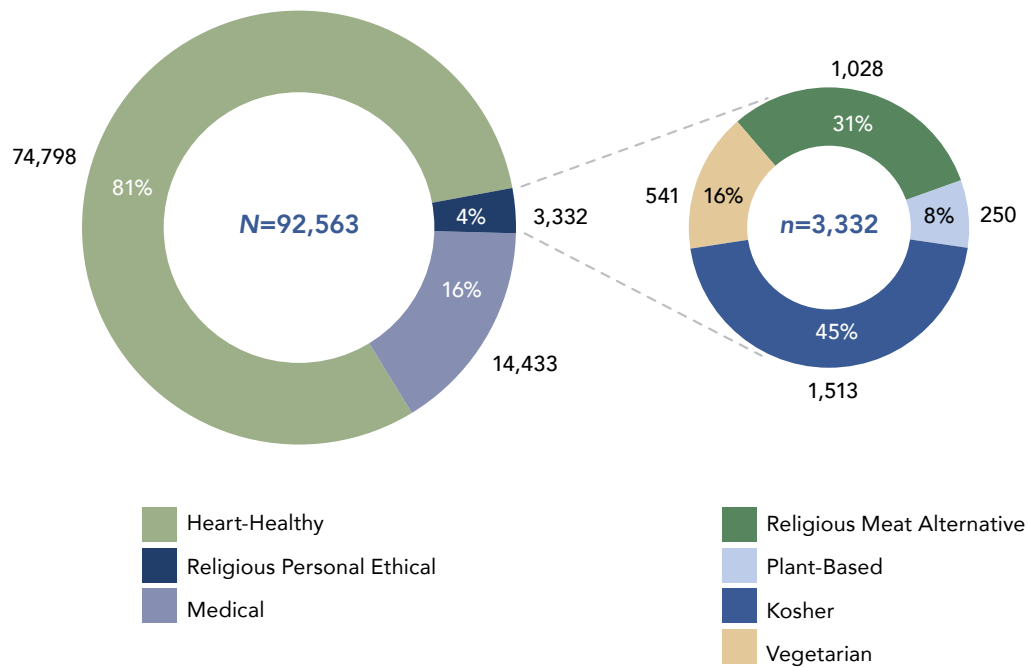
The diet served to approximately 74,798 individuals, or 81 percent of the incarcerated population, is referred to as the heart-healthy diet.⁴ The heart-healthy diet is the foundation for all other dietary development and modifications. The menus based on this diet follow a "healthy U.S.-style eating pattern" as recommended by the United States Drug Administration's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025*.⁵ The heart-healthy diet is generally pork-free because no pork or pork derivatives are served in the prisons, with the exception of fire camps.

In September 2018, the Governor approved Senate Bill 1138 (SB 1138), which required the department to provide each incarcerated person with sufficient plain and wholesome food that is most conducive to good health and must include the availability of plant-based meals—meals that contain no animal products or byproducts, including meat, poultry, fish, dairy, or eggs. Likely as a result of SB 1138, starting in July 2023, the department introduced a new plant-based protein, produced by the California Prison Industry Authority (now CALCTRA), aimed to meet the requirements of the bill. The new pea protein is vegan-friendly and halal

4. A heart-healthy diet is the foundation for health maintenance. The heart-healthy diet was adopted by the department in 1999 and updated in 2005 to the "CDC heart-healthy diet." In 2019, the heart-healthy menu was introduced via a four-week cycle, using the current healthy eating pattern as recommended by the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The four-week cycle was implemented to allow appropriate forecasting and reduction of waste, and to provide improved variety to the incarcerated population. There was an increased focus on adding fruits and vegetables, and the identification of carbohydrates that could be exchanged with healthier options to enhance portion control for incarcerated people living with diabetes.

5. California Correctional Health Care Services Medical Diet Manual (2023).

Figure 1. The Department's Average Population From January 2022 Through December 2024 and the Different Types of Diets That Were Served



Note: Heart-healthy diet meals serve as the foundation for all other dietary development and modifications. The heart-healthy diet, when carefully planned, can meet 100 percent of the dietary reference intakes for most nutrients, averaged weekly.

Religious personal ethical diets are offered by the department to accommodate incarcerated people with approved religious, personal, or dietary needs.

Medical diet meals provided in prison health care facilities are prescribed for medical purposes only. Medically prescribed diets take precedence over religious meals and other food preferences.

The religious meat alternative program provides vegetarian meals for breakfast and lunch and a meal that includes certified halal meat for dinner. These meals are purchased from the mandatory state contractor.

Plant-based meals contain no animal products or byproducts, including meat, poultry, fish, dairy, or eggs.

The kosher diet program provides prepackaged frozen meals that contain certified kosher food and are purchased from the mandatory state contractor.

Vegetarian meals contain milk products and eggs (lacto-ovo), providing "alternate entrées" in place of the meat-based, heart-healthy diet.

Source: The Office of the Inspector General.

certified for incarcerated individuals on meat alternative diets. The new plant-based protein is also certified kosher.⁶

Nutritional and caloric needs of the incarcerated population are assessed through menu planning. A healthy diet consists of 2,200 to 2,600 calories for men and 1,800 to 2,200 calories for women. Protein accounts for 10 to 35 percent of calories, with 45 to 65 percent of calories from carbohydrates and 20 to 35 percent of calories from fat. The target sodium intake is equal to or less than 2,300 mg per day and is designed to align with heart-healthy standards, but that number can be challenging to meet given the amount of processed food available for incarcerated people to purchase from the canteen. According to the department, incarcerated women who are pregnant receive extra milk, fruit, and water based on trimester-specific caloric needs.

Religious Personal Ethical Diet Meals in Prisons

Regulations require prisons to make reasonable efforts to accommodate incarcerated people who have been determined to require a religious personal ethical diet. The department offers four options for religious dietary needs: vegetarian, plant-based, religious meat alternative, and religious kosher. As shown in Figure 1 on page 5, approximately 3,332 individuals, or 4 percent of the incarcerated population, were served a religious personal ethical diet from January 2022 through December 2024. Of those receiving a religious personal ethical diet, 1,513 people, or 45 percent, received the religious kosher diet; 1,028 people, or 31 percent, received the religious meat alternative diet; 541 people, or 16 percent, received the vegetarian diet; and 250 people, or 8 percent, received the plant-based diet.



Photo 1. Halal meals in original packaging showing certified halal stamp. Source: OIG audit staff.

Vegetarian meals contain milk products, eggs, and other alternatives to meat. Plant-based meals contain no animal products or byproducts such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy, or eggs. The religious meat alternative program provides a vegetarian meal for breakfast and lunch and certified halal meat for dinner. As shown in Photo 1 on the left, the original packaging displays the certified halal stamp.

The department began offering a religious kosher diet in November 2003, after entering into a settlement agreement with an incarcerated person who sought

6. State of California, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, “New healthy food option put to the test” (March 25, 2023).

meals consistent with the dietary laws and obligations of his faith. The department settled the lawsuit agreeing to establish a kosher diet program at the prison where the incarcerated individual was housed at the time of the settlement and agreed to provide a kosher meal on a daily basis.⁷ Moreover, the department agreed to make efforts within two years of signing the settlement agreement to accommodate all kosher-observant Jewish incarcerated people housed in all its prisons. Regardless of faith, regulations require the department to provide a diet of kosher-certified items to participating incarcerated people at all prisons. Religious kosher meals are prepackaged, frozen meals with certified kosher food purchased from the mandatory state contractor. As shown in Photo 2 on the right, kosher meals arrive in individually packaged frozen trays marked as certified kosher. The meals are supplemented with fresh fruit, vegetables, salad, salad dressing, and milk as supplied by the department's prisons. The kosher meal budget cost is \$13.50 a day per individual. As depicted in Figure 1 on page 5, approximately 1,513 individuals, or 45 percent of incarcerated people who participate in a religious diet, receive a kosher diet.



Photo 2. Kosher meal served at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Source: OIG audit staff.

Participation in a religious personal ethical diet program requires an incarcerated person to submit a form requesting to participate in a specific religious personal ethical diet program. A chaplain, or the designated Religious Review Committee representative, must approve the incarcerated person's request. Canteen purchases made by incarcerated people who receive one of the four religious personal ethical diets are recorded in the Incarcerated Meal Tracking System, which helps ensure these individuals are served their dietary meals, and tracks whether canteen purchases comply with the incarcerated person's approved religious personal ethical diet. Incarcerated people may request to withdraw or change their religious personal ethical diet, but no more than one change is permitted within a six-month period.

Medical Diet Offered to the Incarcerated Population

Physicians may order a therapeutic or medical diet such as a gluten-free, hepatic, low-sodium, bariatric, dialysis, or renal nondialysis diet for

7. *Victor Wayne Cooper v. State of California* (2003).

certain incarcerated people.⁸ The average daily cost of medical meals ranges from \$7.75 to \$10.00 per incarcerated person. For those in hospital care, the cost increases to \$13.50 per day.

Medical diet meals are prepared in medical kitchens that maintain a higher standard of cleanliness and efficiency largely because medical kitchens operate under regulatory requirements imposed for a health care facility. To comply with regulatory requirements, the medical kitchen equipment must be in good condition or be repaired in a timely manner by plant operations.

Three prisons—California Medical Facility, California Health Care Facility, and Central California Women’s Facility—cook food from scratch in their medical kitchens. This involves preparing dishes from whole, fresh ingredients rather than reheating frozen meals to create medical meals, and independently validating the nutritional adequacy of their locally created menus. All other prisons rely on frozen medical meals.

Sanitation and Maintenance in Prison Kitchens

Generally, the department uses scullery machines to wash and sanitize pans and trays after serving food to the incarcerated population. Departmental policy requires kitchen workers to record the temperature of the scullery machines’ final rinse on a physical log at least once a day.

State law requires that all food-facility premises be kept clean, fully operative, and in working condition. When kitchen equipment is in disrepair and requires maintenance, prison staff complete a work order request. As we discuss in the results section of this report, timely maintenance of kitchen equipment is a challenge. Some prisons have aging infrastructure and equipment, which increases the risk of equipment failure and may affect operations if essential equipment does not function properly for an extended period. The department’s *Master Plan Annual Report for Calendar Year 2025* notes the special repair fund has a backlog of scheduled repairs in the amount of \$1.8 billion dollars. We found that the estimated cost of kitchen repairs at all prisons for calendar year 2025 totaled approximately \$883 million dollars, but the kitchens were only approved for \$47.6 million in the master plan annual report.

Canteen Services in Prisons

At each active prison, the department must maintain and operate a canteen from which incarcerated people can purchase toiletries, snacks, stationery, and personal items. Incarcerated people are limited

8. For patients receiving routine renal dialysis or continuous renal replacement therapy, a renal diet controls protein and electrolytes to slow the progression of azotemia and electrolyte imbalances. Azotemia is a condition in which excess nitrogen, creatine, and other waste products build up in the blood.

to withdrawing up to \$220 from their accounts for canteen purchases depending on their privilege group. Canteen procedures that establish guidelines for the incarcerated population's use, storage, accountability, and ordering of supplies are outlined in departmental policy. However, access to the canteen is sometimes limited, for example during a lockdown when canteen purchases may or may not be permitted at the warden's discretion.

The canteen also provides incarcerated people with an opportunity to purchase food items that they do not typically receive. However, we observed that much of the food offered in the canteen is not the healthiest. For example, we observed one prison offered instant noodles, which contained 1,160 milligrams of sodium, an amount that is more than half of the 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day targeted by the department's heart-healthy diet. In some cases, incarcerated people use items purchased in the canteen to supplement the food provided by the prison, either because they do not like the food and therefore do not eat it, or because they feel they did not receive enough food. Although "junk food" offered in the canteen remains one of the most readily available coping mechanisms in the carceral setting, the regular consumption of certain foods sold in the canteen is not advisable for long-term health.

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Results

Our review examined food service conditions, practices, and oversight in eight key areas and measured how well each prison complied with state law, state regulations, departmental policy, and best practices.

Figure 2. Eight Key Areas We Reviewed



Source: The Office of the Inspector General.

Overall, we found that the prisons we tested met the nutritional needs of the incarcerated population by providing each incarcerated person with necessary calories on a daily basis. Furthermore, when incarcerated people requested specialized diets for religious reasons or when they required a medical diet, the prisons we tested generally accommodated individuals with those needs. The quality of the food is subjective, and for the most part, prisons provided nutritional meals that met the heart-healthy diet requirements.

We did identify several areas of concern, which we discuss in brief here, and in further detail below. Most concerning was the lack of sanitation and hygiene in the kitchens we tested. At three of the four prisons we tested, we identified poor cleaning methods and a lack of personal hygiene items, such as hand soap and towels. We also found expired food items and poor food and kitchen storage practices in some locations. Kitchen equipment was in poor condition in many of the kitchens we tested, and we found that work orders for equipment repairs were backlogged and subject to budgetary constraints. Prison staff also failed to properly complete logs to confirm that cleaning had been completed at required intervals, and temperature logs to confirm that meal trays had been cleaned at temperatures recommended for food safety.

We identified safety concerns stemming from poor inventory control and tracking of kitchen equipment and utensils, which can place incarcerated people and staff at risk when incarcerated people modify these items to create weapons. We also had concerns about food waste and its impact on the health of the incarcerated population, and the sale of canteen food items that were not heart-healthy options to supplement the meals provided by prisons. Lastly, we found poor controls over the approval of religious personal ethical diets, which have a higher cost and can impact prison food budgets.

Chapter 1. The OIG Identified Significant Noncompliance With Sanitation and Hygiene Standards in the Kitchens at Three of the Four Prisons We Reviewed

Overall, we found that CSP-Sacramento, CSP-Corcoran, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility showed significant noncompliance with sanitation and hygiene standards in their kitchens. As we discuss in detail below, in each of the four prisons we visited, we found poor sanitation practices with handwashing, ware-washing, food storage, and general sanitation and cleanliness. In contrast, we found that Central California Women’s Facility demonstrated strong compliance with sanitation and hygiene standards. Unsanitary conditions in prison kitchens drastically increase the risk of gastrointestinal illness. Foodborne illnesses caused by unsanitary conditions in a single kitchen have the potential to cause mass outbreaks within the prison. Furthermore, incarcerated people may carry out infections originating from unsanitary food preparation into the community, thereby resulting in public health risks.

To evaluate the sanitation and cleanliness of the four prisons we reviewed, we used a checklist of basic hygiene requirements from California Correctional Health Care Services. We identified 11 general sanitation and hygiene areas to review: employee appearance, employee performance, food storage conditions, chemical cleaner management, refrigerator maintenance, freezer maintenance, environmental maintenance and safety, sanitation and cleanliness of kitchen and serving areas, ice machine sanitation and maintenance, compliance with standard operating procedures, and ware-washing area maintenance. For each area we reviewed, our auditors identified specific compliance requirements and determined whether the prison met those requirements at the time of our on-site observations. Our complete hygiene checklist with the hygiene checklist averages is available in Appendix B of this report.

During our visit to Central California Women’s Facility, we found the prison demonstrated compliance with 94 percent of the sanitation and hygiene measures we identified at the main kitchen. The other three prisons’ main kitchens exhibited areas of poor performance and lower levels of compliance. CSP-Corcoran showed overall compliance with 75 percent of the measures we identified on our checklist, CSP-Sacramento showed overall compliance with 69 percent of the measures we identified, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility showed overall compliance with just 65 percent of the measures we reviewed.

As outlined in departmental policy, handwashing and hand hygiene are critical to preventing the spread of pathogens that can cause illness.

Employees must wash their hands before preparing food; as often as necessary during food preparation to prevent cross-contamination when changing tasks; and before dispensing food, serving food, or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area. To facilitate these requirements, state law also requires that handwashing stations provide handwashing cleanser and either sanitary, single-use towels or a heated-air hand-drying device. Moreover, every food facility must be kept clean, fully operational, and in good condition.

Equally critical is the responsibility to maintain food safety protocols for storage and labeling. The California Retail Food Code generally requires that all containers holding food that has been removed from its original packaging be identified with the common name of the food. This requirement inherently necessitates that employees check food items to ensure they are free of expired products. Furthermore, it is essential to keep all equipment and utensils clean, fully operative, and in good condition. The Food Service Handbook requires that refrigerators and freezers remain clean, with stored items clearly labeled and dated. The department must ensure all facilities remain clean and sanitary by implementing a cleaning program or schedule, providing necessary cleaning supplies and equipment, and ensuring employees understand and complete cleaning duties. Departmental policy states that employees must store dry goods using the First-In, First-Out (FIFO) method, ensuring products are rotated out and the oldest inventory is used first, based on labeling. Below we identify the most significant deficiencies we observed at each prison.

CSP-Sacramento

During our on-site visit to CSP-Sacramento, we observed significant sanitation deficiencies in handwashing and food storage protocols. In the main production kitchen, hand sinks lacked soap and paper towels, sinks were clogged and not draining properly, and employees wore gloves but did not wash their hands. We found food workers complied with 55 percent of applicable measures for employee performance. We also identified concerns about food storage. Food was stored on shelving that was too close to walls, which hindered access to the back walls for cleaning. Storage conditions of 75°F and 62 percent humidity were outside acceptable ranges.⁹ The prison did not properly maintain a cleaning schedule for the storage locations. Some food items did not have the dates displayed on packaging, and therefore, the manufacture or packaged date could not be determined to establish the expiration date of the food. On some food items, Julian dates were used to display the date of manufacture or packaging; however, employees were unable

9. Based on the Food Services Handbook, storeroom temperatures of 50°F to 70°F should be maintained in areas used to store dry goods to help preserve shelf life and product freshness. In addition, as a best practice, a storeroom relative humidity of between 50 percent and 60 percent should be maintained.

to read or interpret these Julian dates.¹⁰ We found the prison complied with 73 percent of applicable measures for food storage. Storage areas for cleaning chemicals were adequate; however, schedules for kitchen staff to clean chemical storage areas were unavailable, and staff stated they only cleaned on an as-needed basis. As a result, we found the prison met 86 percent of applicable measures for chemical storage.

CSP-Sacramento's kitchens also had deficiencies in the refrigeration of food items. Some of the deficiencies we found included a lack of documentation of the refrigerator cleaning schedule, ice buildup on chill blast fans, and damaged door gaskets. The recorded temperature for milk storage exceeded expected holding temperatures. For example, the prison stored milk in refrigerators at temperatures of 44°F instead of the recommended temperature of 40°F. During our visit, incarcerated kitchen workers failed to follow FIFO procedures by pulling newer products from refrigerators instead of using the oldest items first. As a result, the prison complied with only 65 percent of applicable measures for refrigeration.

As shown in Photos 3, 4, and 5, on the next page, we also identified significant concerns with CSP-Sacramento's environmental maintenance of its kitchen, such as clogged drains; leaking fixtures; visible mildew on ceilings; peeling paint which we found had been painted over by the second day of our visit; missing protective light covers, and insufficient or inaccessible eye wash stations across facilities.¹¹ As a result, we found the prison complied with only 58 percent of the environmental measures we reviewed.

Kitchen serving areas revealed additional compliance failures, such as a lack of documented cleaning schedules for satellite kitchens, which are located on some yards; these kitchens were only cleaned on an as-needed basis. Satellite kitchens receive fully prepared food from the central main kitchen; staff then store, reheat, portion, and serve the meals to incarcerated people locally. We also found residue on trays that indicated the trays had not been properly sanitized, missing signage indicating nonoperational equipment, and a lack of sanitizing solution of an approved concentration as specified in Health and Safety Code 114099.6. We found the prison complied with only 68 percent of applicable measures for kitchen serving area procedures.

10. A Julian date is an ordinal date that displays date of production or packaging using the numerical day of the year rather than the traditional month-day-year format. The most common Julian date format used for food packaging is the YJJJ format, in which January 1 is represented as 001 and December 31 as 365 (or 366 in a leap year). For example, 6001 represents January 1, 2026, in which "6" indicates the year and "001" indicates the first day of that year.

11. Eye wash stations are important in kitchens because they provide immediate treatment for eye exposure to hot grease, food particles, and chemicals that can burn and damage eye tissue upon contact.



Photo 3. Missing tile and dripping hose lines in kitchen at CSP-Sacramento. Source: OIG audit staff.

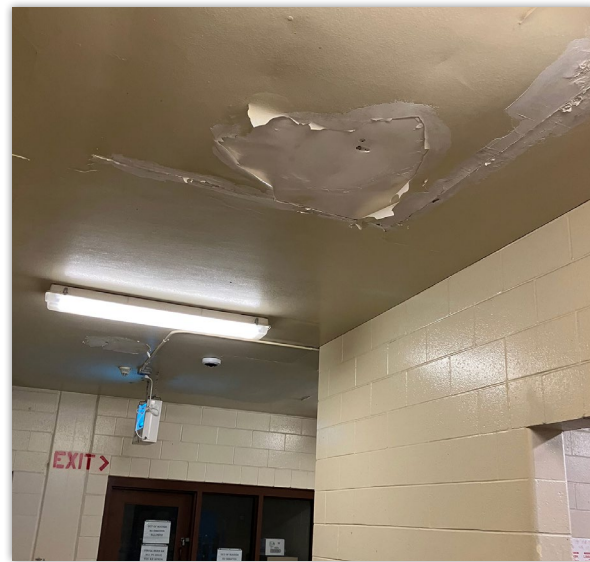


Photo 4. Peeling paint on ceiling in kitchen at CSP-Sacramento. Source: OIG audit staff.



Photo 5. Mold or mildew on ceiling at CSP-Sacramento. Source: OIG audit staff.

CSP-Sacramento's main kitchen lacked a standard cleaning schedule for ware-washing operations—specifically, it lacked cleaning checklists or logs for cleaning the scullery machine. Moreover, the scullery machine failed to provide alarm alerts when it was low on cleaning detergent. Kitchen staff instead relied on the absence of suds to identify when they needed to refill the machine with detergent, which likely resulted in items not being fully sanitized. In addition, hot water temperatures in the scullery machine did not exceed 160°F, falling well below the recommended range of 180°F to 194°F. As a result, the prison kitchen complied with just 57 percent of applicable measures for ware-washing procedures. Furthermore, auditors tested ice machine logs and discovered incomplete cleaning logs for ice machines in two locations in the prison. One ice machine had no cleaning log for three months, and a work order had been submitted for its repair. Given these shortcomings, utensils and trays may not be adequately sanitized as shown in Photo 6 below.



Photo 6. Greasy tray in kitchen at CSP-Sacramento. Source: OIG audit staff.

Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility

During our visit to Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, we noted poor performance within the kitchen areas we observed. Hand sink water temperature was recorded at 50°F, well shy of the required temperature of 100°F, and there was a lack of soap and hand towels. Our auditors observed that kitchen workers did not always comply with hygiene requirements. Specifically, we observed that several kitchen workers did not perform proper handwashing prior to serving meals. Kitchen workers also did not regularly change gloves, which could potentially cause food contamination. If a kitchen worker touches raw meat, and then raw

vegetables without changing gloves or washing hands, the risk of food contamination increases. In the main kitchen, we observed that kitchen workers did not demonstrate proper handwashing and did not follow proper hand-hygiene procedures. During our observation at one of the satellite kitchens, only one out of approximately five kitchen workers washed their hands. We found that kitchen staff were only in compliance with 40 percent of applicable measures for employee performance in the prison's main kitchen and were in compliance with 80 percent of applicable measures in the satellite kitchen.

When we reviewed the prison's food storage compliance, we found the food storeroom contained dented cans, no designated area to separate damaged goods, and shelves that were not placed far enough away from walls to allow for proper cleaning. There were no other significant areas of noncompliance for food storage. We found the prison's main kitchen complied with 82 percent of applicable measures for this area.



Photo 7. Chemical test strip showing high concentration of sanitizer. Source: OIG audit staff.

We found very few issues with storage of cleaning chemicals at the prison's satellite kitchens. However, in the main kitchen, chemical storeroom cleaning supplies were not stored properly above the floor. Face shields and goggles were also not available in the main kitchen. As shown in Photo 7 on the left, chemical test strips used to determine the concentration of quaternary ammonium sanitizer in a sanitation bucket indicated high concentration levels between 300 and 400, exceeding the 220 parts-per-million minimum required by the Food Services Handbook. Furthermore, neither kitchen possessed necessary face shields or goggles required for cleaning tasks. We found the prison's main kitchen complied with 43 percent of applicable measures for chemical storage.

The main kitchen and satellite kitchens had several environmental safety and maintenance concerns that posed significant

risks. In the main kitchen, staff did not check fire extinguishers on a monthly basis as required by policy, and pipes and faucets leaked throughout kitchen locations. Several light fixtures lacked safety covers or were nonoperational, cleaning buckets were not labeled to identify their contents, and eyewash stations were not available in the main kitchen. At the prison's satellite kitchen, we observed drains that did not function properly, and we identified pipes and faucets that leaked. We also observed areas where the walls were dirty and the paint was either chipped or peeling. Several light fixtures were nonoperational

and lacked safety covers. A food transport cart in the satellite kitchen was missing a door, and egg-wash buckets were being used as detergent containers because workers had removed available sanitation buckets. As shown in Photo 8 on the right, we observed dirty towels drying in hand sinks rather than in closed containers. Overall, the main kitchen complied with 61 percent of applicable measures for environmental safety and maintenance, and the satellite kitchen complied with 53 percent of applicable measures.

We identified several concerns with basic sanitation protocols at both the prison's main kitchen and satellite kitchen. In the main kitchen, we found food contact surfaces were not sanitized after use, and utensils were rinsed in a dirty kettle that had previously been used for food preparation. As shown in Photo 9 below, several cutting boards were unclean and had deep cuts where bacteria could accumulate. Floors and walls in work areas were dirty and had visible dirt and debris. Equipment was nonoperational and was not properly marked. Furthermore, buckets with sanitizer solution



Photo 8. Dirty towels drying in hand sinks at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Source: OIG audit staff.



Photo 9. Cutting boards with deep cuts at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Source: OIG audit staff.

were not labeled, and garbage containers were not covered. Staff in the main kitchen also did not log thermometer calibration records. In the prison's satellite kitchen, the scullery machine had a malfunctioning gauge and was not properly identified as nonoperational, and no work order request for repair had been created. Unfortunately, kitchen workers still used the machine, but because the gauge was not working properly, kitchen workers could not ensure dishes and utensils were properly sanitized. Overall, for sanitation protocols, the main kitchen complied with 56 percent of applicable measures, and the satellite kitchen complied with 78 percent of applicable measures.



Photo 10. Yellowed ice scoop at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Source: OIG audit staff.

We also observed the ice machines at the main kitchen. As shown in Photo 10 on the left, the scoops kitchen workers used to scoop ice from the machine were stained yellow and were unsanitary. The exterior of the ice machine was dirty and covered with dust, and the ice-dispensing chute was unclean. We found the main kitchen was in compliance with only 20 percent of applicable measures for the condition of the ice machines, and the satellite kitchen was in compliance with only 29 percent of applicable measures.

We also identified several concerns regarding ware-washing in the main kitchen. When we reviewed cleaning logs for the kitchens, the correctional food manager informed our auditors that kitchen staff had not completed any cleaning logs in 2024. This is concerning because if regular cleaning schedules are

not maintained, prison staff cannot confirm how frequently the kitchens are cleaned or whether they are cleaned at all. The main kitchen scullery machine lacked automatic chemical dispensing and audible or visible alarms to notify staff when chemicals needed to be added to the machine. The scullery machine also lacked operational data plates to display temperatures during washing, rinsing, and sanitizing cycles, and did not indicate water pressure or conveyor speed. During our visit, one of the scullery machines was not operational, and kitchen staff used a manual process to sanitize trays and utensils. Despite using a three-compartment sink, water temperatures failed to meet the required thresholds in the range of 180°F to 194°F, and cooking utensils were not consistently cleaned. The main kitchen was in compliance with 36 percent of applicable measures for ware-washing requirements.

CSP-Corcoran (COR)

Employee performance was one area of concern at CSP-Corcoran's main kitchen. Specifically, kitchen workers failed to wash their hands before meal service and wore gloves with holes, which increases the potential for food contamination. Overall, we found that employee performance in the main kitchen complied with 77 percent of applicable measures.

In the food storeroom, prison food services management staff could not interpret the Julian date printed on labeled food items, and shelving was not placed far enough away from walls to permit adequate ventilation and easy cleaning. For bulk food items stored for multiple days of use, kitchen staff did not have regularly scheduled inspections to discard expired food; kitchens lacked cleaning schedules for scooping utensils

used in open bulk foods; and the scoops were not stored in a clean, dry, and secure space. The main kitchen's food storeroom procedures were in compliance with 75 percent of applicable measures we tested.

We also identified concerns regarding the main kitchen's compliance with required refrigerator conditions. Specifically, the doors and gaskets of a refrigerator in the main kitchen were in disrepair. A refrigerator and a freezer both lacked emergency internal door release mechanisms to ensure kitchen workers could avoid being trapped inside. As shown in Photos 11 and 12 below, we also found rotten tomatoes and other produce



Photo 11. Rotten tomatoes at CSP-Corcoran.
Source: OIG audit staff.

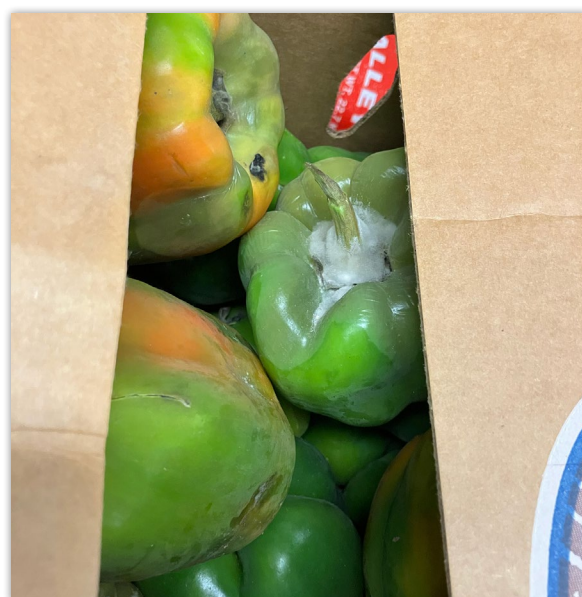


Photo 12. Moldy Peppers at CSP-Corcoran.
Source: OIG audit staff.

in a refrigerator. Overall, the prison's main kitchen was in compliance with 75 percent of applicable measures for refrigerator procedures and with 70 percent of applicable measures for freezer procedures.

There were several concerns regarding environmental maintenance issues at both the main kitchen and the satellite kitchen. At both kitchens, we observed clogged floor drains that backed up and created a safety hazard for kitchen workers, and leaking faucets in the bakery section of the main kitchen. Floors and walls were in poor condition, with cracks in the walls and on the floor, and paint on the walls that was peeling and chipping. Several light fixtures in the kitchens were not working, which also posed a safety concern. We found mold on the ceilings, spiderwebs and cobwebs, and fly traps holding dead flies. We found that for environmental maintenance, the prison was in compliance with 65 percent of applicable measures in the main kitchen and with



Photo 13. Mold or mildew on ceiling in kitchen at CSP-Corcoran. Source: OIG audit staff.



Photo 14. Hole in scullery ceiling at CSP-Corcoran. Source: OIG audit staff.

68 percent of applicable measures in the satellite kitchen. General cleaning and sanitation were also areas of concern. For example, cleaning schedules in the kitchens were communicated verbally between kitchen staff and incarcerated workers, with no documentation to confirm cleaning and sanitation had been completed. We observed the kitchen floors were not clean, and the walls and ceiling were in poor condition. As shown in Photos 13 and 14 on the left, there was visible mold or mildew on the ceiling, and a portion of the ceiling was missing, leaving a hole. We identified equipment that was nonoperational, yet kitchen staff had not used lockout tags on the equipment. Garbage containers were left uncovered, and we observed kitchen workers not wearing gloves as required by policy. The prison was in compliance with 63 percent of applicable measures in the main kitchen and 71 percent compliance in the satellite kitchen.

The scullery machine lacked visible or audible alarms to indicate deficiencies in detergent or sanitizing solution delivery; hot water peaked at only 178°F instead of the required level of 180°F, and food services trays and pans were towel-dried rather than air-dried in both kitchens. Moreover, the portable sink in the satellite kitchen was not self-draining. These ware-washing deficiencies resulted in a compliance rate of 79 percent for the main kitchen and 60 percent for the satellite kitchen.

Central California Women's Facility (CCWF)

In stark contrast to the other three prisons, Central California Women's Facility demonstrated better compliance in the areas we reviewed. For example, employee appearance, employee performance, chemical cleaner management, refrigerator maintenance, and sanitation and cleanliness of serving areas were in full compliance with all applicable measures for those sections on our checklist. Similarly, the satellite kitchen also demonstrated full compliance with the checklist in areas including employee appearance, employee performance, environmental maintenance and safety, sanitation and cleanliness of serving areas, and ice machine sanitation and maintenance.

Although the prison did exhibit some areas of noncompliance, the issues we noted were minor, and the prison generally met most applicable measures for the other sections on our checklist. Cleaning cloths were stored in detergent buckets, and sanitizer buckets were not labeled with the date and time to ensure use within four hours; however, the buckets were appropriately labeled to distinguish between detergent and sanitizer. Cleaning schedules for refrigerators and freezers were unavailable. Lastly, the water temperature for ware-washing of kitchen items did not always reach the recommended final rinse temperature of 180°F, and the scullery machine in the satellite kitchen did not automatically dispense detergents and sanitizers and lacked an audible or visual alarm to notify the operator of insufficient detergent or sanitizer levels, which raised the concern that trays and kitchen equipment were not being properly sanitized. Overall, Central California Women's Facility serves as an example of properly maintained kitchen services in a prison.

Inconsistent Policy Frameworks and Sanitation Practices Across Prisons

We found the department lacked a consistent statewide policy for kitchen sanitation, and each prison differed from the other prisons we visited. The department's headquarters has minimal oversight of kitchen sanitation in its prisons and assigns the responsibility for maintaining proper hygiene standards to individual prisons. This is likely why we observed inconsistencies at the prisons we visited, with CSP-Sacramento exhibiting significant challenges, and Central California Women's Facility demonstrating that sanitary conditions could effectively be maintained. Without standard procedures and oversight by the department's headquarters, prisons will continue to have inconsistent sanitation practices, which can jeopardize the health and safety of the incarcerated population and staff. Poor sanitation in prison kitchens can lead to contamination and the risk of foodborne illness that likely can be prevented with standard cleaning procedures.

Recommendations

- The department's headquarters should provide stronger oversight and monitoring of compliance with sanitation and hygiene protocols in its departmental kitchens by performing periodic audits and inspections.
- The department should develop clear policies that set forth the frequency at which specific cleaning tasks must be completed.
- The department should schedule Julian date training for all kitchen staff and provide access to vendor reference charts displaying how to interpret the Julian date on packaging. The department should also distribute a guide with estimated spoilage timelines for common food items.

Chapter 2. Kitchen Equipment Was in Poor Condition or Was Inoperable, Likely Due to Work Backlogs, Budget Constraints, and Weak Headquarters Oversight

We reviewed kitchen equipment work orders at four prisons to determine whether equipment was being repaired in a timely manner. We found that medical kitchens at the prisons we reviewed generally had operational equipment. At three prisons, CSP-Sacramento, CSP-Corcoran, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, departmental kitchens had one or more nonoperational equipment items, which could take weeks, months, and in some cases, years to repair.¹² Central California Women's Facility's departmental kitchens were the only kitchens we reviewed in which most or all equipment was working. Central California Women's Facility and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility were the only prisons we reviewed in which any nonoperational equipment was repaired in a timely manner. Headquarters does not conduct periodic oversight of the work order tracking system, and only Central California Women's Facility's operational procedures specify required completion timelines for corrective maintenance work orders. The financial resources available to fix or replace broken equipment are limited, which hampers the efforts of kitchen staff to serve thousands of incarcerated people each day.

The ability to perform infrastructure repairs and acquire replacements tied to critical assets such as scullery machines, walk-in refrigeration units, and steam kettles mainly depend on either the institution facility operations budget (also known as Program 27),¹³ or the special repair project funds.¹⁴ As demonstrated by the recent \$212K investment in a new scullery machine for the main kitchen at CSP-Corcoran, which was funded through the institution facility operations budget, these repairs are necessary but costly. The department experiences budget constraints across both the institution facility operations budget and the special repair project budgets; specifically, the special repair projects backlog is estimated to be approximately \$883 million dollars for kitchen repairs, but the kitchens were only approved for \$47.6 million in the *Master Plan Annual Report for Calendar Year 2025*. Because of these budget constraints, the number of work orders may increase as aging equipment breaks down more frequently without replacement.

12. *Departmental kitchen* refers to the main kitchens and satellite kitchens that are not medical kitchens operated by California Correctional Health Care Services.

13. *The institution facility operations budget* refers to the Program 27 funding. Prison maintenance funding is separated into three categories: contracts required for specialized maintenance, repair, and rental services in case of equipment breakdown; required annual fees to regulatory agencies; and parts and materials necessary to provide for the planned level of repairs and equipment replacements during the fiscal year.

14. *Special repair projects* are major system repairs or replacements resulting from system failure due either to unforeseen circumstances or end of useful life.

Departmental policy includes general guidelines for completing work orders to repair equipment and infrastructure items, and each prison has local operating procedures to provide guidance specific to the prison. We reviewed the local operating procedures for the four prisons we visited and found they were all different, particularly regarding completion times for kitchen equipment repairs. For example, Central California Women's Facility requires plant operations staff to complete equipment repairs within 30 days. However, the other three prisons did not include completion time frames in their local operating procedures. Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility requires plant operations staff to respond to a kitchen equipment work order within 24 business hours, but does not specify when the repair must be completed. However, local operating procedures for all four prisons indicate that emergency repairs in kitchens should be prioritized.

When we requested work order data from each of the four prisons, we found the department had been transitioning to a new case management system, which required us to adjust our testing periods at each prison based on the department's ability to provide information from its previous system, the Standard Automated Maintenance System, and the new system, Tririga. The OIG either analyzed data from the new Tririga-integrated workplace management system or the manually maintained work order logs kept by the kitchen as records of submissions to plant operations. This difference in testing methods, alongside the ongoing migration to Tririga at CSP-Sacramento, likely contributed to some of the work order issues we identified.

We selected a sample period at each prison to review work orders for the prison's departmental and medical kitchens.¹⁵ Two of the prisons we visited, CSP-Sacramento and CSP-Corcoran, had significant delays in processing work orders for kitchen equipment repairs. Specifically, during our review period for CSP-Sacramento, we found that departmental kitchens generated nearly 1,194 work orders to repair kitchen equipment, of which 332 work orders were still open for a year or

15. Because of the department's transition from the Standard Automated Maintenance System, an older computerized management system, to the Tririga system, we had to gather the datasets we used for testing from a variety of sources, and we had to adjust our work order review period for each prison. The data used to test CSP-Sacramento's departmental kitchens and medical kitchen were obtained from manual spreadsheets maintained by kitchen staff. Testing data for CSP-Corcoran's and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's departmental and medical kitchens were obtained from Tririga records. Data for Central California Women's Facility's departmental kitchens were obtained from Tririga records, while its medical kitchen data were obtained from manual spreadsheets maintained by kitchen staff. The testing periods for CSP-Sacramento's departmental kitchens spanned from January 4, 2022, through December 30, 2024, while the medical kitchen operated between March 8, 2022, and October 22, 2024. At CSP-Corcoran, testing was conducted from April 22, 2023, through December 24, 2024, for the departmental kitchen, and from August 8, 2023, through September 3, 2024, for the medical kitchen. Central California Women's Facility had a testing period from June 26, 2023, through December 19, 2024, for the departmental kitchen and from April 4, 2024, through December 26, 2024, for the medical kitchen. Finally, at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, the departmental kitchen was tested from February 9, 2024, through December 31, 2024, with the medical kitchen undergoing testing in April and December of 2024.

longer, from 2023 or before. For example, work orders for broken scullery machines in the prison's departmental kitchens were still open after two years, and a scullery machine was out of service during our on-site visit. In contrast, the medical kitchen had only 29 equipment work orders, with just three remaining open.

CSP-Corcoran also had challenges completing work orders for its departmental kitchens and medical kitchen. The departmental kitchens had submitted 503 equipment work orders, with 108 remaining open, while the medical kitchen had submitted 45 equipment work orders, of which 17 were still active. During our visit to CSP-Corcoran, we also noted areas that needed repairs, such as the ceiling and a floor drain; nonoperational equipment such as a blast chiller and an oven; and broken gaskets and inoperative emergency internal door release mechanisms in the freezer and refrigerator.

Central California Women's Facility and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility performed better than the other two prisons in processing work orders for their departmental and medical kitchens. Central California Women's Facility had a total of 774 work orders for departmental kitchens and 65 work orders for the medical kitchen, and both kitchens completed all work orders submitted during our review period. Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility also performed well in completing nearly 560 work orders for its departmental kitchens and 18 work orders for its medical kitchen during our review period. Nearly all work orders were closed within 30 days.

When we asked correctional food managers at CSP-Sacramento and CSP-Corcoran why so many work orders were open for an extended period of time, they stated the prisons faced budget challenges and challenges with ordering replacement parts. These issues could cause delays in repairing broken equipment.

In addition, as the department migrated to a new work order tracking system, there were some challenges in accessing data in the old system and reconciling the data from the two systems while prisons made the transition. Each prison has their own process for monitoring work orders, and there is minimal oversight from the department's headquarters concerning the completion of work orders. Each prison manages work orders and tracks completion rates using the Tririga system at the local level. Headquarters administers the Tririga system as a whole and monitors the system for functionality.

An efficient work order process helps operations run smoothly and maintains a functional environment. When important kitchen equipment remains out of service for too long, it increases the burden on kitchen operations. In some cases, kitchen staff must find alternative ways of managing tasks when the scullery machine is down, which can make daily operations more difficult.

Recommendation

- The department should designate staff at headquarters to perform statewide oversight and monitoring of the work order management process to ensure that work orders are completed in a timely manner. The department should establish reasonable completion time frames for work orders based on their priority and severity.

missing entries on nine of the days during our testing period, but we identified five missing items over 32 days, which included push brooms, mops, a toilet bowl brush, a mop and bucket combination, and masks. Central California Women's Facility did not have any deficiencies during our testing period.

Departmental policy requires kitchen tool inventory checks to be performed at the beginning and end of each work or class period, as well as before all breaks, and the supervisor must sign the tool inventory checklist.

We concluded that missing logs or failure to track items was due to staff oversight. The department's lack of proper monitoring practices for utensil logs can lead to several issues. Improper tracking of kitchen utensils and tools used in a kitchen is a safety risk to incarcerated people and staff at a prison. These utensils and tools are easily manipulated into weapons that can be used to harm incarcerated people or staff. Moreover, lost or stolen utensils and tools must be replaced. Not only does this create a financial burden, but the replacement of utensils and tools can take time.

Scullery Machine Temperature Logs Are Not Properly Maintained and Monitored by the Department, Possibly Leaving Some Dishes, Food Trays, and Utensils Unsanitary and at Risk of Spreading Foodborne Illness

A scullery machine is used to properly sanitize food trays, dishes, and utensils to ensure these items are cleaned at an appropriate temperature of 180°F, per departmental policy, to prevent foodborne illness. Prison staff must maintain daily logs to verify that the scullery machine functions at the appropriate temperature. Prison staff must record the water temperature during the scullery machines' final rinse to ensure the rinse temperature reaches 180°F. Alternatively, if the scullery machine does not display the temperature, prison staff can use a temperature strip that changes color to ensure that the rinse water reaches a temperature of 180°F.

We reviewed scullery machine logs at four prisons from June 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024, and identified several deficiencies. At CSP-Sacramento, no scullery machine log entries were recorded during our testing period. When we asked staff why the logs were unavailable, they stated once the scullery machine was moved in April 2024, "the logs fell off the radar." As of October 17, 2025, CSP-Sacramento was reviewing post orders to identify who would be responsible for keeping and recording the scullery machine logs.

At Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, staff only recorded scullery machine log temperatures for 49 percent of the days in our audit period. The scullery machine's display for rinse temperature was not working

on any of the days for which staff recorded log temperatures, so staff used the test strip method discussed above. However, we found that staff recorded the scullery machine rinse temperature on the log as exactly 180°F every day of the testing period on days the scullery machine log was completed. During our on-site visit, our auditor used one of the test strips on a completed scullery machine cycle, and the test strip indicated that the dish tested did not reach the required 180°F to be properly sanitized.

At Central California Women's Facility, we found that only 1 percent of scullery log entries were missing during our testing period. However, we identified that 30 percent of log entries showed that the scullery machine's final rinse temperature did not reach the required 180°F necessary to prevent foodborne illness. When the OIG was on-site, dishes, trays, and utensils were still used even when the recorded scullery temperature was below 180°F. However, in the main kitchen, most trays and utensils were cleaned with the three-compartment sink method before being run through the scullery machine.¹⁶

At CSP-Corcoran, we noted several deficiencies with scullery machine logs. From June 27, 2024, through December 3, 2024, the scullery machine was nonfunctioning, in which case we would not expect an entry into the log. However, for the 13 days the machine was functioning and the log should have been completed, no entries were recorded due to the responsible party being either in training or off from work. Furthermore, for 15 of the days the scullery machine had been operating, staff recorded on the log that the temperature did not reach 180°F. When the scullery machine was not functioning, CSP-Corcoran switched to paper trays and used the three-compartment sink method to clean cooking trays and utensils.

When we discussed the deficiencies we identified at the four prisons with the headquarters food administrator, he stated headquarters depends on prisons to maintain logs and track temperatures, and that headquarters does not monitor prisons' logs. Failure to consistently maintain logs that verify the temperature of scullery machines is problematic because it means prison staff cannot confirm that the machines reach the appropriate temperature to sanitize dishes and trays. Using properly sanitized dishes and trays reduces the risk of exposing the incarcerated population to foodborne illnesses.

16. The three-compartment sink method is a manual ware-washing system in which utensils are processed sequentially through three steps: washing, rinsing, and sanitizing. In the first sink, utensils are washed using detergent solution maintained at a minimum of 100°F and scrubbed with appropriate cleaning tools. In the second sink, utensils are rinsed with water to remove residue and detergent. In the third sink, utensils are sanitized either by immersing in hot water at a minimum of 171°F for at least 30 seconds or by using a chemical sanitizer at the proper concentration, and then allowing them to air-dry.

Recommendations

- To ensure staff properly safeguard kitchen utensils, prisons' management should ensure that chit logs for kitchen equipment and utensils are completed and monitored. Departmental headquarters staff should perform periodic reviews of each prison's kitchen equipment and utensil chit logs to verify the logs are being completed by each prison. The department should issue training and corrective action to staff who do not complete utensil chit logs as required by policy.
- To ensure staff properly monitor scullery machine temperatures, departmental headquarters staff should perform periodic reviews of each prison's scullery machine logs to ensure they are being completed.

Chapter 4. Meals Provided to the Incarcerated Population Are Wasted, and the Incarcerated Population Purchases Less Healthy Options Through the Prison's Canteen



Photo 16. Food waste at CSP-Sacramento.
Source: OIG audit staff.

As we stated earlier in this report, we found that the department provides meals that have the proper number of calories and align with the heart-healthy mandate. We did not find significant concerns regarding the quality of the food served. However, we found that some food items the department serves are significantly disliked by the incarcerated population, such as plant-based protein products, which leads to food waste. During our on-site visits, auditors at CSP-Sacramento discovered large trash bags full of discarded food as seen in Photo 16 on the left. Incarcerated people and departmental staff acknowledged that there is significant food waste, and many food items are discarded by the incarcerated population. Furthermore, incarcerated people told our auditors they

supplement their food intake with canteen food items they purchase. However, much of the food sold at prisons' canteens does not align with the heart-healthy mandate.

Starting in July 2023, the department introduced a new plant-based protein, a product of the California Prison Industry Authority (now CALCTRA), along with additional low-sugar and healthier food substitutions. The menu changes were implemented to follow a “healthy U.S.-style eating pattern,” as recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025. The department partnered with Forward Food Collaborative to add creative recipes using pea protein. Correctional food managers selected pea protein to meet dietary guidelines and protein requirements, while limiting sodium and additives.¹⁷

Plant-based products such as pea protein were pilot-tested and approved by departmental executives before being added to menus. However, these healthy additions to the menu have caused unforeseen consequences. The OIG found that plant-based proteins have not been well received by the incarcerated population. Through discussions with staff and the incarcerated population, it became clear that while food provided by the department is thrown away in general, pea protein is likely wasted

17. In affiliation with the Humane World for Animals, a charitable nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., Forward Food provides recipes and training for institutional dining operations to increase the proportion of plant-based food on their menus.

more than other food items. Incarcerated people reportedly throw out pea protein at a higher rate than the other foods they are served. Incarcerated people made comments to auditors that the pea protein is inedible or “tastes like dog food.” One individual stated he does not eat the pea protein and “does not have enough food as it is.” He added, “It [pea protein] gets thrown away by most people.”

We discussed plant-based protein foods with staff, who also confirmed that they are not well received by the incarcerated population. According to the departmental food manager and the chief dietitian, pea protein has received much resistance from the incarcerated population. Furthermore, food managers at the prisons we visited also acknowledged that plant-based protein items were regularly thrown out, and the population regularly complained about the pea protein. Headquarters management mentioned a lot of complaints about hummus, another plant-based protein option the department provides to incarcerated people. During interviews with departmental staff and incarcerated individuals, we were made aware of a misconception that pea protein contains soy. Many incarcerated individuals reported avoiding the product because of the belief that soy consumption increases estrogen levels in men. The OIG found no evidence that consuming soy products increases estrogen levels in men.

When we interviewed incarcerated people, we asked what they eat if they do not consume the meal provided by the prison. At the four prisons we visited, 33 of 35 incarcerated people told our auditors that they supplement their meals with food purchased at the canteen. When we asked Incarcerated-Person Advisory Councils at three prisons, one incarcerated person stated:

They have to buy canteen,
because the food is not food.

The incarcerated population’s rejection of the pea protein and the heart-healthy diet in general in favor of canteen food can lead to increased health risks from ultra-processed foods, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease.¹⁸ These health issues can lead to an increase in medical care, which costs the department additional money. Better communication with the population about the adoption of plant-based food items might generate greater acceptance of the new diet. Photo 17 on the right, shows canteen food being prepared by incarcerated people in the kitchen.



Photo 17. CSP-Sacramento’s incarcerated kitchen staff cook canteen food. Source: OIG audit staff.

¹⁸. Items sold in the canteen include soups, candies, condiments, canned meat, soda, cookies, chips, and pastries.

Recommendations

- The department should measure the costs of using plant-based protein products and the rate at which incarcerated people waste the product to inform a cost-benefit analysis of its provision of plant-based protein to the incarcerated population.
- The department should educate the incarcerated population about healthy food choices and explain the nutritional common misconceptions.
- The department should take steps to monitor food waste and adjust menus based on foods that incarcerated people frequently discard.

Chapter 5. The Department Meets Requirements to Provide Specialty Diets to Incarcerated People but Should Improve Controls to Ensure Compliance With Specialty Diet Requirements

The department is required to provide specialty diets to accommodate religious preferences. Every prison has chaplains who must review or approve an incarcerated person's participation in a specialty diet program. The most common religious personal ethical diet programs are the kosher diet and the religious meat alternative diet. However, we found that prisons do not provide proper oversight to ensure that incarcerated people adhere to the specialty diet restrictions required to participate in the programs. Moreover, specialty diet meals cost much more than the regular diet meals provided to the incarcerated population, which can affect prisons' food services budgets.

Chaplains at each prison oversee the initial review of religious personal ethical diet requests from incarcerated people, provide regularly scheduled services, offer counseling services, and are available to provide last-rites services to the incarcerated population. The various religious personal ethical diets include the religious kosher diet, religious meat alternative, plant-based, and vegetarian. The religious review committee initiates and oversees the audit of the religious personal ethical diet for its fulfillment of all conditions listed on the CDCR 3030-A form. Religious review committee meetings include the community resources manager, the kitchen cook, the business services manager, the warden, and the chaplains. All religious personal ethical diet requests are reviewed by the religious review committee, regardless of the chaplain's recommendation.

In November 2003, the department reached a settlement through litigation in which it agreed to provide the plaintiff with kosher meals at any prison at which he was housed. The department also agreed to establish a kosher diet program at the prison where the plaintiff was housed at the time of the settlement.¹⁹ The department has since adopted the religious personal ethical diet program, under which it provides specialty meals to accommodate incarcerated people of all faiths. Chaplains and the community resource manager are responsible for receiving requests from incarcerated people who wish to participate in the religious personal ethical diet program and evaluate whether the requests are made in good faith.

Departmental policy requires that the department conduct quarterly audits of incarcerated people on religious personal ethical diets to ensure they comply with program participation conditions listed on form CDCR 3030A. Using data provided by the department's headquarters,

19. *Victor Wayne Cooper v. State of California* (2003)

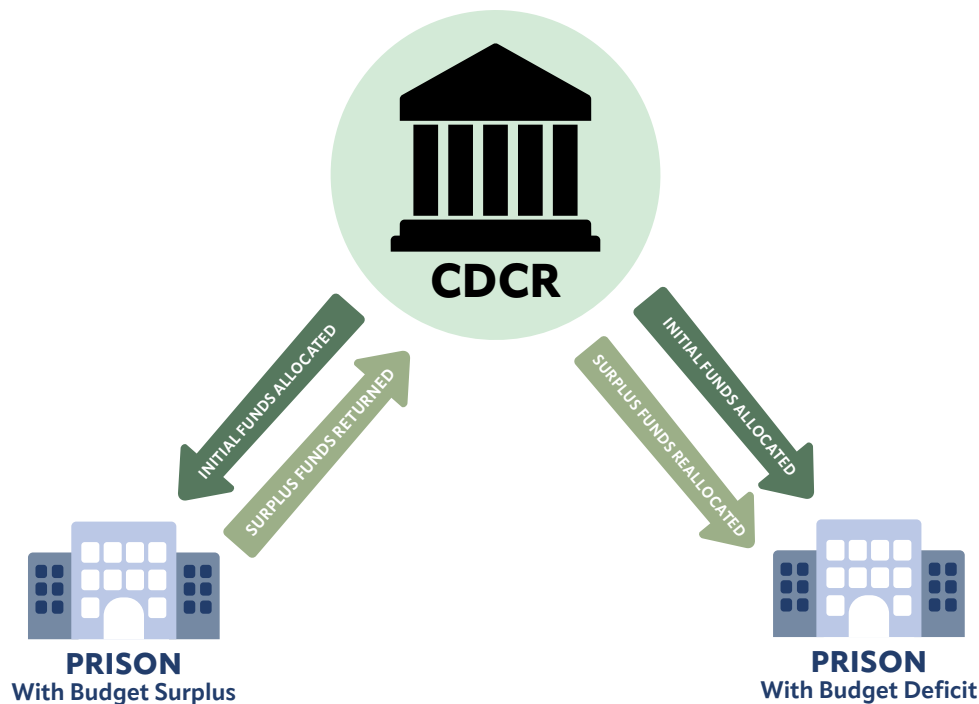
we reviewed religious personal ethical diet audits for calendar years 2022 and 2023. We found that 10 prisons each submitted at least one quarterly audit with missing data entries. Three prisons had quarterly audits missing two data entries, which was the highest number of missing quarterly-audit data entries we found.

Furthermore, when the community resource manager and chaplains conducted quarterly audits, they typically found high percentages of incarcerated people who violated the requirements to participate in a specialty diet. The most commonly violated religious personal ethical diet was the religious kosher diet. Program participation requires that incarcerated people not purchase, possess, or consume items not part of the diet program for which they are approved. The chaplain at each prison reviews incarcerated people's canteen purchases to determine whether they have purchased food items that contain pork or other nonkosher items. Incarcerated individuals who receive two violations in a six-month period are removed from the program. However, after a six-month period, they can request to again participate in the program. The high rate of noncompliance among the incarcerated population leads us to believe that many individuals participating in the religious personal ethical diet program take advantage of the program believing the food is of better quality than what they receive from the prison's main kitchen.

The food budget at prisons may also be affected by individuals on religious personal ethical diets who potentially abuse the program. The exact number of incarcerated people who participate in a religious personal ethical diet fluctuates, but averaged 3,332 individuals during our audit period. The daily food budget per incarcerated person is \$4.45, regardless of whether the individual receives a specialty diet meal. When incarcerated people are on specialty diets, the cost ranges from \$5.28 per day for the religious meat alternative meal, to \$13.00 per day for the kosher diet meal. Prisons do not receive any additional funds to compensate for incarcerated people who are on specialty diets, and that cost must be absorbed by the individual prisons. When incarcerated people are not removed from the religious personal ethical diet program for failing to adhere to dietary requirements, the cost of food for the department increases unnecessarily, which can impact the overall food budget. As illustrated in Figure 3 on the next page, the department assigns each prison an estimated food budget encumbrance amount. According to the department, when a prison's food expenditures surpass its allocation, the department reallocates funds within the existing statewide food budget. The Division of Adult Institutions and Budget Management Branch collaborates with the institution to review purchasing and production processes to understand contributing factors.

The department's headquarters is not required to monitor prisons' quarterly religious diet audit process; however, it oversaw the religious diet audits and collected audit data during testing years 2022 and 2023. The second quarter of 2023 was missing from the audit data collected

Figure 3. The Department’s Food Budget Allocation and Reallocation of Surplus Funds to Correct Shortfalls



Source: The OIG's analysis of the department's food budget allocation process

by departmental headquarters staff pertaining to all prisons. Our communication with headquarters confirmed that headquarters stopped collecting and monitoring quarterly religious audits beginning at some point during 2024. In addition to the missing data for the second quarter of 2023, 10 prisons had one or more quarters of incomplete data from 2022 through 2023. Seven of the 10 prisons had one quarter with incomplete data, and three prisons had two quarters with missing data entries.

The quarterly religious diet audit process serves to identify people who violate program participation conditions and rescind eligibility due to noncompliance. Auditors tested a total of 34 prisons and found an average of 48 percent of incarcerated people committed a first noncompliance violation each quarter.²⁰ Although a first non-compliance finding does not result in an incarcerated person's termination from the program, the department terminated an average of 21 percent of participants in religious personal ethical diet programs for ongoing

20. During the period in which we conducted our audit of religious personal ethical diets, there were 34 departmental prisons. However, as of the date of this report there are only 31 departmental prisons.

violations. Because these specialty religious diets are more expensive to provide than the general diet meals provided to the rest of the incarcerated population, it is important that the department ensure prisons complete the quarterly audit process to eliminate as much abuse of the program as possible.

Recommendation

- The department’s headquarters should conduct periodic monitoring and verify religious personal ethical diet program audits are being conducted to strengthen internal controls and improve oversight.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

California Penal Code section 6126(b) and (c) authorizes the Office of the Inspector General (the OIG) to initiate audits of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s (the department’s) policies, practices, and procedures. This audit addresses concerns about the department’s ability to maintain industry standards and comply with food safety regulations, including preparation, storage, and handling practices. It also evaluates whether meals provided to the incarcerated population meet dietary guidelines, accommodate religious and medical needs, and are prepared and served under hygienic conditions. The table below presents the objectives of our audit and the methods we used to fulfill them.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions according to our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions according to our audit objectives.

A-1. Audit Objectives and Methodology

OBJECTIVE 1

Review and evaluate laws, regulations, policies, and procedures pertinent to the audit objectives.

METHODOLOGY

Hygiene

1. We obtained and reviewed laws, regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to how the department conducts food programs and services.
2. We received and reviewed the following information:
 - California Retail Food Code
 - Food Services Handbook
 - California Health and Safety Code
 - Medical Kitchen Audit
3. We interviewed subject-matter experts at the departmental level and prison management at the four selected prisons to understand the operations of the kitchen.

Scullery

1. We requested and received the department's Food Services Handbook and all available scullery temperature logs from the four sampled prisons (CSP-Sacramento, CSP-Corcoran, Central California Women's Facility, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility). The scope period for logs that were requested were from June 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024.
 - The total number of testing days differed by prison due to days the prison's kitchen may not have been in use (e.g., CSP-Corcoran's kitchen was not operational during weekends).
2. We developed testing around the temperature guidelines set forth in the Food Services Handbook and created a testing spreadsheet to document and evaluate the data.

Utensils

1. We reviewed all applicable departmental regulations, policies, and procedures about tracking utensils used in the kitchens.
2. We requested all utensil logs for the scope period of June 1, 2024, through October 31, 2024, for review.
3. The total number of days tested differed by prison due to the kitchens at some locations, such as CSP-Corcoran and CSP-Sacramento not being operational during weekends.
4. While on-site, we also spoke with correctional officers about their understanding of the policies and procedures to gain an understanding of the daily processes they follow.

Religious/Medical Diets and Menu Testing

1. We reviewed relevant laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures related to food services and quality.

(Continued on next page)

A-1. Audit Objectives and Methodology (continued)

2. We received the following information:

- Department Operations Manual
- Local Operating Procedures
- The Food Services Management Handbook
- California Correctional Health Care Services' Medical Diet Manual

OBJECTIVE 2

Determine whether the department's supply and distribution of meals meet nutritional requirements, including specialty dietary needs as recommended by federal, state, and departmental guidelines.

METHODOLOGY

Religious/Medical Diets and Menu Testing

1. We interviewed incarcerated individuals and chaplains at four sampled prisons to understand the following:

- The quality, cleanliness, and palatability of religious meals.
- The process chaplains must follow to approve or deny a religious personal ethical diet request.

2. We tested the religious quarterly audits from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2024, to understand the number of violations and the process of removing incarcerated individuals from a religious personal ethical diet program.

3. We tested the CDCR general population menu and California Correctional Health Care Services' medical menu for men and women to test the number of calories served in the department on a randomly selected week.

- One week was selected due to time and insufficient material.

OBJECTIVE 3

Determine whether the department's procedures and policies meet food safety and hygiene regulations and guidelines throughout food preparation and distribution.

METHODOLOGY

Hygiene

1. We distributed a survey with questions about food services to correctional food managers at each prison to better understand the challenges they face.

2. We utilized an on-site testing checklist from California Correctional Health Care Services that covers key areas to ensure prisons comply with food safety and hygiene regulations and guidelines throughout food preparation and distribution. Key areas tested were:

- Employee appearance and employee performance
- Food storeroom

(Continued on next page)

A-1. Audit Objectives and Methodology (continued)

- Chemical storeroom or janitorial closet
- Refrigerator
- Freezer
- Environmental maintenance and safety
- Kitchen serving area
- Ice machine
- Standard operating procedures
- Ware-washing area

3. We conducted on-site observations at four prisons: CSP-Sacramento, CSP-Corcoran, Central California Women’s Facility, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility.

- We performed a walk-through with correctional food managers and food administrators in the kitchens, food storage areas, and related areas in each prison. Using the established on-site checklist, we documented deficiencies and findings for each prison.

4. We interviewed correctional supervising cooks, correctional officers, and incarcerated kitchen staff to understand:

- Whether they receive adequate food safety training;
- The specific roles and responsibilities of staff in food service and handling;
- Staff recommendations for improving preparation and handling processes; and
- The criteria required for removing an incarcerated worker from the kitchen.

5. We organized and analyzed all findings from on-site observations, checklist documentation, and supporting photographs to calculate performance scores for the four departmental and medical kitchens.

Scullery

1. For the four prisons selected for testing, we recorded any instances of the department not meeting the expected guidelines. We created tables to show how many days each prison was noncompliant with guidelines from the Food Services Handbook.

2. We specifically tested for the following:

- Any scullery machine that did not reach the required temperature;
- The length of time the scullery machine did not reach the required temperature; and
- The percentage of days that had incomplete information on scullery temperature logs. (e.g., missing signatures, missing temperature recordings, or missing logs.)

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A-1. Audit Objectives and Methodology (continued)

OBJECTIVE 4

Review and assess any other issues that are significant to the audit.

METHODOLOGY

Utensils

1. For the four prisons selected for testing, we created a spreadsheet and recorded any instances of noncompliance with departmental policies and procedures.
2. For the four prisons selected for testing, we specifically tested for the following items:
 - Which utensils were recorded as missing;
 - How long the missing utensils remained missing; and
 - Whether any utensil logs had any additional missing information.

Religious/Medical Diets and Menu Testing

1. We documented the amount of waste, with observations and interviews, at the four prisons sampled to learn about the supplementation of meals with canteen food items, and the food items that are commonly disliked by the incarcerated population.

Work Orders

1. We received and reviewed departmental and medical kitchen equipment work orders provided by either plant operations, the correctional food manager, or the food administrator to assess the following information:
 - Whether the department has policies or procedures in place to ensure the timely completion of work orders;
 - Whether kitchen work orders are completed in a timely manner; and
 - The average completion time for kitchen equipment work orders.
2. We adjusted the testing period based on the data available at each prison:
 - The testing period for CSP-Sacramento's departmental kitchen was from January 4, 2022, through December 30, 2024, and March 8, 2022, through October 22, 2024, for the medical kitchen.
 - CSP-Corcoran's departmental kitchen had a testing period from April 22, 2023, through December 24, 2024, and the medical kitchen had a testing period from August 8, 2023, through September 3, 2024.
 - Central California Women's Facility's departmental kitchen had a testing period from June 26, 2023, through December 19, 2024, and its medical kitchen had a testing period from April 4, 2024, through December 26, 2024.
 - Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's departmental kitchen's testing period was February 9, 2024, through December 31, 2024, and its medical kitchen had a testing period from April 2024 through December 2024.

Source: Compiled by OIG audits staff.

Assessment of Data Reliability

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, whose standards our office follows in performing and preparing audits, requires us to assess the sufficiency and appropriateness of computer-processed information that we use to support our findings, conclusions, or recommendations.

In performing this audit, we relied on the department's log records. To evaluate this data, we reviewed existing information about the data and interviewed staff members knowledgeable about the data. While on-site, auditors observed day-to-day kitchen operations including hygiene practices, dish washing, tool inventory, and storage temperatures. Data was reviewed for completeness and accuracy. Auditors compared key data fields to support documentation, tested a sample of records for consistency, and followed up on any discrepancies identified during our review. The department had a significant backlog of work orders due to the transition of its computerized maintenance management system for preventative and corrective maintenance. The OIG received and relied upon work order maintenance data from the department for testing purposes.

Appendix B

Hygiene Checklist and Averages

B-1. Hygiene Checklist

1. EMPLOYEE APPEARANCE

- ☐ Employees were in full uniform, and uniform was clean and free of food debris.
- ☐ Employees wore personal protective equipment (PPE), N95 face mask, or face shield as required.
- ☐ Employees wore ID badge or had ID badge present.
- ☐ Head and facial hair were contained with hair net, beard guard, or other adequate cover.
- ☐ Employees were free from illnesses (persistent sneezing, coughing, runny nose with discharge from eyes, nose, or mouth) that may be spread to food.

2. EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

- ☐ Hand sinks were equipped with soap and individual hand towels, were in good working order, and had appropriate signage for handwashing.
- ☐ Handwashing sinks had adequate flow, and water temperature was between 100°F and 115°F. If water temperature was 120°F, signage was posted above the sink. (Auditor should allow one minute for water to run to reach 100°F.)
- ☐ Employees washed hands prior to meal service—observed or asked employee.
- ☐ Had an employee wash their hands.
- ☐ Employees changed gloves when necessary—observed or asked employee.
- ☐ Employees wore gloves during direct food handling tasks.
- ☐ Employees washed hands and changed gloves after tasks, if task was interrupted, or if they began a new task (e.g., switching from handling a raw food item to a ready-to-eat food item).
- ☐ Employee could calibrate thermometer.
- ☐ Employees were familiar with menu and menu changes for the meal. Menu changes were documented.
- ☐ Employees were attentive and helpful [with nursing staff] or correctional officers when requesting items during meal service.
- ☐ Employees were pleasant when patients requested a substitution or condiment during meal service.
- ☐ Employees ate in designated food areas only, except for food tasting by supervisor or manager.
- ☐ The person in charge had a valid food protection manager certificate.

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)**3. FOOD STORAGE CONDITIONS**

- ☐ Thermometer was visible inside storeroom, and temperature was between 50°F and 70°F, with 50 percent to 60 percent humidity.
- ☐ Storeroom cleaning schedule was available and documented (e.g., daily and weekly cleaning).
- ☐ Storage room food items were rotated accordingly with expiration dates and/or use-by dates on them.
- ☐ All items were covered, labeled, and dated. Storeroom was free of expired items. Employees checked the items.
- ☐ Food in unlabeled, rusty, leaking, broken containers or cans with side seam dents, rim dents, or swells were not used or kept in storage.
- ☐ Labeled rack for damaged cans to return to vendor was available and kept in a separate area of the storeroom.
- ☐ All foods were rotated using First-In, First-Out (FIFO).
- ☐ Items were sorted on racks 12" from the floor and 18" from the ceiling (18" from beneath sprinklers).
- ☐ Food items were stored on shelves, racks, dollies, or other surfaces (i.e., not stored directly on the floor).
- ☐ Shelves were clean and free of dust.
- ☐ Walls, floors, ceilings, vents, and doors were clean.
- ☐ Shelves were placed away from walls to permit ventilation and easy cleaning.
- ☐ Storage rooms were ventilated and not subject to contamination by wastewater backflow, condensation, leakage, rodents, or vermin.
- ☐ Open bulk food supplies and bins were stored in labeled plastic or metal containers with tight-fitting lids.
- ☐ Open bulk food supplies and bins had a cleaning schedule or were cleaned when a new product was opened and dispensed.
- ☐ Open bulk food supply scoops were properly stored in a clean, dry, and secured space.
- ☐ Nonfood supplies such as tongs, scoops, forks, spoons, and spatulas were clean and stored in clean containers and kept separate from food.
- ☐ Receiving area was clean and free from food debris, boxes, cans, and refuse.
- ☐ Incoming food orders and supplies were moved to the proper storage areas and secured within the time allotted (30 minutes).
- ☐ Contents of pallets were broken down, and food items were stored appropriately.
- ☐ Outside doors were kept closed at all times.
- ☐ There were no signs of rodent or insect infestation.

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)**4. CHEMICAL CLEANER MANAGEMENT**

- ☐ Cleaning supplies (chemicals) were stored in the janitorial closet away from food, and dry food storage. Items were stored 6" or above from floor.
- ☐ Cleaning schedule was available and documented.
- ☐ Safety data sheets were current and available in the immediate area.
- ☐ Appropriate personal protective equipment such as safety goggles, face shield, and protective gloves was available and worn when using products.
- ☐ Chemicals were appropriately connected, and dispensing unit was working correctly.
- ☐ Correct and unexpired test strips for chemical sanitizer (Sani-Guard 24-7) were used to test sanitizer.
- ☐ Chemical room was well-stocked, clean, and organized, and all chemicals were appropriately stored.

5. REFRIGERATOR MAINTENANCE

- ☐ Thermometer was visible inside refrigerator, and temperature was 41°F or below.
- ☐ Temperatures were recorded on a daily temperature log at the beginning and end of each day.
- ☐ Refrigerator cleaning schedule was available and documented.
- ☐ Walls, floors, and shelves were free from spills and debris.
- ☐ Interior refrigerator fans were clean and free of dust.
- ☐ All items were stored on racks, allowing proper air circulation.
- ☐ Refrigerated food was wrapped, covered, labeled, dated, and in sanitary containers.
- ☐ There were no out-of-date items or spoiled products.
- ☐ Leftover food, which had been clearly labeled and dated, was discarded after 72 hours (three days).
- ☐ Refrigerated foods were stored from top to bottom in the following order: cooked and ready-to-eat food, whole fish, whole meat, ground meat, and on bottom shelf, poultry.
- ☐ All foods were rotated using FIFO.
- ☐ All food was covered, labeled, dated, and not expired.
- ☐ Food Samples—for each meal, a 4-ounce sample of each food item served was covered, dated, and stored in the refrigerator for 72-hours (was not frozen) and discarded thereafter.
- ☐ Temperature taken on an 8-ounce milk carton was less than 40°F.
- ☐ Refrigerator door and gaskets were clean and in good condition.
- ☐ Items were sorted on racks 12" from the floor and 18" from the ceiling, except for mobile food carts (18" from beneath sprinklers).

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)

- ☐ Employees' food items were stored on a designated and labeled tray.
- ☐ Refrigerator doors were not blocked and allowed accessibility to enter and exit.

6. FREEZER MAINTENANCE

- ☐ Thermometer visible inside freezer and temperature at 0°F or below.
- ☐ Temperatures were recorded on a daily temperature log at the beginning and end of each day.
- ☐ Freezer cleaning schedule was available and documented.
- ☐ Items were sorted on racks 12" from the floor and 18" from the ceiling (18" from beneath sprinklers).
- ☐ Shelves, racks, walls, floors, ceiling, and doors were clean and free from ice buildup and debris.
- ☐ All foods were rotated using FIFO.
- ☐ All food was covered, labeled, dated, and not expired.
- ☐ Freezer and door gaskets were clean and in good condition.
- ☐ All items in freezer were stored on racks, allowing proper air circulation.
- ☐ Freezer doors were not blocked and allowed accessibility to enter and exit.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY

- ☐ Fire exit and entrance doors of the satellite kitchen were free of equipment or any other items blocking the fire safety doors.
- ☐ Fire extinguisher was checked and dated monthly.
- ☐ All water drains were in working order and clean.
- ☐ There were no leaks in any pipes, faucets, or hoses.
- ☐ All painted surfaces were clean and not chipped.
- ☐ All floors, walls, and ceiling tiles were free of cracks, dust, and debris. There were no cracks, holes or loose molding.
- ☐ There was no evidence of insects or pests.
- ☐ All lights were in good working condition.
- ☐ Light fixtures had safety covers.
- ☐ Floor mats were in place, and floors were clean and free of debris and food.
- ☐ Retherm docking stations' condensing trays were clean and free of food debris and dust.
- ☐ Retherm docking stations were in good working condition.
- ☐ Ovens were in good working condition and were clean and free of food debris and dust.

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)

- ☐ Food transport carts were clean and free of food debris and dirt, and wheels were in good working order.
- ☐ All doors leading into the satellite kitchen and dining rooms had the ability to open and lock with no difficulty.
- ☐ Dumpsters on back dock area were closed and not overflowing.
- ☐ Back dock area was clean and not cluttered; it did not contain food items or food containers.
- ☐ Detergent wash buckets and sanitizing buckets were readily available and used during kitchen operation.
- ☐ Cloths were stored inside sanitizing/detergent buckets labeled with date and time.
- ☐ Cleaning supplies and equipment were stored separately from food.
- ☐ Dirty mops and dirty towels were stored in container or bins covered with lids.
- ☐ Mops were stored properly (out of water bucket); water bucket did not have standing water unless in use.
- ☐ Eyewash station was in good working order (physically test station for proper operation).
- ☐ Eyewash stations included four bottles mounted to wall and not expired.
- ☐ Telephone was mounted and working.

8. SANITATION AND CLEANLINESS OF SERVING AREAS

- ☐ Cleaning schedule for satellite kitchen serving and meal preparation area was completed and followed (daily and weekly schedules).
- ☐ Meal or menu item changes met comparable meal or menu item substitution, and notification was posted.
- ☐ Food contact surfaces were smooth and easily cleanable surfaces, free of breaks, cracks, chips, rust, etc.
- ☐ Food contact surfaces were cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- ☐ Coffee maker was clean and in good working order.
- ☐ All food prep equipment such as countertops, dishes, trays, and utensils were cleaned, sanitized, and stored properly.
- ☐ Cutting boards were clean and free of deep cuts.
- ☐ Microwave was clean and in good working order.
- ☐ All floors, walls, ceiling, sneeze guards, and work areas were clean.
- ☐ All worktables and drawers were clean and neat.
- ☐ Gloves were sorted appropriately and easily available for employees.
- ☐ Equipment repair log was maintained, and work orders were submitted promptly.
- ☐ Work orders were posted on all equipment that was not working properly.

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)

☐ Lockout Tagout sign was displayed on all equipment that was not working properly.
☐ Transit carts were cleaned thoroughly, and wheels were in good working order.
☐ Racks for dirty dishes were available.
☐ Food service equipment was not blocking work areas.
☐ Cleaning cloths were stored in sanitizing solution or detergent buckets only.
☐ Detergent wash buckets were available with detergent for cleaning food service equipment.
☐ Sanitizing buckets had appropriate concentration of sanitizer. Appropriate test strip was used for the on-site sanitizer (buckets with sanitizer should be in use no longer than four hours or when water is visibly dirty).
☐ Kitchen meal preparation tables were clean and sanitized after each meal service or meal preparation.
☐ Floors were swept and mopped as needed or after each meal service.
☐ All garbage containers were clean and covered unless in use.
☐ Gloves were worn by employees per facility policy and procedure.
☐ Meal service temperature log was filled out appropriately, and food temperatures were recorded as indicated.
☐ Food item racks were labeled correctly indicating meals, and meals were stacked in order with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) sheet.
☐ Appropriate scoops and ladles for accurate serving size were used for the meal service.
☐ All food preparation equipment, dishes, and utensils were cleaned, sanitized and ready for meal service.
☐ Employees were using thermometers appropriately with no cross contamination (Yes = Pass and No = Fail).
☐ Food service employee could demonstrate how to calibrate a thermometer correctly using ice water method (document employee name and pass or fail).
☐ Calibration log for thermometers was maintained per the Food and Nutrition Services - Policies and Procedures (verify log was kept and ice water method was used for thermometer calibration).

9. ICE MACHINE SANITATION AND MAINTENANCE

☐ Ice scoops for the dispenser were kept outside of the ice bin in a dry, clean, and secure container.
☐ The outside of the ice machine was clean, free of debris and dust, and in good working condition.
☐ Ice bin was clean, and walls of the ice container were clean.
☐ Dispensing ice chute cover was clean and free of debris. Swipe clean paper towel across the inside cover to check for debris.

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B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)

- ☐ The gaskets of the ice door were clean and free of debris.
- ☐ Daily cleaning: drain trough was cleaned daily or as needed, and the exterior of machine was wiped daily.
- ☐ Monthly cleaning log for the ice machine was up to date (cleaning log for Nutrition Services for lower bin was up to date).
- ☐ Monthly cleaning log for the ice machine was up to date (cleaning log for Plant Operations upper machine cleaning).

10.COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- ☐ Hazard Communication Training (Safety Data Sheets [SDS], in-service verification and documentation).
- ☐ Injury Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP)—look for documentation, in-service and logs.
- ☐ Food Safety and Hygiene Training (training book for the food service staff and for incarcerated people – weekly and/or monthly).
- ☐ Pest Management (verify documentation, log, or maintenance schedule).
- ☐ Food and Nutrition Services Policy and Procedure Manual (copy is in medical kitchen).
- ☐ HACCP Manual (training & in-service documented).
- ☐ SDS manual was accessible to all food service staff and in designated work areas where chemicals were used.
- ☐ Emergency Operations Plan for Nutrition Services - Policy and Procedure
- ☐ High Heat Plan for Nutrition Services

11.WARE-WASHING AREA MAINTENANCE

- ☐ Cleaning schedule of the area was available and documented.
- ☐ Ware-washing machine automatically dispensed detergents and sanitizers.
- ☐ A visual or audible alarm signaled if detergents and sanitizers were not delivered to the washing and sanitizing cycles.
- ☐ Data plate was affixed to the dish machine by the manufacturer indicating: temperatures for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing; PSI—pressure for fresh water and conveyor speed.
- ☐ Ware-washing machine was equipped with temperature-measuring device in the wash-and-rinse tank, and gauges were within normal limits (refer back to the manufacturers operating instructions).
- ☐ Ware-washing machine was equipped with temperature-measuring device as the water entered the hot water sanitizing final rinse or in the chemical sanitizing solution tank, and gauge was within normal limits (refer back to the manufacturers operating instructions).
- ☐ If hot water was used for manual ware-washing operations, the sanitizing compartment of the dish machine was no less than 180°F and no greater than 194°F (greater than 194°F will result in steam and not adequately sanitize).

(Continued on next page)

B-1. Hygiene Checklist (continued)

-
- ☐ Ware-washing machine was equipped with curtains that minimized internal cross-contamination of the solutions in wash and rinse tanks.
-
- ☐ Sinks and drainboards of ware-washing sinks and machines were self-draining.
-
- ☐ Food service flatware, plateware, pots, and pans were air-dried on racks with adequate air flow for drying (conduct physical check between items to determine if air-dried properly).
-
- ☐ Dish machine temperature logs were maintained, and temperatures were recorded for each meal service (breakfast, lunch, and dinner - verified on temperature logs).
-
- ☐ Logs for cleaning the dish machine were maintained.
-
- ☐ Manual ware-washing sink compartment had at least three compartments and was on-site for manual washing, rinsing, and sanitizing.
-
- ☐ Food service employee was asked to set up a three-compartment sink to demonstrate proper cleaning, rinsing, and sanitizing. Give name of employee and rate under comments.

Source: State laws, regulations, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's and California Correctional Health Care Services' policies, procedures, and best practices.

B-2. Hygiene Checklist Averages

Hygiene Areas Reviewed	CSP-Sacramento*	Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility†	CSP-Corcoran‡	California Correctional Women's Facility§
	Main Kitchens and Satellite Kitchens Combined for Each Prison			
1. Employee Appearance	80%	90%	100%	100%
2. Employee Performance	55%	60%	84%	100%
3. Food Storage Conditions	73%	82%	75%	82%
4. Chemical Cleaner Management	86%	65%	100%	86%
5. Refrigerator Maintenance	65%	100%	84%	97%
6. Freezer Maintenance	67%	79%	70%	85%
7. Environmental Maintenance and Safety	58%	57%	67%	95%
8. Sanitation and Cleanliness of Serving Areas	68%	67%	67%	100%
9. Ice Machine Sanitation and Maintenance	100%	25%	88%	93%
10. Compliance with Standard Operating Procedures	100%	100%	100%	100%
11. Ware-Washing Area Maintenance	57%	58%	70%	89%

Note: Because each section of the checklist contains a different number of items, the section percentages scores were calculated by dividing the number of items that received a **yes** rating by the total number of applicable items in that section.

We calculated the overall score for each prison using the total number of tested items that received a **yes** rating or **no** rating. We excluded items marked as **N/A** from the calculation. Some satellite kitchens do not have a food storeroom, chemical storeroom, or freezer. As a result, the related checklist items were not applicable to those locations. Below is the breakdown of the calculations for each prison.

* CSP-Sacramento's main kitchen had a total of 136 applicable items tested, of which 94 received a **yes** rating and 42 received a **no** rating. The overall score was calculated by dividing the number of yes responses by the total number of applicable items tested, resulting in an overall score of 69 percent. Unlike the comprehensive multi-section inspections at other prisons, the OIG limited the satellite kitchen testing to the kitchen serving area at CSP-Sacramento because the facility relies on cell feeding instead of a cafeteria.

† For CSP-Corcoran's main kitchen, 142 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 107 received a **yes** rating and 35 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, CSP-Corcoran's main kitchen achieved an overall score of 75%. For CSP-Corcoran's satellite kitchens, 90 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 72 received a **yes** rating and 18 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, CSP-Corcoran's satellite kitchen achieved an overall score of 80%.

‡ For Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's main kitchen, 138 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 90 received a **yes** rating and 48 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's main kitchen achieved an overall score of 65%. For Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's satellite kitchens, 117 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 89 received a **yes** rating and 28 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility's satellite kitchen achieved an overall score of 76%.

§ For California Correctional Women's Facility's main kitchen 141 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 133 received a **yes** rating and 8 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, California Correctional Women's Facility's main kitchen achieved an overall score of 94%. For California Correctional Women's Facility's satellite kitchens, 119 applicable items were tested. Of those items, 112 received a **yes** rating and 7 received a **no** rating. Based on these results, California Correctional Women's Facility's satellite kitchen achieved an overall score of 94% and the main kitchen achieved an overall score of 94%.

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

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The Department's Response to Our Report

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA — DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

PO Box 942883

Sacramento, CA 94283-0001



August 4, 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) would like to thank the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for the opportunity to review the draft report titled *Audit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Food Programs and Services Within California's Prisons*.

CDCR acknowledges the report's identification of systemic deficiencies in sanitation practices, food handling protocols, equipment operability, storage and labeling, scullery documentation, tool control, and Religious Personal Ethical Diet (RPED) oversight. As reflected in recent program directives and statewide discussions, the Department agrees that consistent standards, structured accountability, and improved documentation are critical to ensuring safe and compliant food service operations in every institution.

CDCR also appreciates the audit's recognition that kitchen equipment repairs can be delayed for significant periods of time due to the Department's significant infrastructure backlog and budget constraints. These findings are consistent with the assessment included in the [CDCR Infrastructure Master Plan](#), which reflects the Department's commitment to addressing its aging infrastructure. The Department will consider addressing the infrastructure issues identified herein through its overall infrastructure planning and associated proposals. The Department looks forward to the opportunity to engage with the appropriate stakeholders to develop proposals to address these and other critical infrastructure issues facing CDCR institutions.

In response to the findings, CDCR is developing a department-wide corrective action strategy focused on strengthening hygiene and food safety practices, improving equipment maintenance oversight, and enhancing RPED monitoring. As this work progresses, the Department is evaluating training modalities, standardized cleaning schedules, temperature and tool control documentation processes, and the structure of local Corrective Action Plans to ensure they are practical, sustainable, and aligned with operational needs. Planned statewide monitoring, through monthly reporting and quarterly Proof of Practice packets, is expected to support more consistent compliance and assist institutions in identifying and correcting emerging issues.

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The Department's Response to Our Report (continued)

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Amarik Singh, Office of the Inspector General
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CDCR remains committed to ensuring that the incarcerated population receives meals prepared in safe, sanitary, and well-maintained environments, consistent with the Department Operations Manual and Food Services Handbook. The Department values the OIG's recommendations and will continue advancing operational improvements through policy clarification, staff development, and measured oversight. CDCR appreciates the collaborative engagement of the OIG and looks forward to continued partnership as these corrective efforts evolve and strengthen food service delivery statewide.

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

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Jeffrey Macomber
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JEFF MACOMBER
Secretary

**Audit of the California Department
of Corrections and Rehabilitation's
Food Programs and Services
Within California's Prisons**

AUD N° 25-01

**OFFICE of the
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

Amarik K. Singh
Inspector General

Shaun Spillane
Chief Deputy Inspector General

STATE of CALIFORNIA
August 2026

OIG