



# Inspection Report

Okanagan Correctional Centre



**INVESTIGATION &  
STANDARDS OFFICE**  
INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT



Ministry of  
Attorney General

## **Investigation & Standards Office**

**B.C. Ministry of Attorney General**

Inspection Report: Okanagan Correctional Centre

Cycle 2 (2025 - 2027)

On-site Inspection Conducted September 23 - 25, 2025

Report Completed February 2026

*We acknowledge with respect that the Justice Services Branch operates throughout B.C. on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. The BC Public Service is deeply committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in B.C.*

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# Executive Summary

## Mandate

Established by the *Correction Act*, the mandate of the Investigation and Standards Office (ISO) is to provide fair, independent oversight to BC Corrections. As part of the Ministry of Attorney General and independent from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the ISO has the authority to conduct investigations and inspections of correctional centres in British Columbia. Additionally, the ISO undertakes investigations into complaints from individuals in custody or under community supervision and conducts reviews of serious incidents, escapes, deaths in custody, disciplinary hearing decisions, and use of force incidents.

The ISO inspection model is comprehensive, evidence-based, and focus on the experience of individuals in custody and the conditions at B.C. correctional centres. The ISO has developed Inspection Standards, described below, which are applied to B.C. correctional centres to assess, monitor, and report on the conditions of confinement and the experiences of individuals in custody.

The ISO inspects five correctional centres per year, completing all ten correctional centres within a two-year cycle. To assess each of the ten provincial correctional centres, the Inspection Standards are guided by internationally recognized standards of confinement, primarily the *Nelson Mandela Rules*, in addition to more specialized expectations such as the *Bangkok Rules*, which focuses on the experience of women in custody. The Inspection Standards also incorporated various elements of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, *Yogyakarta Principles*, *United Nations' Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness*, and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

The Inspection Standards and additional information about the ISO Inspection Model is available on the [ISO website](#).

## Purpose

This inspection report is the first completed inspection within Cycle 2 of the ISO inspection cycle. The inspection of Okanagan Correctional Centre (OCC) commenced off-site on June 26, 2025, with the on-site portion of the inspection conducted from September 23-25, 2025. Through on- and off-site data collection, the inspection team uses standardized assessment

tools and multiple sources of evidence to determine if a centre has met the defined Inspection Standards and to evaluate compliance with past inspection recommendations.

Upon completion of the inspection, data, and evidence analysis, the ISO identifies findings and makes recommendations, which are shared with BC Corrections. BC Corrections responds to the recommendations, specifying the acceptance status and detailing the action that will be undertaken to address or respond to each recommendation. The ISO monitors implementation by tracking progress on the action items. One year after BC Corrections responds to the recommendations, the ISO requests a formal update on the status of actions taken to address each recommendation.

## Key Findings

Okanagan Correctional Centre meets expectations for **80 out of 84** applicable Inspection Standards.

### **The inspection team identified strengths in the following areas:**

- Okanagan Correctional Centre leadership demonstrated effective support for staff development during cell inspections and unit searches.
- The case management team demonstrated strong organizational practises in tracking and ensuring the completion of essential documentation.
- Okanagan Correctional Centre provides culturally responsive supports for Indigenous individuals.

### **The inspection team identified the following findings among Inspection Standards that did not meet expectations:**

- Inconsistencies in cell/tier visitation practises and administration of institutional charges.
- Insufficient unit rule enforcement.

## Conclusion

The ISO would like to extend our appreciation to the staff and management at OCC for their cooperation and support throughout this inspection. Their professionalism and willingness to accommodate our process greatly contributed to the efficiency and thoroughness of this inspection. Based on the findings, three recommendations have been identified for OCC

management to consider. A recommendation response table, included at the end of this report, outlines the responses from both OCC and BC Corrections.

# Inspection Overview

Okanagan Correctional Centre (OCC) was built in 2016 and opened in 2017. Okanagan Correctional Centre has a 401 cell capacity and houses individuals who are sentenced and remanded, with secure, medium, and open classifications. At the start of our review in June 2025, there were 190 individuals in custody at OCC.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Individuals in Custody at OCC, June 2025<sup>1</sup>**

Category	Number	Percentage
<b>Self-Identified Gender</b>		
Male	120	63%
Not Stated (did not identify upon admission)	65	34%
Female	4	2%
X (non-binary)	1	1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian	104	55%
Indigenous	70	37%
Other/Unknown	6	3%
Black	4	2%
Hispanic	3	2%
Asian	2	1%
East Indian	1	1%
<b>Legal Hold Status<sup>2</sup></b>		
Remand	148	78%
Sentenced	42	22%
<b>Security Classification<sup>3</sup></b>		
Secure	168	88%
Medium	13	7%
Open	2	1%
<b>Population Designation</b>		
General population (GP)	75	39%
GP Mental Health Needs (MHN) designation <sup>4</sup>	19	10%
Protective custody (PC)	68	36%
PC Mental Health Needs (MHN) designation <sup>4</sup>	20	11%

<sup>1</sup> Numbers and percentages are based on data from CORNET, BC Corrections' internal client management system.

<sup>2</sup> *Sentenced* refers to individuals serving provincial sentences. *Remand* includes individuals awaiting trial or sentencing, sentenced individuals who are before the courts on other matters, and those held on behalf of Correctional Services Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Security Classification and Population Designation exclude individuals in the "not stated" category.

<sup>4</sup> The MHN designation is intended as a classification tool and does not encompass all individuals in custody who have identified mental health needs.

## Internal Case Data

The inspection process commences with an analysis of the ISO data related to individuals in custody at OCC between July 1, 2023, and July 1, 2025. During this time frame the ISO had 226 overall contacts with individuals. The analysis also incorporated all recommendations and annual progress updates from the previous inspection conducted at OCC in September 2023.

The information below may include multiple complaints from the same individual and does not reflect the number of unique individuals with concerns.

192 Telephone Calls

8 Early Resolutions

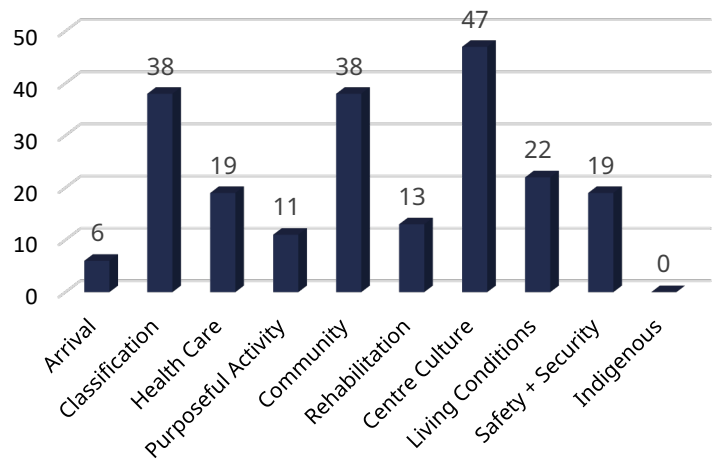
34 Written Complaints

9 Disciplinary Hearing Reviews

2 Critical Incident Reviews

6 Previous Recommendations

ISO Data (OCC) - Concerns by Theme  
(July 2023 - July 2025)



## Document Review

The inspection team conducted file reviews on 10% of the individuals incarcerated at OCC selected through stratified random sampling. This method ensured the files selected included remanded and sentenced individuals, those classified as general population and protective custody, and those who identify as Indigenous or as belonging to a minority group.

The inspection team reviewed a diverse selection of documents and materials held by the centre. Concerns raised through the review of these materials, individuals' files, past inspection recommendations, annual progress updates, and/or the ISO internal data were assessed against the Inspection Standards. In response, an on-site Action Plan was developed to support the on-site inspection.

## On-site Inspection

The inspection team, comprising of two deputy directors and one inspector, conducted a site visit to OCC from September 23 - 25, 2025. In addition to the ISO inspection team, the executive director of Correctional Health Services (CHS) for Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) participated in the healthcare portion of the on-site inspection as a healthcare representative. This representative was responsible for identifying and addressing healthcare-related concerns connected to the ISO Inspection HealthCare Standards.

The inspection team interviewed 48 individuals in custody who were classified to segregation, supported integration placement, the mental health unit, and included those with protective custody and general population status. In addition, 46 staff members ranging from management to line staff and contractors were interviewed from all areas of the centre.

In addition to interviews, the inspection team attended most areas of the centre to assess conditions and observe centre operations, including the admissions and discharge area, program spaces, all living units, segregation, healthcare, outdoor yard spaces, food service areas, and workshop areas.

## Survey

To capture the experience of all individuals, including those who may not have had the opportunity to speak with the inspection team, a confidential, voluntary survey was distributed on each unit. Surveys were anonymous and respondents were informed they were not obligated to answer all questions. The inspection team received 103 completed surveys, a response rate of 54%.

While the survey responses offer some insight, it is important to consider the relatively low response rate may not fully represent the perspectives of all individuals at OCC. It should be noted the survey findings are derived from self-reported data, and the analysis focused on areas where corroborating evidence was present.

**Table 2: Yes-or-No Question Results**

Question	Yes
1. Do you feel your basic needs (including living space, hygiene, clothing, food, and exercise) are being met?	<b>61%</b>
2. Is healthcare accessible?	<b>62%</b>
3. Are there any staff you could turn to if you had a problem?	<b>73%</b>
4. Are you treated well by staff?	<b>82%</b>
5. Could you get mental health support if you wanted?	<b>76%</b>
6. Do you feel safe here?	<b>78%</b>
7. Do you feel your time here has been beneficial?	<b>46%</b>

In addition to the survey questions, respondents were invited to provide written feedback. Table 3 highlights the most common responses:

**Table 3: Written Feedback from Surveys**

Overall, the participants described staff as polite, courteous, good listeners, helpful and approachable
Health and mental health services were viewed as accessible, though long wait times, especially for medication-related appointments, were a common concern
Participants expressed satisfaction with the quality of the meals provided
Participants expressed interest in expanded programming, with particular emphasis on increased access to the shops and vocational training opportunities
Participants noted the cost of canteen items and phone calls is disproportionately high relative to their hourly work wage

In summary, the high regard for staff at OCC reflected in the survey results was also observed by the inspection team on-site. Respondents highlighted staff's respectful and non-judgmental approach, and on-site, the inspection team observed staff effectively managing multiple responsibilities and duties.

A majority of survey respondents expressed concern over the lack of shop programming at OCC. While this feedback is understandable, the metalworking and woodworking shops have remained closed due to the high cost of remediating ventilation issues, which has been

deemed financially and operationally unfeasible by BC Corrections. However, the spaces continue to operate as multi-purpose areas, with programming such as the recently reintroduced sewing/textile program.

Survey respondents expressed concerns about long wait times for healthcare and mental health services, particularly for medication-related appointments. Correctional Health Services acknowledged these delays and explained the healthcare request process is being revised. Changes include updated forms, triaging by the client care coordinator, and improved communication with individuals in custody. Correctional Health Services is working to streamline clinic processes, increase in-person visits, and intends to add an experienced nurse practitioner for twice-weekly appointments, including weekends. Many healthcare services are currently provided virtually, but efforts are underway to expand in-person care. The ISO is satisfied that CHS remains committed to improving client satisfaction and overall care.

Respondents also raised concerns regarding canteen and phone prices. This issue has been brought to the attention of BC Corrections, as it has been identified in previous inspections. According to BC Corrections, pricing for the Call Control System aligns with and is comparable to cost-per-call models in other jurisdictions. The provincial canteen list is reviewed bi-annually, including an assessment of all items available for provincial distribution and their associated pricing. The ISO encourages BC Corrections to continue exploring alternative contracting options to reduce costs or, alternatively, to consider wage increases for individuals in custody to help mitigate the impact of these expenses.

# Identified Strengths

The following strengths illustrate a sample of successful practices currently in place at OCC:

- During cell inspections and unit searches, the OCC leadership team actively supported the development of newer staff by providing clear guidance and fostering a positive learning environment. Additionally, the cell inspections were well organized and efficiently executed with a high level of detail and planning, ensuring all actions were thorough and respectful of individuals' personal items.
- The case management team demonstrated strong organizational practises in tracking and ensuring the completion of essential documentation. This includes case management plans, monthly summaries, and completed Mental Health Needs and/or Indigenous Considerations Forms. These efforts reflect a proactive approach to meeting the needs of individuals in custody, ensuring case management practises are not only thorough and timely but also responsive to the unique circumstances and requirements of each person.
- Okanagan Correctional Centre provides culturally responsive supports for Indigenous individuals. This includes an Indigenous Patient Navigator who, together with the Community Transition Team, assists Indigenous individuals with healthcare-related requests. Okanagan Correctional Centre employs two Indigenous Cultural Liaisons who deliver a wide range of programming to individuals in custody. These services include one-to-one teachings for those who are segregated, separately confined, or experiencing mental health challenges, as well as talking circles, traditional food feasts, medicine pouch making, drumming, and drum-making activities. Okanagan Correctional Centre features an Indigenous yard and garden, a dedicated space for all individuals in custody to connect with the land and sky. This area includes a medicine wheel circle with seating for drumming and an Indigenous Garden.

# Inspection Findings

## Inconsistencies in cell/tier visitation protocols and administration of institutional charges

During off-site documentation review the inspection team noted a Critical Incident Review (CIR) was conducted in 2024 following a serious incident in which an individual in custody was assaulted in their cell by three peers, resulting in significant injuries to the individual. The CIR report highlighted staff had prior concern for violence on the living unit where the assault occurred.

This CIR prompted the inspection team to further investigate the prevalence of in-cell assaults at OCC. Off-site documentation review revealed between January 1, 2024, to September 25, 2025, there were 25 documented incidents of individuals entering cells not assigned to them and committing assaults. It is important to note this data does not account for incidents that may have gone undetected by staff. In all but two cases, the individuals involved were charged and attended a disciplinary hearing.

Further file reviews identified 12 incidents where staff observed individuals entering unauthorized cells or tiers. Although no assaults occurred in these cases, warnings were issued rather than pursuing disciplinary charges. In some cases, individuals received multiple warnings for cell visitation without formally being charged. One client file documented 10 individuals repeatedly entering and exiting a single cell throughout the day.

While on-site at OCC, the inspection team spoke with eight staff members regarding enforcement of cell and tier visitation rules and the use of the disciplinary hearing process. Staff provided the following information:

- Individuals in custody are not permitted to visit other tiers or cells. However, enforcement becomes more challenging in double-bunked units, as it is harder to determine who is authorized to enter a particular cell.
- While cell visitation may occur with staff permission, unauthorized visits happen frequently without consequences, and individuals are not consistently held accountable.

- Staff often issue multiple warnings before considering formal charges, citing challenges in substantiating the behaviour.
- Enforcement is inconsistent due to discretionary permissions being granted. Staff report it would be helpful to have a zero-tolerance approach to cell and tier visitation to reduce violence and improve consistency in enforcement.
- There have been several cases where warnings were issued for cell visitation infractions in lieu of formal charges, based on the belief that such charges are frequently dismissed during disciplinary hearings. Dismissals are often linked to poor documentation rather than the nature of the charge. In some cases, warnings are appropriate, particularly for individuals with mental health concerns.
- There are inconsistencies in how cell and tier visitation rules are enforced across the centre. This inconsistency is concerning given OCC's limited placement options and the need to maintain safety in large units.
- Some staff expressed limited confidence in the disciplinary process, citing insufficient training and discomfort with confronting individuals in custody.

During the inspection, individuals in custody were asked about their understanding and experiences related to cell and tier visitation. Their feedback included the following:

- Some individuals reported concern about safety, particularly among those placed on regular units rather than specialized ones.
- Five individuals reported enforcement varies, some staff allow visitation while others do not, resulting in inconsistent practises.
- While cell visitation may occur with staff permission, individuals stated it frequently happens without authorization, and those involved are not consistently held accountable.

The rules governing individuals' conduct are standardized across BC Corrections and are outlined in the Correction Act Regulation (CAR). They are designed to maintain the safety and security of individuals, staff, and the correctional centre, and all individuals in custody are expected to follow these rules. Breaches may result in disciplinary action as defined by the CAR, with consequences ranging from warnings and extra duties to cell confinement or segregation.

Okanagan Correctional Centre staff acknowledged the challenges in strictly enforcing the prohibition of cell and tier visitation. The "OCC Inmate Information Guide" reflects this rule,

stating: “You are not allowed to go on a living unit tier where your assigned cell is not located, except for the first floor, which has common areas open to all.” However, staff noted that enforcement is complicated because the CAR allows for cell visitation with staff permission. Specifically, Section 21 of the CAR states that an individual must not enter a cell or living unit that is not assigned to them without staff permission, and doing so may result in disciplinary action. Staff report this creates a degree of ambiguity in practise, making consistent enforcement difficult.

The inspection team acknowledges the challenges staff face in consistently enforcing cell and tier visitation rules, which may contribute to an increased risk of cell-based assaults. However, as this issue has been identified by the ISO through investigations and inspections across correctional centres in B.C., we strongly encourage OCC to review practises related to enforcing these rules. These measures are critical to maintaining the safety and security of individuals in custody.

### Recommendation

The ISO recommends OCC Management ensure staff consistently enforce cell/tier visitation rules and initiate the disciplinary hearing process with formal charges for unauthorized visitation when appropriate.

### Inspection Standards Needing Development

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 64. | Following serious incidents, the correctional centre pursues quality improvement and supports individuals and staff |
| 68. | The correctional centre effectively prevents incidents of bullying, violence, and intimidation                      |

# Inspection Findings

## Insufficient unit rule enforcement

During the on-site inspection, the inspection team identified, through both direct observation and interviews, that unit rules were not being enforced consistently by staff. This lack of enforcement is creating an environment where unequal power dynamics of individuals in custody is occurring. These issues were most apparent during mealtimes, where disorganized meal distribution and minimal staff supervision led to unequal access to food. Inconsistent enforcement of general unit rules allowed certain individuals to control shared resources and spaces. Additionally, the use of individual's handmade physical signage, both within the unit and in the courtyard, appeared to reinforce exclusionary or hierarchical dynamics among individuals in custody.

During the inspection, several practises were observed that appear to reinforce informal hierarchies and contribute to unequal power dynamics among individuals. These practices are also inconsistent with the unit rules outlined in the "OCC Inmate Information Guide":

- Staff reported that buckets placed under sinks were being used by dominant individuals in custody ("heavies") to assign dishwashing duties to newer individuals in custody, who are expected to wash dishes on their behalf.
- Graffiti was observed in two yards, including inappropriate imagery such as marijuana leaves, firearms, and a knife through a skull. These markings contribute to an atmosphere of intimidation.
- Numerous handwritten signs were posted on the units near the showers and phones, including messages such as "Back Table ONLY," "Long Term Inmates ONLY," "Don't touch, BACK TABLE". These signs appear to reinforce informal control by certain individuals and restrict access to shared resources.
- During meal distribution no line or order was observed, making it difficult to monitor whether all individuals received meals. Staff were not observed to be applying direct supervision and therefore limited the ability to control the constant movement and what appeared to be a very chaotic environment.

- On two units, juice and apples were concentrated at one table, with only a few individuals receiving them. One individual distributed apples selectively, giving more to those at their own table and excluding others.
- Some individuals were seen taking food directly from others' trays without permission. Individuals responsible for food distribution removed parts of meals from two individuals' trays and placed them on another tray at what appeared to be the 'back table'.
- Individuals were observed entering and exiting the food distribution area freely, grabbing items without staff supervision.
- Two individuals did not receive full meal trays but had access to soup.
- One table near the back of the unit was observed to have a large collection of food items and was the only table with a juice jug.

During the on-site inspection and through survey responses, individuals in custody shared concerns regarding safety, staff responsiveness, and the influence of “heavies” within the units. The following themes emerged:

- Five individuals expressed a lack of trust in staff, stating that reporting safety concerns is futile as no action is taken. One individual noted there are unwritten rules among peers discouraging communication with staff about any issues. They expressed this culture of silence contributes to an environment where intimidation and violence remain unaddressed.
- One individual reported meals are routinely taken by the "back table" group. Refusal to comply with their demands can result in physical assault, including one incident where an individual was allegedly physically assaulted over a meal and sustained physical injuries. This individual stated staff are aware of these dynamics but choose to ignore them.
- One individual reported feeling safer on the mental health unit but raised concerns about other units, particularly regarding the "back table" dynamics, and being unfairly charged or pressured to give up items.
- One individual shared they were assaulted after taking a food item which was claimed by the “heavies”. They were directed by the “heavies” to return to their cell, where an assault allegedly took place.

The inspection team identified inconsistent enforcement of institutional rules by staff has contributed to an environment where certain individuals in custody exert undue influence over others. This lack of consistent supervision has created conditions in which unequal power dynamics can emerge and persist unchecked. In the absence of clearly defined and enforced boundaries, individuals known as “heavies” have been able to exert control over aspects of unit dynamics, undermining safety and contributing to a culture of intimidation and violence.

### Recommendations

The ISO recommends OCC Management establish structured mealtime procedures and ensure staff are actively supervising both meal cart distribution and the monitoring of meal consumption.

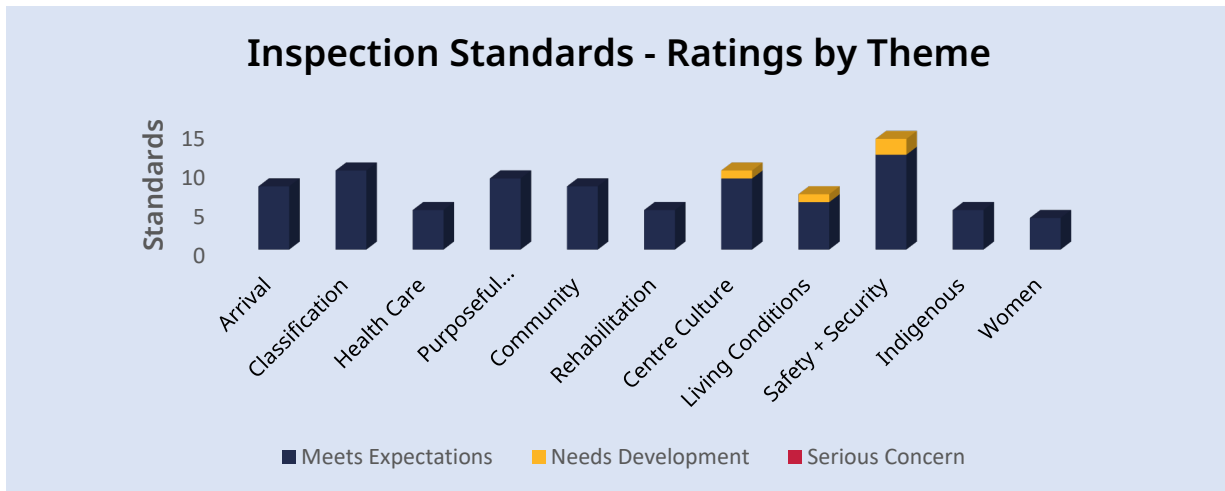
The ISO recommends OCC Management remove any signage and graffiti on the units and the courtyards that may be deemed offensive or contribute to unequal power dynamics for individuals in custody.

### Inspection Standards Needing Development

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 47. | Positive behaviour is encouraged, and individuals understand what is acceptable                |
| 57. | Accommodations, common areas, and workspaces are kept clean and well maintained                |
| 68. | The correctional centre effectively prevents incidents of bullying, violence, and intimidation |

# Conclusion

Based on the inspection findings, OCC demonstrated compliance with 80 out of 84 Inspection Standards assessed. Correctional staff, contractors and individuals in custody actively participated throughout the process, contributing to its overall success.



The inspection highlighted strengths at OCC, including strong leadership support for staff development during operational activities, effective organizational practices within the case management team, and culturally responsive services for Indigenous individuals. Areas requiring improvement include inconsistencies in cell and tier visitation practices, administration of institutional charges, and insufficient enforcement of unit rules.

## Inspection Standards Needing Development

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 47. | Positive behaviour is encouraged, and individuals understand what is acceptable                                     |
| 57. | Accommodations, common areas, and workspaces are kept clean and well maintained                                     |
| 64. | Following serious incidents, the correctional centre pursues quality improvement and supports individuals and staff |
| 68. | The correctional centre effectively prevents incidents of bullying, violence, and intimidation                      |

# Recommendations

- 1** The ISO recommends OCC Management ensure staff consistently enforce cell/tier visitation rules and initiate the disciplinary hearing process with formal charges for unauthorized visitation when appropriate.

Okanagan Correctional Centre management advised they will strengthen the consistent enforcement of existing policies regarding cell visitation, including training led by OCC leadership on the importance of consistent practices and proper enforcement of cell-visitiation procedures.

Okanagan Correctional Centre will continue to incorporate weekly focus items into its regular schedule, including topics related to consistency and cell visitation. These weekly focus areas will reinforce the upcoming training and further support improvements in the consistency and enforcement of cell-visitiation policies.

Target Date: March 31, 2026

- 2** The ISO recommends OCC Management establish structured mealtime procedures and ensure staff are actively supervising both meal cart distribution and the monitoring of meal consumption.

Okanagan Correctional Centre management advised they will strengthen the consistent enforcement of existing policies regarding meal distribution, including delivering training led by OCC leadership on the importance of consistent practices and proper enforcement of meal distribution.

Okanagan Correctional Centre will continue to incorporate weekly focus items into its regular schedule, including topics related to meal distribution. These weekly focus areas will reinforce the upcoming training and further support improvements in the consistency and enforcement of meal distribution policies.

Target Date: March 31, 2026

**3** The ISO recommends OCC Management remove any signage and graffiti on the units and the courtyards that may be deemed offensive or contribute to unequal power dynamics for individuals in custody.

Okanagan Correctional Centre management advised they will strengthen the consistent enforcement of existing policies regarding the removal of graffiti, including training led by OCC leadership on the importance of consistent practices regarding graffiti removal. OCC has in place inmate workers with duties that include the removal of graffiti in areas of the centre.

Target Date: March 31, 2026