

2025-2027

Cycle 2



**INVESTIGATION &  
STANDARDS OFFICE**  
INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT

# INSPECTION STANDARDS



Ministry of  
Attorney General

## Inspection Standards

The standards are used by the Investigation and Standards Office (ISO) to assess treatment and conditions in provincial adult correctional centres in British Columbia (B.C.).

The standards are centred on the treatment and experience of individuals in custody. Each standard describes treatment and conditions a correctional centre is expected to achieve. Standards are grouped into themes and are supported by potential indicators; evidence that may show the standard is being met. Potential indicators are not exhaustive; correctional centres may meet a standard in other ways not listed in this document.

### Operating Context

The ISO is an independent body established by the *Correction Act* (the Act) to provide oversight to BC Corrections, which manages adults who are in custody or under community supervision. The Act provides authority for the ISO to conduct inspections of and investigations within provincial correctional centres.

BC Corrections, Adult Custody Division, operates ten correctional centres throughout the province that house individuals who are on remand awaiting trial or serving a custodial sentence of less than two years. While the physical plant and levels of security vary from centre to centre, each offers programs, education, and vocational training to individuals in custody.

Of note, health care services in adult provincial correctional centres are provided by Provincial Health Services Authority, Correctional Health Services (PHSA/CHS), which is accredited by Accreditation Canada. As such, the provision of health care services is out of scope for inspections. Rather, the standards focus on correctional centres' health care-related responsibilities from an operational perspective, including ensuring individuals in custody have access to necessary health care services and collaboration between correctional centre and health care staff.

### Administrative Fairness Principles

The ISO's work is guided by principles of administrative fairness and natural justice. Administrative fairness is an essential element of quality of the correctional services for which we provide oversight.

Fairness in delivery of services has three main dimensions: procedural, substantive, and relational fairness. These dimensions pertain to the decision-making process, the nature of decisions made, and the treatment of individuals impacted by decisions.

Fairness in correctional service delivery includes informing people of processes that affect them and giving them the opportunity to be heard, acting in accordance with applicable rules, and ensuring decisions are made without bias. Fairness is also about making decisions that are transparent, considerate of individuals' needs and circumstances, and based on relevant information. It is also about treating people respectfully and courteously, as well as providing clear and substantive reasons for decisions so the person affected can understand the process and how the decision was reached.

Additionally, fairness in correctional service delivery requires staff to adopt a stance of cultural humility in their work.

## Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility and Anti-Racism

B.C. has the greatest diversity of Indigenous cultures in Canada, with distinct world views, languages, and traditions. The ISO recognizes the diversity of Indigenous people in B.C., including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Throughout this document we refer to Indigenous people and individuals, with the understanding these terms do not reflect the diversity of cultures.

The ISO has publicly declared our commitment to work with Indigenous partners to advance cultural safety and humility.<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge the existence of widespread and systemic racism, stereotyping, and discrimination perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples have been disproportionately affected by justice system interventions and are overrepresented in B.C. correctional centres.

The ISO places a high priority on Indigenous cultural safety and humility as essential dimensions of quality and safety of the correctional services for which we provide oversight. Cultural safety is defined by each individual's experience, as such, approaches to cultural safety must be individual-centred. Cultural safety must be understood, embraced, and practiced at all levels of the correctional system.

Inspections are informed by ISO's commitment to Indigenous cultural safety and humility and anti-racism. Standards and indicators must reflect and recognize the needs of Indigenous individuals in custody and how correctional systems and practices impact Indigenous people. The ISO acknowledges that we rely on the expertise of our Indigenous partners in drafting standards and indicators that are responsive to the needs of Indigenous individuals in custody.

Cultural safety and humility and anti-racism sets out clear expectations for how the organization is to provide a culturally responsive environment for Indigenous individuals in custody. We note standards responsive to needs of Indigenous individuals in custody may also apply to individuals in custody of any cultural or ethnic background without discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> The Declaration of Commitment Addressing Cultural Safety and Humility and Indigenous-Specific Racism is available on the [ISO website](#).

## Guiding Documents

The standards are responsive primarily to *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which set out 122 generally accepted good principles and practice in the treatment of individuals in custody and correctional centre management. In our development of standards, we referenced the Guidance Document on the Nelson Mandela Rules (Penal Reform International), as well as standards from jurisdictions<sup>2</sup> that operate similar inspection models.

The standards are additionally informed by international, national, and provincial legislation, guidelines, and principles. In particular, the *B.C. Human Rights Code*<sup>3</sup> (the Code) and protected grounds inform and apply to all standards. Several protected grounds under the Code are particularly relevant when examining conditions of incarceration in B.C.; in addition to Indigenous identity (discussed above), these include sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and physical or mental disability. These protected grounds are discussed further below; other grounds are referenced in the standards when relevant (e.g., age, place of origin).

### Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity or Expression

#### Women in custody

Women in custody are a vulnerable group with specific needs and requirements. Standards and indicators must reflect and recognize these needs and how incarceration impacts women.

Although the Nelson Mandela Rules apply to all individuals in custody, the United Nations recognized that these Rules did not draw sufficient attention to women's particular needs. *The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (the Bangkok Rules) were developed to complement and supplement the Nelson Mandela Rules.

Specific standards and indicators for assessing the treatment of women in custody and conditions in correctional centres are interspersed throughout the standards. Gender-specific standards may also, however, apply to individuals in custody of any gender without discrimination. References to 'women' in the standards also include transgender women.

#### Transgender individuals in custody

Transgender individuals in custody are particularly vulnerable and at risk of human rights violations or abuses while incarcerated. Standards and indicators must reflect and recognize the needs of transgender individuals in custody and how they are impacted by correctional systems and practices.

Transgender is an umbrella term that describes individuals whose gender identity (a person's sense of being a man or a woman or another gender) does not completely align with their assigned sex at birth.

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<sup>2</sup> Jurisdictions include the United Kingdom (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons); New Zealand (Office of the Inspectorate – *Te Tari Tirohia*); and several Australian states: Australian Capital Territory (ACT Inspector of Correctional Services); Tasmania (Office of the Custodial Inspector); State of New South Wales (Inspector of Custodial Services); and Queensland (Office of the Chief Inspector for Queensland Corrective Services).

<sup>3</sup> The fundamental protected grounds under the *B.C. Human Rights Code* are generally consistent with those under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The recent addition of Indigenous identity as a protected ground under the B.C. Human Rights Code is particularly relevant to the standards given the overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in custody.

The word ‘transgender’ is used throughout the standards to describe all people whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex at birth (including, for example, non-binary transgender individuals [whose gender identity is neither female nor male]).

The *Yogyakarta Principles*, published in 2006, guide the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Additional principles reflecting developments in international human rights law and practice, the *Yogyakarta Principles plus 10*, were published in 2017. Principles 9 and 10 are specific to transgender people held in detention; however, other principles that focus on issues facing transgender people as a whole were also relevant in drafting the standards.

Specific standards and indicators for assessing the treatment of transgender individuals in custody and conditions in correctional centres are interspersed throughout the standards.

## Physical or Mental Disability

Individuals with mental illnesses and substance use disorders are overrepresented in B.C. correctional centres, and custodial settings pose unique challenges for these individuals. Custodial settings also pose challenges for individuals with physical disabilities. We therefore developed standards to reflect the needs of individuals with mental or physical disabilities.

To do so, we referenced primarily the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), which enshrines that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. CRPD recognizes that disability is an evolving concept that includes “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments”. In addition to clarifying how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities, CRPD identifies areas where adaptations are required for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights.

In developing the standards, we also referenced the *Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care* (PPMI), which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1991.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Some provisions of the PPMI have been criticized and CRPD supersedes the principles in the event of disagreement between the two documents.

## Theme 1 – Arrival in Custody

### Reception, Admission, and Orientation

- 1.** Reception and admission procedures are responsive and supportive
- 2.** The reception and admission process meets individuals' unique needs, including assessments that support their success in custody
- 3.** Orientation processes support individuals and prepares them for their stay in custody
- 4.** Protocols for monitoring acute drug withdrawal are in place upon admission
- 5.** Physical and mental health screening occurs within 24 hours of being received into a correctional centre
- 6.** Individuals' property is stored securely, and individuals can access it upon request

### Court, Escorts, and Transfers

- 7.** Court movements, escorts, and transfers are conducted fairly
- 8.** Transport vehicles and process facilitate conditions that are humane and meet individual needs

## Theme 2 – Classification

### Placement, Classification, and Assessment

- 9.** Information collected from individuals and collateral sources for classification is confidential and client centered
- 10.** Classification decisions are justifiable, thorough, and consider risk and need assessments
- 11.** Individuals are placed in units based on their assessed risks and needs
- 12.** Remanded individuals are classified and supported accordingly

### Specialized Units and Placements

- 13.** Specialized units and placements provide support, and individuals are encouraged to participate in their own case management
- 14.** Individuals' access to correctional centre resources is not restricted by being housed on a specialized unit or placement
- 15.** Right living and therapeutic community placements provide individuals with programming and interventions to improve their outcomes

### Segregation and Separate Confinement

- 16.** Individuals understand the reasons for their placement in segregation and separate confinement and have the right to make submissions about their placement
- 17.** Segregation units are used appropriately and for the minimum time possible
- 18.** Individuals in segregation or separate confinement are given support and their basic needs are met

## Theme 3 – Health Care

### Collaborative and Accessible Care

- 19.** Health care staff and correctional staff work cooperatively to ensure provision of health care services to individuals in custody
- 20.** The correctional centre facilitates individuals' access to specialist and emergency health care when necessary
- 21.** Effective medication distribution procedures are in place

### Mental Health

- 22.** Individuals with mental health needs are identified and supported
- 23.** Individuals identified as being at-risk of self harm or suicide are provided due care and classified accordingly

## Theme 4 – Programming and Purposeful Activity

### Daily Activities and Time Out of Cell

- 24.** Individuals receive a reasonable amount of out of cell time that is sufficient to meet their needs
- 25.** The correctional centre provides a clear, reasonable, and structured schedule

### Education and Work Programs

- 26.** Individuals receive educational services and are supported and encouraged to participate in the learning process
- 27.** Individuals have access to library and educational amenities
- 28.** Individuals are encouraged to work while in custody and have access to equitable work programs that provide fair remuneration
- 29.** Work programs provide individuals the opportunity to learn valuable skills

### Recreation, Arts, and Exercise

- 30.** All individuals have access to varied recreational and arts and crafts activities
- 31.** Individuals are encouraged and able to exercise and have access to appropriate amenities

### Spiritual and Religious Activity

- 32.** Individuals have access to responsive spiritual and religious programming and representatives

## Theme 5 – Community Contacts and Connections

### Maintaining Connections

- 33.** Individuals are supported to maintain their relationships with family, friends, and communities
- 34.** Individuals have access to an effective and secure mail service
- 35.** Individuals have access to an effective and secure telephone service

### Legal and Community Services

- 36.** Legal resources are accessible to all individuals
- 37.** The correctional centre maintains relationships with communities and external service providers to support individuals' connections with resources

### Visitation and Temporary Absences

*Unless otherwise specified, standards related to visitation apply to both in-person and virtual visits.*

- 38.** The visitation process is accessible and supportive of the maintenance of individuals' relationships with their family, friends, and communities
- 39.** Visits from dependant children are encouraged, where appropriate, and a safe environment for children is maintained in correctional centre visitation areas
- 40.** Temporary absences (TAs) are accessible to individuals and are conducted in a secure, compassionate manner

## Theme 6 – Case Management and Release Planning

### Case Management

- 41.** The electronic case management system is used by all staff to meet requirements and support correctional objectives
- 42.** Staff support the rehabilitation of individuals through individualized case management

### Rehabilitative Programming

- 43.** The correctional centre provides a range of programs and interventions to support, rehabilitate, and meet the needs of individuals

### Release Planning

- 44.** Effective pre-release planning takes place to support individuals in their transition to the community
- 45.** Discharge procedures and release planning are completed thoroughly while supporting the client's reintegration into the community

## Theme 7 – Correctional Centre Culture

### Staff-Client Relationships

- 46.** Staff treat individuals with respect, dignity, and humanity, and support them to make positive changes
- 47.** Positive behaviour is encouraged, and individuals understand what is acceptable

### Equality, Equity, and Diversity

- 48.** The correctional centre promotes equality, equity, and diversity and a culture free from discrimination
- 49.** The correctional centre accommodates all individuals regardless of literacy or language of choice
- 50.** The correctional centre accommodates individuals with physical disabilities and ensures all have equal access to correctional centre life

### Requests, Complaints, and Feedback

- 51.** The request and complaint processes are accessible and address individuals' concerns in a timely manner
- 52.** Individuals are given the opportunity to provide feedback to the correctional centre

### Staff Recruitment and Training

- 53.** The correctional centre and Adult Custody Division utilize selection and retention strategies to maintain staffing levels
- 54.** Correctional centre staff are trained to carry out every aspect of their roles effectively and professionally
- 55.** Correctional centre staff demonstrate a trauma-informed approach

## Theme 8 – Accommodations and Living Conditions

### Living Conditions

- 56.** The number of individuals housed in the correctional centre is determined by its design capacity
- 57.** Accommodations, common areas, and workspaces are kept clean and well maintained

### Clothing, Bedding, and Hygiene

- 58.** Individuals are provided with clean clothing and bedding in sufficient quantity
- 59.** Individuals are provided with adequate facilities, support, and supplies to maintain their own hygiene

### Food Services and Canteen

- 60.** Individuals are provided with food and drink of sufficient quantity and quality that meet nutritional requirements and are culturally responsive
- 61.** The correctional centre ensures contractors and service staff prepare and serve food in a secure and hygienic manner
- 62.** Individuals are given the opportunity to make canteen purchases, including a wide variety of fairly priced goods

## Theme 9 – Safety and Security

### Codes and Critical Incidents

- 63.** Critical incident and code response processes ensure the safety of individuals and staff
- 64.** Following serious incidents, the correctional centre pursues quality improvement and supports individuals and staff

### Searches and Contraband

- 65.** The correctional centre drug and contraband interdiction strategy protects individuals in custody
- 66.** Searches are conducted safely and effectively
- 67.** Searches are trauma-informed and respect the dignity of individuals

### Bullying and Violence Reduction

- 68.** The correctional centre effectively prevents incidents of bullying, violence, and intimidation
- 69.** Reports of abuse are investigated, and reporting individuals are provided support

### Discipline

- 70.** Use of the disciplinary process is clearly defined, reasonable, and treated as a measure of last resort
- 71.** Disciplinary hearings are conducted fairly and incorporate elements of natural justice
- 72.** Disciplinary sanctions are proportionate and never cruel or degrading

## Use of Force

- 73.** When applied, force is legitimate and used only as a last resort
- 74.** When used, force is employed to the minimum extent necessary to gain compliance
- 75.** After force or restraints have been used, appropriate post-incident procedures are carried out
- 76.** Instruments of restraint and placement on special handling protocols occur only to the minimum extent necessary to ensure safety

## Theme 10: Indigenous Culture

### Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility

- 77.** The management of the correctional centre develops collaborative relationships with Indigenous partners to advance reconciliation efforts
- 78.** Staff are committed to Indigenous cultural safety, cultural humility, and anti-racism, with access to ongoing support

### Indigenous Cultural Programming

- 79.** Individuals have access to a range of Indigenous programming
- 80.** The correctional centre respects the cultural rights of Indigenous individuals by supporting access to traditional ceremonies and customs, through practices, art, language, and connections to the land.
- 81.** Indigenous individuals have access to rehabilitation programs based on and informed by Indigenous culture, practices, values, and teachings

## Appendix A – Correctional Centres Housing Women

- A1.** Women’s gender-specific needs are accurately assessed and met by the correctional centre
- A2.** The correctional centre provides gender-specific health care and staff are knowledgeable about and responsive to women’s mental health needs
- A3.** The correctional centre provides programs and interventions that match the needs of women in custody
- A4.** Pre-natal and post-natal care are provided to women in custody and, if applicable, their children