



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the State Inspector General

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The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Youngkin,

The Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) conducted an unannounced inspection of Buckingham Correctional Center. This report includes a summary of the factors listed in *Code of Virginia* § 53.1-17.6 (B), recommendations, safety and compliance classification, recommended timeline for the next inspection, and the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) response to the inspection.

Inspection Report: Buckingham Correctional Center
June 25, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Background

Buckingham Correctional Center is a Security Level III, medium security facility located in Dillwyn, Virginia. The facility has an operational capacity of 1,117 male inmates. At the time of inspection, 1,065 male inmates were housed at the facility. The facility was in the process of transitioning to the Virginia Model Prison by September 2025. By pairing positive incentives with fair, consistent accountability, this model promotes safety, personal growth, and a more respectful environment for everyone.

Inspection Scope

This inspection was not intended to assess compliance with legislative or regulatory requirements, nor assess compliance with Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) policies, though both were considered where relevant. The facility inspection was conducted

with the Warden, Major, Safety Officer, and Institutional Program Manager. The inspection included discussions with staff, management, and inmates, along with observations of the facility's physical environment and daily operations.

Areas reviewed during the inspection included five housing units (A, B, C, D and N), a Restorative Housing Unit (RHU), infirmary, inmate dining hall, staff dining hall, recreation areas, intake area, visiting room, laundry services area, programs and services building (J-Building), administrative offices, medical, dental, commissary, gymnasium, music room, law library, chaplain's room/religious library, and the outer perimeter.

Safety/Security

The facility had several security measures in place, including a visitor log, walk-through magnetometer, X-ray machine, cellular phone detection unit, and pat-down/frisk searches to screen staff, inmates, and visitors. Security is further reinforced by 254 surveillance cameras, watch towers, and a roving patrol. The perimeter of the facility was secured with two 16-foot fences topped with razor wire along with the internal fence featuring a motion detection system. Fire extinguishers were accessible to staff and inmates throughout the facility. Fire extinguishers observed during the inspection were current and properly tagged, showing adherence to fire safety codes, routine maintenance, and recordkeeping.

Housing

Buckingham's housing area consisted of four general population housing units and a Restrictive Housing Unit (RHU). Each housing unit included four double-tiered pods, designated as 100, 200, 300, and 400, with each pod containing 32 cells. Within the housing units, there were designated specialty pods, including a Veterans Pod, an Honor Pod, and a Shared Alliance Management (SAM) Unit. The SAM Unit is designed to maintain eligible inmates in the general population setting, or a modified general population setting. This is accomplished with additional programming and staff support, rather than isolating inmates in restrictive housing. All cells in the general population pods were equipped with double bunks, while RHU is equipped with single bunk housing. RHU shares the same design and layout as the other pods.

Prior to entering each pod, the presence of a female was audibly announced, and a Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) logbook was used to document the inspector's presence. Each cell is equipped with bunks, mattress pads, pillows, linens, electrical outlets, a combination sink/toilet unit, a vented outdoor window, and an intercom system. The pod layouts are uniform, with cells lining the outer walls and a central dayroom in the interior. The common area contains up to six telephones, one JPay kiosk, one video visitation kiosk, one television, four showers, a water fountain, a garbage can, a clock, a wall-mounted ironing board, surveillance cameras, five tables, and a temperature gauge. PREA informational posters were visibly displayed throughout the housing units. Additionally, some pods featured an ice machine for inmate use.

During the inspection, temperatures in the housing units ranged from 85°F to 92°F. The housing units, constructed in 1982, were not equipped with climate-controlled Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems. To mitigate the elevated indoor temperatures, the facility utilized five industrial fans per housing unit to promote air circulation. One misting fan was present in nearly every unit. The misting function was not in use at the time of inspection due to inmate reports of the misting fan causing increased humidity in the units. Inmates were permitted to use one personal fan, purchased through the commissary, for air circulation within their cells. Inmates who purchased a second fan reported the additional fans were confiscated due to a conflict with policy.

Inspectors observed staff adhering to VADOC Operational Procedure 801.1, Section 2E, Environmental Conditions, related to the distribution of frozen water pouches to inmates as a heat mitigation measure. Despite efforts, inspectors received negative feedback from inmates regarding the elevated temperatures in the housing units. Multiple inmates reported their cells felt warmer than the common areas. On the day of inspection, the outdoor temperature was approximately 99°F and the humidity was estimated at 60%.

The control booth design allowed officers to observe inmates in two adjacent pods. Each booth was equipped with a wall-mounted air conditioning unit, which maintained temperatures between 77°F and 81°F at the time of the inspection. However, inspectors observed condensation forming above the units, resulting in damaged acoustic ceiling tiles. Many of the ceiling tiles appeared to require replacement. The control booth is scheduled for upgrades, including the installation of new control boards and a modernized climate control system.

At the time of the inspection, inmate telephones, JPay kiosks, and video visitation kiosks were operational excluding one telephone needing repair and one JPay kiosk which reportedly required syncing. Inspectors notified facility staff upon discovering inoperable showers in several housing units, which prompted the immediate initiation of work orders. All other showers in the pods were functioning with consistent water pressure and temperature. Sinks, water fountains, and toilets were also operational and showed no signs of leakage.

Housing Units A and B share a designated outdoor recreational yard, while Housing Units C and D share another. The recreational areas are equipped with weightlifting stations, softball and soccer fields, basketball hoops, cornhole sets, two fixed sitting benches, and one stationary table. The recreational spaces remain accessible to inmates until dusk. During the inspection, several inmates were observed utilizing the larger outdoor recreation area, where a water station was available for hydration.

Building N houses both RHU and general population inmates and mirrors the design of the other housing units. This unit also features 32 recreation yard security enclosures (cells), six of

which were covered with tarps for shade. As part of the facility's transition to the Virginia Model, this housing unit and its associated recreational area were slated to be converted into an incentive-based housing unit.

Sanitation

The facility was observed to be clean and free of clutter in all areas. The housing units appeared to be properly sanitized. Each housing unit had inmate workers designated as inmate porters responsible for sweeping and mopping the area daily using detergent or a germicidal agent.

All waste was properly contained and discarded in a sanitary manner. Inspectors noticed many flying insects throughout the complex. Common area toilets and sinks were sanitized as needed by inmate workers. Cleaning equipment and chemicals were available throughout the facility.

Each housing unit is equipped with a washer and dryer for laundering inmate personal clothing items. The central laundry room features four commercial washers and nine commercial dryers for cleaning state issued bed linens. At the time of the inspection, one of the commercial dryers was inoperable, pending the receipt and installation of a replacement part. Additionally, inmates' clothing was observed over handrails throughout the housing units.

Food Services

The facility was equipped with two dining halls designated for inmates and a separate dining area for staff. Inmate meals are distributed in either Dining Hall A or B. Both the dining and food service areas were noted to be clean, orderly, and well-maintained. A sanitation checklist was visibly posted within the food service area, and both daily and weekly cleaning schedules were prominently displayed in the dining halls. Weekly menus were accessible to inmates via postings in the housing units. Meals were served on compartmentalized trays in the dining hall. When necessary, each tray was covered with a white plastic lid to maintain food quality during transport to inmates in their housing units. During the inspection, the kitchen and dining areas were observed to be free of pests and insects; however, a fly was observed in the freezer area.

During the lunch preparation period, inspectors observed inmates assigned to food service duties. All inmates were appropriately outfitted with food safety gear, including gloves, hair nets, and aprons. The lunch meal consisted of chicken, sweet potatoes, cabbage, bread, and a cookie. The staff dining area was also reviewed and featured a distinct menu offering. Both the staff dining room and associated food service areas were found to be clean, well-organized, and in compliance with sanitation standards.

Large Gymnasium/Music

The facility included a building that housed a large gymnasium with a basketball court, weight room, music room, tables for board games, barbershop, and televisions. A black substance was

observed leaking from the ceiling of the gym that discolored a wall. This was reported to the warden at the time of the inspection. This space is utilized in addition to outdoor recreational activities. The indoor weight room featured various workout machines, free weights and cardio equipment. A recreation schedule was observed on the wall of the gym. The air in the room was warm despite industrial fans throughout the space.

On one side of the gymnasium, a room was designated as a band room, equipped with musical instruments donated to the facility for inmate use. Nearby, there was a designated space for a barbershop, with each building assigned a specific day to receive barbering services. Additionally, inspectors observed a cool-down room, designed for use by one inmate at a time, which featured calming wall murals and a comfortable chair.

Visitation Room and Intake Area

The visitation room was observed to be spacious and equipped with movable tables and plastic chairs. The facility can accommodate a maximum of 80 visits at a time. It included food and drink vending machines, which were operational at the time of the inspection. On the date of inspection, Jet Dental provided dental hygiene services for the inmates in the visitation area. This space is routinely used for visiting providers such as dental hygienists and optometry to accommodate the greatest number of inmates at one time. One wall featured a detailed underwater mural, adding a welcoming atmosphere to the space. The room was clean, well-lit, and monitored by video cameras.

The intake area provided a clean and semi-private space for receiving new inmates. Upon arrival, inmates are processed through a body scanner, searched, and issued undergarments, uniform clothing, and hygiene products. Inmate property is mailed separately from the previous facility and typically arrives several days after the inmate's arrival. According to staff, inmates were present when incoming property was inventoried. The uniform storage room was observed to be clean and well-organized.

Medical Services

The facility's medical unit consisted of a triage area, examination room, observation unit, pharmacy, staff lounge, dental area, office, and storage space. The infirmary unit consisted of five beds and one observation room. According to the nursing staff, inmates who submitted sick call requests were seen within 24 hours. Nurses are assigned to each of the housing units and conduct sick call access for inmates submitting non-emergency medical requests, Monday through Friday in the housing units. Blood sugar testing, diabetic medications, and other regularly prescribed medications are also administered in the housing units. A full-time doctor is available Tuesday through Friday, and a nurse practitioner is available Monday through Thursday. These two providers are supplemented with an hourly doctor as well. Telemedicine

appointments are also available for inmates. Two dental hygienists and a dentist are also available for dental services.

Programs/Services Building

The programs and services building included several General Education Development (GED), vocational, mental health, and computer classrooms. Both the general and religious libraries offered extensive book collections. Some of the classrooms were climate controlled, however most of the classrooms did not have an air conditioning unit and were at least 80°F. Inspectors observed multiple ceiling leaks in the classrooms of the J-building, with water being collected in trash cans and buckets placed throughout the affected areas.

Eligible inmates are encouraged to participate in employment opportunities, rehabilitation, reintegration, and training programs. Available programs included: Anger Management SAMHSA, Canine Obedience Training FETCH, Citizenship Journal, Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abusers (CBI-SA), Decision Points, Dialogue Skills Training, Orientation, Peer Support Program, Re-entry Money Smart, Re-entry Planning, Re-entry Seminars, Restorative Justice—How to Handle Conflict, Thinking for a Change, Veteran’s Support Group, and other therapeutic groups.

This facility also participates in Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) workshops and features the metal shop that provides vocational opportunities for inmates in areas such as welding, powder coating, AutoCAD design, manufacturing assembly, and other skills and positions.

Complaint, Grievance, and Administrative Forms

Written complaint, regular grievance, and emergency grievance forms were available and accessible to inmates within their assigned housing unit control booth. Inmates are instructed to inform the assigned security booth officer of their request, and the officer will provide the appropriate form. The housing units also had designated “Pod Pals,” who are inmate workers who assist in keeping bulletin board information up to date and ensuring forms are available to the unit. Completed forms are placed in the designated locked drop box located outside on the main boulevard. Emergency grievances must be submitted directly to a staff member for processing.

Additional forms included: general inmate request, trust—savings withdrawal, trust—GTL withdrawal, withdrawal requests, law library requests, reasonable accommodation, personal property add/drop, property list, indigent services, job application, commissary menu, commissary special order, inmate evidence request, and witness request forms. The general inmate request form is used for inmates to request appointments, information, or other services.

Additional Information

As reported by facility management:

- **Staffing:** Buckingham employed 269 security staff and 64 non-security staff at the time of inspection, with 92 security and eight non-security positions vacant. Over the past year, 16 staff members received disciplinary action. The average tenure for correctional staff was nine years. *VADOC provided the staff-to-inmate ratio at the facility; however, due to security concerns, this information will not be publicly reported.*
- **Lockdowns:** Buckingham experienced 13 lockdowns over the past three years, including five in the last year. The most recent scheduled lockdown occurred on January 21, 2025. The last unscheduled lockdown occurred on May 14, 2025.
- **Physical/Sexual Assaults/Deaths:** Buckingham reported seven serious physical assaults in the past three years. Three of the seven assaults occurred in the last year. Reportedly, there were zero sexual assaults in the past three years. There were 10 inmate deaths reported in the past three years. Two of the deaths were related to cancer, three were due to cardiovascular related illnesses, one suicide, one drug overdose, and three additional death cases which are pending determination by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).
- **Visitations:** In calendar year 2024, the facility received 3,578 requests for in-person visits; 49 of the visits were denied due to body scanner anomaly and canine alerts. Additionally, 9,819 video visit requests were received, of which 564 were denied due to modified program (including lockdown).

Recommendations

Based on the items observed during this inspection, OSIG recommends the facility:

- Conduct a feasibility study and proposal to install Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems in housing units to optimize temperatures to safeguard the health and safety of inmates and staff.
- Consider installing a heat safety monitoring system for accurate indoor temperature and humidity monitoring for housing units and general living areas.
- Initiate a heat-related pathology policy which outlines procedures for indoor temperature monitoring and the relocation of at-risk inmates to cooler areas, such as from the recreation yard to the housing unit, when temperatures exceed safe levels. It also provides guidance on ventilation and cooling measures, specifying when staff should use unit fans, exhaust fans, and misting devices. Additionally, the policy directs staff and inmates

during periods of extreme heat, including limiting outdoor activities to reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses, particularly for inmates prescribed Heat Alert Medications.

- Maintain a list of inmates on Heat Alert Medications. The list will ensure the safe and effective use of Heat Alert Medications and the communication and dissemination of the Heat Alert Medication List to all health care staff. All housing unit staff should maintain a Heat Alert Medication List and take special precautions to prevent heat related illness in patients prescribed medications that have the potential to impair thermoregulation. All staff should be trained in relation to this policy and the necessary precautions.
- Complete the Housing Unit J air conditioning repairs.
- Install ceiling mounted industrial fans in the housing units for improved circulation.
- Consider allowing inmates to have two personal fans for air circulation in their cells.
- Conduct institutional duct cleaning to remove any dust, dirt or allergens which may impede air flow into the cells.
- Complete roof repair assessments on the large gymnasium and Housing Unit J.
- Collect and analyze samples of black substances from the gymnasium ceiling and walls for potential mold identification.
- While maintaining state and federal regulations (including Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)), adapt enhanced cleaning agents. Train staff and inmates on the use of chemicals formulated to remove black substance on gymnasium walls.
- Consider hiring a professional remediation firm rather than conducting routine cleaning to eliminate the black substance. Especially consider this option if the black substance is tested and identified as black mold (*Stachybotrys chartarum*) as this can directly pose a health risk for both inmates and staff.
- Repair the broken showers in housing units.

Inspectors Comments

We would like to thank Buckingham Correctional Center staff for their cooperation and assistance during this inspection. Our team was impressed by the comradery of the staff members which reflected greatly during the inspection.

Facility Classification

Tier II – This facility had violations of rights, substandard conditions of confinement, or substandard programming options requiring an inspection within 18 to 36 months.

Department of Corrections Response

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) appreciates the Office of the State Inspector General's (OSIG) comprehensive and constructive inspection of Buckingham Correctional Center. We are encouraged that the report reflects the facility's commitment to safety, security, and the provision of rehabilitative programming in a structured and responsive environment.

Several of the recommendations outlined in the report have already been addressed. Work orders were initiated during the inspection to repair broken showers and address ceiling tile damage in the control booths. The facility is actively working to complete air conditioning repairs in Housing Unit J and has begun assessing roof repairs for both the gymnasium and Housing Unit J.

To improve temperature regulation and air quality, the facility is evaluating the installation of ceiling-mounted industrial fans and conducting a feasibility study for HVAC installation in housing units. Institutional duct cleaning is also being scheduled to improve airflow and reduce allergens. Inmates continue to receive frozen water pouches, and staff are adhering to VADOC Operating Procedure 801.1 regarding environmental conditions. The Department is reviewing policies related to heat safety monitoring and the use of personal fans to enhance inmate comfort during extreme temperatures.

In response to concerns about the black substance observed in the gymnasium, samples are being collected for analysis. If identified as mold, a professional remediation firm will be contracted to ensure safe removal. In the interim, enhanced cleaning agents are being used, and staff and inmates are being trained on proper chemical handling procedures.

The facility continues to maintain high standards of sanitation and cleanliness. Inmate porters are assigned to daily cleaning duties, and sanitation checklists are prominently displayed in food service areas. The dining halls and kitchen were observed to be clean and well-organized, with food safety protocols followed during meal preparation and service.

We are proud of the programming offered at Buckingham Correctional Center, including vocational training in welding, AutoCAD, and manufacturing, as well as therapeutic and reentry programs such as Anger Management, Restorative Justice, and the Canine Obedience Training FETCH program. These initiatives support inmate rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community.

VADOC remains committed to continuous improvement and appreciates OSIG's recognition of the facility's professionalism and responsiveness. We will continue to implement enhancements where needed while upholding the standards reflected in OSIG's Tier II classification.

OSIG appreciates the assistance provided by the Department of Corrections during this inspection. Please contact me with any questions at 804-625-3255 or corrine.louden@osig.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,



Corrine A. Louden,
Chief Deputy Inspector General

cc: The Honorable John Littel, Chief of Staff to Governor Youngkin
Justin Vélez-Hagan, Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Youngkin
Kate Stockhausen, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
Jason Miyares, Attorney General of Virginia
Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services
House Committee on Public Safety
Corrections Oversight Committee
Chadwick Dotson, Director, Virginia Department of Corrections
Dave Robinson, Chief Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Corrections
Holly Cline, Chief of Staff, Virginia Department of Corrections