



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the State Inspector General

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December 15, 2025

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 Pocahontas State 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: Pocahontas State Correctional Center
May 14, 2025, at 10:10 a.m.

Background

Pocahontas State Correctional Center, established in 2007, operates as a Level III custody facility located in Pocahontas, Virginia. Earlier this year, the facility underwent a reclassification from Level IV to Level III; however, it continues to house a limited number of Level IV inmates. The majority of the higher custody inmates have been transferred to other facilities, specifically, Keen Mountain Correctional Center and River North Correctional Center.

Pocahontas actively promotes inmate engagement in a variety of technical and vocational training programs designed to equip inmates with valuable skills for successful reintegration into their communities. These programs include Flooring Application, Computer-Aided Drafting (CAD), Small Engine Repair, and General Building Maintenance. The facility's infrastructure comprises four housing units. Each housing unit is divided into three separate

units; collectively, they can accommodate up to 1,044 inmates. At the time of the inspection, the population was 829 inmates.

Pocahontas initiated the Fentanyl Response Program. This is a specialized program aimed at providing support and intervention for inmates who test positive for fentanyl upon intake or while housed at the facility. Additionally, the facility maintains a Restorative Housing Unit (RHU), designed to house inmates requiring protective custody or serving time on a disciplinary sanction.

Inspection Scope

The inspection was not intended to assess compliance with legislative or regulatory requirements, nor assess compliance with VADOC policies. However, relevant policies and regulations were taken into consideration where appropriate. The inspection was conducted in collaboration with the Acting Warden, Operations Manager, and the Housing Unit Managers.

The assessment methodology employed during this inspection was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the facility's operations and environment. The inspection team used a variety of methods to gain an understanding of daily life and operations at the facility. This included inquiries and conversations with staff and inmates, as well as extensive on-site observation. Inspectors observed how staff and inmates interacted and was attentive to how procedures were followed throughout the facility.

The areas inspected included administrative offices, all four housing units, the commissary, control room, intake area, outdoor recreation yards, gymnasium, staff dining area, inmate chow halls, laundry facilities, medical and dental clinics, vocational and educational classrooms, library and law library, RHU, the visitation area, and the secured outer perimeter. Additionally, documentation such as program schedules and waitlists, maintenance work orders, and surveillance system inventories were reviewed to provide added context and detail.

Safety/Security

Pocahontas employed several security measures to intercept the introduction of contraband into the facility. Security procedures included a visitation log, walk-through magnetometer, body scan machine, cellular phone detector, and a pat down search for screening staff, inmates, and visitors.

Security at the facility was enhanced with 195 cameras that are on a 90 day video archive. Inspectors were provided a list of all cameras which either provided a fixed view or a Pan-Tilt-Zoom (PTZ) view. The Acting Warden advised that the facility was actively switching all cameras over to the MaxPro models, and expected to have the upgrades completed in the near future.

The perimeter of the facility was protected by dual fencing which was supplemented with razor and barbed wire. There were two entrances into the facility utilized for staff, inmate transfers, and visitors. Fire extinguishers observed during the inspection were current, properly tagged, showing adherence to fire safety codes and routine maintenance and recordkeeping.

Staffing

On the date of the inspection, staffing at Pocahontas was deemed adequate to support the operational needs of the facility. There were multiple housing unit managers available to assist during the inspection. Staff demonstrated a knowledgeable attitude to the inmate's needs. Numerous inmates requested assistance during the inspection and were addressed appropriately by staff members, which reflected an engaged workforce.

Housing

Pocahontas was comprised of four housing unit buildings labeled A, B, C, and D. The housing units were similar in structure and cell style with double bunks in each cell, and three separate sections in each housing unit. The officer control room was positioned above the units, overseeing the area. When inspectors entered, the announcement "female on the floor" was broadcasted loudly over the unit's intercom system to comply with PREA regulations. However, it was difficult to hear and understand what was being said over the intercom, specifically in Housing Units C1, C2, and C3, due to background noise and static interference. Each unit contained 40 cells, accommodating a total of 80 inmates.

Inspectors consistently noted the presence of televisions in all housing units, which broadcasted facility announcements on a continuous loop. Amenities in each unit's common area included wall-mounted televisions, six telephones, a JPay kiosk, a video visitation station, two water fountains, two microwaves, an iron and ironing board, along with ten tables with four chairs at each table. Inmate staffing in the units included one "Pod Clerk" who was responsible for maintaining all inmate forms as these allowed inmates to request documents through their peers without direct staff involvement. Inmate porters were divided into five "house-men," four "shower-men," and one designated "closet-man." These porters were tasked with cleaning the housing common areas, showers, and managing cleaning chemicals.

Housing Sections A1, A2, and A3 shared similar layouts, featuring cells on both lower and upper floors. Each unit also had community showers with six shower stalls. While the area was generally clean, inspectors noted trash scattered on the common area floors, flickering or non-working ceiling lights, black stains (possible mold) above showers, and one shower that did not provide hot water. Housing Section A3 was comprised of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) classified inmates along with cells for re-entry inmates.

Housing Sections B1 and B2 were designated for the general population, while Section B3 served as the Honors Section. Housing Section B1 was labeled the "Good Living Unit." The

canine program was conducted in Section B1. This program placed dogs rescued from local shelters into the care of inmates, as the inmates helped train and care for the dogs to prevent euthanasia and assist with adoption. This housing unit also had a shower without hot water and multiple non-working showers.

Housing Unit C, like A and B, was divided into three sections but was designated entirely for general population. Housing Sections C1, C2, and C3 have a total capacity of 80 inmates each, using the double bunk design. The units had intercom announcements like the others, though it was difficult to clearly hear the broadcasted information. The general housing design was consistent with the previous units. In Section C3, a large fan was installed in the common area to help decrease the temperature during the warm weather.

Housing Sections D1, D2, and D3 followed the same layout as the others. Unit D was divided into three sections: D1 housed the vulnerable inmate population alongside the Shared Allied Management (SAM) program participants. D2 was reserved for inmates identified with fentanyl use. The inmates in this unit are identified by wearing yellow jumpsuits to distinguish them and keep them separate from others. D3 was an overflow for the RHU. Cells were arranged around a centralized common area. Inspectors noted D3 had one shower which was not functioning, and another which failed to provide hot water.

Inspectors were notified that this facility had experienced a storm earlier that day, causing a power outage affecting the inmate telephones, rendering them inoperable during the inspection. Due to the outage, inspectors could not verify the full functionality of inmate accessed telephones. Staff advised that they contacted Global Tel Link (GTL), the inmate telephone provider and were waiting for the arrival of the technicians to complete the repairs.

The SAM program was introduced in 2018 by VADOC to reduce the use of restrictive housing placements. SAM provided enhanced care management for inmates falling into one of three groups: mentally ill, medically infirmed, or vulnerable individuals. This program aimed to better address inmate needs while lessening the strain on security, mental health staff, and medical staff. Though SAM inmates had no distinctive uniforms, they were separated from the general population community.

The facility operated a Fentanyl Response Program, isolating inmates who tested positive for fentanyl. This group was housed separately with distinct recreation schedules, mealtimes, and movement protocols to prevent contact with other inmates.

Restorative Housing Unit (RHU)

The facility's RHU contained 20 cells, with 18 double bunked and two single cells. The RHU had four showers inside the unit, and inmates were allowed 20 minutes daily to shower inside

their cells. The RHU recreation yard consisted of three covered and seven uncovered recreation yard security enclosures (cells), with telephones installed in three of the enclosures.

Inside the RHU building, there was a mobile (rolling) telephone available for inmate use during recreation. The unit also had stationary restraint tables accessible for inmate use when necessary (used for video visitation). Inmates were able to utilize the grievance procedure by requesting documents from staff and placing them in the grievance box when completed.

Sanitation

Though Pocahontas had inmate workers assigned to clean the facility along with housing units, the overall cleanliness of the facility was inadequate. Inspectors observed multiple areas where trash and debris were discovered. Specifically, the two cool down rooms had trash in the cells, and the toilet basin had not been cleaned. Additionally, the water was inoperable in the sinks in the cool down rooms.

During the inspection, trash was observed on the floors in the housing units and also in the showers, the intake area, and the property room. Each housing unit employed one closet-man worker, five house-men workers, and four shower-men workers to handle the daily cleanings in the units.

There were no signs of pests or rodents observed during the inspection. The facility's safety officer was responsible for implementing pest control, which was done on an as-needed basis. Cleaning equipment and chemicals were readily available throughout the facility and in order to keep abreast of what items were being used, a shadow board was implemented in the closet for accountability of all cleaning equipment. There was a sign out sheet for chemicals and cleaning supplies posted on the door of the cleaning closet.

Laundry operations were supported by two commercial washing machines and two clothes dryers servicing state-issued linens and inmate personal items. Nine inmate laundry workers facilitated laundry services, with linen exchanges occurring weekly on Fridays.

As of May 14, 2025, the facility had a total of 33 work orders to address maintenance issues within the facility. These work orders were comprised of a variety of problems ranging from cracks on the floors to leaking ceilings. There were minimal repairs needed in the housing units noted on the work orders.

Medical

The medical department was staffed by 16 full-time employees, including Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), contract nurses, two part-time nurses, a physician present three days weekly, a full-time dentist on-site five days a week, and a visiting eye doctor

attending once monthly. The department also included a dietician available via phone consultation.

The medical suite comprised of a nurses' station, multiple examination rooms, four medical observation beds, two negative pressure isolation cells, and two surveillance camera-monitored cells utilized as overflow for the RHU. Daily sick call appointments averaged between 20 and 30 inmates per day, with efforts made to provide prompt medical attention. A mobile imaging service contract allowed for X-rays to be conducted on-site.

Inspectors observed a sign, in the dentist office which stated, "*These are NOT emergencies. Tooth broken off 'down to the gum.' Teeth hurt when I drink cold/hot water, Gums hurt, gums bleed, Broken denture, lost my filling(s), Wires from my braces cutting my cheek, Tooth cutting my tongue, Bit on a rock while eating.*" Inspectors questioned what qualified as an emergency, but with the dentist off-site, the ambiguity remained unresolved. A pharmacy was located on-site and underwent biannual inspections, with the most recent inspection completed on May 6, 2025. The facility utilized Bluefield as a backup pharmacy if medications are not readily available at the facility. The pharmacy is inspected once every six months with the last inspection date of May 6, 2025.

Food Services

Pocahontas operated two chow halls, one for Housing Units A and B and the other for Housing Units C and D. Each chow hall accommodated a total of 120 inmates with four tables having wheelchair accessibility. Inmates entered their designated chow hall, received their tray, and were seated in the order they arrived. They are allotted 20 minutes to eat before being escorted back to their units. Unless the facility was on modified program, inmates were fed in the chow hall for all meals. When needed, the facility maintains hotboxes that plug into the housing unit outlets which will keep meals warm for serving in the housing units.

The chow hall servicing Units C and D was observed to have dirt and trash near tables and food servicing lines. In the kitchen prep area, inspectors were notified that rubber boots were not mandatory for inmate workers to wear. All inmate workers were classified as either Level III or IV and were screened thoroughly before becoming kitchen workers. Inspectors observed two trays of turkey ham with an expiration date of May 13, 2025. These were immediately removed from the freezer area and disposed of. On the day of inspection, the inmates' meal consisted of taco meat, a taco shell, potatoes, carrots, and a pack of cookies.

During the tour of the kitchen, inspectors observed the food traps in the kitchen floor drains were clogged and unclean and the vents in the kitchen and bakery were dirty. A storage closet was cluttered, which impeded inspectors access to a fire extinguisher and presented a potential fire hazard. The facility passed the latest VADOC food establishment inspection with no violations noted. A few minor recommendations were made, which included: cleaning the

shields on the ceiling lights, replacing the caulking around the three-compartment sink in the C/F room, replacing several wooden pallets in the dry storage area, repairing the ice machine lid, and having the PSI (pounds per square inch) gauge evaluated due to inaccurate readings.

The staff dining hall was well-maintained and featured murals representing a 1950s diner theme. The area contained 11 tables for staff members with a salad bar next to the serving line. The daily menu posted on a whiteboard during the inspection consisted of chicken dumplings, mashed potatoes, carrots, rolls and Oreos for dessert. Inmates working the staff dining hall served as waitstaff. They took the orders of the facility staff and delivered the items to the table. All personnel were observed adhering to proper food handling procedures.

Programs/Services

Pocahontas State Correctional Center offered a broad array of programs within its educational wing, which contained nine classrooms. The facility's chaplain, recently nationally recognized for outstanding service, oversaw religious activities along with two full-time clerks who coordinated with colleges in Bristol and Richmond.

Religious services were scheduled by building, rotating biweekly except during the fifth week, and accommodated a diverse range of faiths including but not limited to: African American Church, Baptist, Church of Christ, Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Hindu, Interfaith, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutheran, Methodist, Nation of Gods and Earths, Pentecostal, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Satanism, Temple of the Way-Out (of sin) Church, United Church of Christ, Wiccan, and Yahwist.

The recently appointed librarian was acclimating to facility operations. The law library was accessible by appointment only, with space to accommodate three inmates. An inmate worker assisted in managing the law library and supporting inmate legal research needs. The library was noted to be very neat and orderly, and books were organized by fiction, non-fiction, and genre.

Recreation

Pocahontas was equipped with two outdoor recreational yards that remained operational during inclement weather. The recreational yards included amenities such as a track, a volleyball net, a basketball court, and a weight system. There was an inmate recreation worker responsible for gathering any equipment needed for the recreation yard.

Visitation

The visitation area was designed with flooring resembling a game board, with seating arranged along walls, and small tables available to separate visitors and inmates. Visitation occurred on weekends and holidays. At the time of inspection, a program session was underway, which

involved two instructors and approximately 15 inmates. There was also a video visitation session which occurred towards the back area of the visitation center.

Commissary

The commissary operated Monday through Friday in a building separate from the main facility. Pre-packaged commissary packages were distributed according to a rotating schedule: Housing Unit B on Mondays, Housing Unit C on Tuesdays, Housing Unit D on Wednesdays and Housing Unit A on Thursdays. Fridays were reserved as a make-up day for the facility. Inmates housed in RHU were restricted to 15 dollars monthly for commissary, primarily comprised of hygiene. The packages were delivered to the housing units where inmates verified and signed receipts to confirm accuracy. A commissary restriction list is distributed every Friday to monitor inmates with commissary sanctions spending privileges.

Property/Intake

Pocahontas' property room appeared disorganized. There were multiple open boxes filled with property, littering the floor of the area. Several trashcans were filled with miscellaneous property awaiting to be removed from the facility. In the middle of the property room, was an open cart that had several contraband items sitting on top, which consisted of either banned or altered inmate property. Lined across the walls, were lockers labeled, "Release Clothing Khaki Shirts," "Hospital and Out to Court Property Storage," and "Deceased Inmate Property Storage." There was one property officer available on the date of the inspection, but the facility advised there were two officers assigned to the property unit.

Adjacent to the property room, was a designated section specifically for the processing of inmate transfers, known as the intake area. This area served as the initial point of entry for inmates entering the facility. There was a inoperable shower in this area, intended for initial hygiene processing, but was observed out of service by inspectors.

The space also facilitated an area for conducting unclothed body searches in accordance with institutional procedure to ensure safety, security, and to prevent the introduction of contraband into the facility. A body scanner machine was present to screen incoming inmates before being housed at the facility.

The intake area was equipped with multiple shelves that were stocked with essential inmate items such as uniforms and blankets, which are distributed upon arrival. A holding cell was also located in this area which temporarily housed inmates upon intake. During this period, inmates are provided with an overview of the facility rules, regulations, and expectations, via an inmate handbook, as part of their orientation into the facility.

Grievances/Facility Forms

The Grievance Coordinator reported the facility maintained a relatively effective system for processing inmate grievances, which led to few issues regarding the thoroughness or timeliness of responses. It was explained to inspectors that emergency grievances, typically related to medical or PREA allegations, must be responded to within eight hours. Not all complaints were entered into the VADOC database; as incomplete, non-emergency, or verbal complaints are excluded.

Inmates deemed to be abusing the grievance process may be placed on a limitation list restricting them to two complaints and two grievances weekly for a 90-day period. Written notice is provided to inmates when restrictions are imposed. The facility does not currently have a formal follow-up system to ensure staff respond to grievances timely.

If a response is not received within 15 days, inmates are permitted to file a grievance regarding the lack of response. The types of complaints that are mostly received at the facility included grievances regarding food and nutrition, dental and medical care, recreation, and property. Inspectors noted that there was only one grievance box located in the front of the chow halls, which may make it difficult for inmate accessibility.

Additional Information

As reported by facility management:

- **Staffing:** The facility employs 189 security staff and 108 non-security staff, with current vacancies of 18 security and seven non-security positions. Over the past year, eight staff members received disciplinary actions. The average tenure of correctional staff is five years. *VADOC provided the staff-to-inmate ratio at the facility; however, due to security concerns, this information will not be publicly reported.*
- **Lockdowns:** Sixteen lockdowns occurred over the past year, with 28 lockdowns in the past three years. The most recent scheduled lockdown spanned April 28 to May 5, 2025. The latest unscheduled lockdown occurred from May 21 to May 29, 2025.
- **Physical/Sexual Assaults/Deaths:** Four physical assaults were reported in the past year, with seven over three years. No sexual assaults were reported in the past year, with four reported over three years. The facility recorded zero inmate deaths in the past year and seven deaths over the last three years.
- **Visitation:** In 2024, there were 1,091 requests for in-person visits, with 17 denied (5 for enhanced sanctions, 12 for contraband attempts). Additionally, 10,388 video visit requests were processed, with 13 denied for rule violations.

Recommendations

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

- 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 use of chemicals specifically formulated to remove the black substance observed on shower ceilings in housing units.
- 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 staff and inmates.
- Create an annual schedule to conduct a comprehensive cleaning and maintenance of Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems in the general living areas, kitchen, dining halls, isolation cells, and throughout the facility.
- Create a schedule to clean and clear food particles and debris from drainage systems (clean-out drains) in the kitchen preparation area and ensure security screws are replaced in all drains and drains are secured in order to remain free of contraband.
- Have maintenance staff caulk and grout all areas lacking in the dining and kitchen areas.
- Food Service Management develop a system for Food Service Employees to ensure expiration dates marked on all perishable food items in storage and freezer areas are continuously reviewed for the safety of all staff and inmates. Expired food items shall be removed to prevent health hazards, and noted for explanation in a report or log book. This log book should be maintained and available for review by Food Service Management, Virginia Department of Health, and VADOC Administration.
- Ensure cool down rooms are cleaned after each use to prevent the spread of germs and maintain sanitary conditions.
- Repair and provide acceptable water functions in the cool down cell for health and safety protocols.
- Increase the number of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant showers to accommodate inmates with disabilities or assistive devices in compliance with ADA specifications.
- Repair malfunctioning showers and restore hot water functionality throughout the housing units.
- Install additional grievance boxes in inmate accessible locations to improve access for submitting complaints.
- Define and clearly state the criteria for necessitating emergency dental care. This can be documented on a brochure or poster in the housing units.
- Clean and organize the inmate property room for a more efficient work area and reduce the number of complaints and grievances related to property.

- Thoroughly clean and sanitize the facility which includes housing units, cool down cells, recreation areas, and facility sidewalks.

Inspectors Comments

We would like to thank Pocahontas State 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 the next 24 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 Pocahontas State Correctional Center (PSCC). We are encouraged that the report reflects the facility's commitment to safety, security, and rehabilitative programming in a structured and responsive environment.

Several recommendations from the report have already been addressed. Repairs are underway to restore hot water and fix showers, and the black substance in shower areas is being evaluated and if confirmed as mold, professional remediation will follow. To address improper chemical use, the PSCC Safety Officer partnered with Correct Pac to provide additional mandatory training for staff and inmates on proper chemical mixing and usage.

To improve sanitation and maintenance, a recurring inspection schedule has been implemented for cool down rooms, and cleaning protocols have been updated to ensure sanitation after each use. Water fixtures in these rooms are also being repaired to meet health and safety standards.

In the kitchen and dining areas, floor drains are now subject to routine cleaning, and expired food items are being logged and removed in accordance with updated food safety protocols. A logbook system has been introduced to track expiration dates and ensure compliance with health regulations. Maintenance staff have begun caulking and grouting areas in need of repair, and additional pest control measures have been implemented.

To improve accessibility and inmate services, VADOC is planning to install additional ADA-compliant showers and grievance boxes in more accessible locations. The property room is undergoing reorganization to improve efficiency and reduce grievances related to lost or mishandled items.

VADOC is also working with medical staff to clarify emergency dental care criteria, which will be posted in housing units to ensure transparency and timely response. HVAC systems across the

facility are being reviewed, and a cleaning and maintenance schedule is being developed to improve air quality and temperature regulation.

We are proud of the innovative programming offered at Pocahontas State Correctional Center, including the Fentanyl Response Program, Shared Allied Management (SAM), and vocational training in Flooring Application, CAD, Small Engine Repair, and General Building Maintenance. These programs support inmate rehabilitation and successful reentry 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. Loudon
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 of Corrections Operations, Virginia Department of Corrections
Holly Cline, Chief of Staff, Virginia Department of Corrections