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# OSIG NEWS

*Office of the State Inspector General • P.O. Box 1151 • Richmond, VA 23218*

Maggie Sotos, Public Relations Officer  
[communications@osig.virginia.gov](mailto:communications@osig.virginia.gov)

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## **CORRECTIONS OMBUDSMAN ISSUES FIRST INSPECTION REPORT**

The Office of the State Inspector General's (OSIG) Corrections Ombudsman has completed its first unannounced inspection of a state correctional facility and has [issued its findings to Governor Youngkin](#).

The inspection occurred at Caroline Correctional Unit #2 in Hanover on January 15, with the report issued February 19. Unannounced inspections are required by the *Code of Virginia* and are not in response to a specific complaint or allegation. The Caroline report includes an acknowledgment and response from the Virginia Department of Corrections and is available to the public on the OSIG website.

"Virginia has 37 major facilities, field units, and work centers with over 22,000 inmates," said Corrections Ombudsman Andrea Sapone. "So we have a lot of work to do to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of inmates and DOC staff."

Sapone was hired as the Ombudsman in September 2024, after the General Assembly established an independent oversight unit within the Office of the State Inspector General. Sapone previously worked as a Lead Family Services Specialist in the Chesterfield-Colonial Heights Department of Social Services, a Service Coordinator with Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services, and as a Background Detective with the Chesterfield County Police. She approaches the Ombudsman role with patience and an eye for details.

Sapone has been tasked with building an entirely new unit, including establishing policies and procedures for handling incoming complaints from inmates, families, stakeholders, etc. One of the unit's first priorities will be investigating allegations of abuse at Red Onion State Prison, including the alleged self-harm of inmates by way of electrical burning.

The Corrections Ombudsman Unit has broad investigatory powers. There is also an internal grievance process for inmates and families to pursue first; once this has been exhausted, the Corrections

Ombudsman can be contacted. Not every complaint will merit a full investigation, but patterns of reporting will be taken into account.

Sapone has now hired her team of five Ombudsman Specialists, bringing backgrounds in investigations, compliance monitoring, healthcare, behavior, corrections, advocacy, and housing services. The unit is housed within OSIG, which has independent oversight of Virginia's executive branch agencies. OSIG is accredited at both [the state](#) and [national level](#).

"I'm proud to lead a team with this much expertise," said Sapone. "Together, we will help improve transparency and accountability within the Department of Corrections."

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Established in 2012, the Virginia Office of the State Inspector General manages the State Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Hotline; conducts administrative and criminal investigations and performance audits of state agencies; provides training and standards for the commonwealth's internal audit programs; and conducts inspections and reviews of Department of Corrections and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services-run facilities and programs.