

Office of the Correction Ombuds



At-a-Glance

Agency: Office of the Correction Ombuds (OCO)

Agency Head: DeVaughn L. Ward, Esq., Correction Ombuds

Deputy Agency Head: Associate Ombuds, N/A

Established: 2021 (Public Act 21-81, effective July 1, 2022; operational September 2024)

Statutory Authority: Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 18-81qq

Central Office: 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105

Number of Employees: 1 (authorized to expand to 6 positions in FY 2026)

Recurring Operating Expenses: \$790,799 (FY 2026 appropriation; \$763,692 in FY 2027)

Organizational Structure: Correction Ombuds (appoint, independent)

- **Associate Ombuds**
- **Assistant Ombuds** (pending hire)
- **Health Care Consultant / Ombuds** (pending hire)
- **Office Administrator** (pending hire)
- **Clerk Typist** (pending hire)

Mission

The Office of the Correction Ombuds provides independent, impartial oversight of the Department of Correction to promote transparency, accountability, and the protection of the civil and human rights of incarcerated people. The office ensures that individuals in state custody are treated with dignity and that correctional policies and practices comply with state and federal law.

Statutory Responsibility

Under Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 18-81qq, the Office of the Correction Ombuds is charged with:

- Receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints from individuals incarcerated in Department of Correction facilities.
- Monitoring compliance with state and federal laws, administrative directives, and regulations governing conditions of confinement.
- Conducting site visits and inspections of correctional facilities.
- Publishing reports and recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and public to promote transparency and accountability.

The primary beneficiaries of the OCO's work are incarcerated individuals, their families, and the broader public. By ensuring lawful and humane conditions in correctional facilities, the OCO safeguards public health and safety, fosters fairness in the correctional system, and enhances public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Public Service

The OCO serves as an independent and accessible resource for individuals in the custody of the Connecticut Department of Correction, their families, and the public. Complaints may be submitted by mail, phone, email, or via secure drop boxes in correctional facilities.

Each complaint is triaged, categorized, and acknowledged within 45 days, with updates provided regarding resolution or the opening of a formal investigation.

Investigations may include record reviews, staff and incarcerated person interviews, and site inspections.

At the conclusion of an investigation, the OCO issues a public decision detailing whether any administrative directive, state law, or constitutional right was violated. These findings are provided to the Department of Correction, the Judiciary Committee, and the Governor.

The office measures effectiveness through:

- Timely acknowledgment and resolution of complaints.
- Tracking complaint categories to identify systemic issues.
- Engagement with families, advocates, and incarcerated individuals through listening sessions and community forums.

Improvements / Achievements for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

During FY 2024-2025, the Office of the Correction Ombuds:

- Opened for operations in September 2024 with the appointment and confirmation of the state's first Correction Ombuds in over a decade.

- Established initial intake processes for complaints and inquiries, receiving over 100 complaints in the first six months.
- Developed and published a standardized workflow for complaint triage, investigation, and reporting.
- Conducted unannounced site visits at multiple facilities, documenting conditions related to heat mitigation, water outages, staffing shortages, and medical care.
- Convened the first meeting of the statutorily mandated Advisory Committee on June 13, 2025, with the next meeting scheduled for December 11, 2025.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Office of the Correction Ombuds is required to provide semiannual reports to the chairs of the General Assembly's Judiciary Committee pursuant to Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 18-81qq(h).

The first semiannual report was submitted on June 13, 2025, summarizing complaint trends, site visits, legislative engagement, and office development.

A comprehensive annual report is required by December 1, 2025.