WALLKILL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

The Correctional Association (CA) visited Wallkill Correctional Facility, a medium security prison for men located 60 miles north of New York City in Ulster County, on August 2, 2010. The facility was built in 1932 and is located next to Shawangunk C.F. Originally constructed to provide individualized treatment and education to inmates, Wallkill housed 595 inmates at the time of our visit, 592 of whom were in general population, with a total capacity of 606. The facility does not contain a Special Housing Unit (SHU).

Wallkill offers a range of therapeutic, vocational, and educational programs, including a residential Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Program (ASAT). The facility operates several distinctive programs including an optical laboratory (New York State’s sole provider of eyeglasses and lenses to Medicaid recipients), a recycling program, and a horse handling and care program in which inmates learn to care for retired racehorses.

The primary objectives of our visit to Wallkill were to assess the programs, physical facilities, and conditions for both staff and inmates within the prison. The CA obtained surveys about general prison conditions from 47 general population inmates, as well as two surveys from inmates in substance abuse treatment programs. To recruit survey participants, the Visiting Committee asks inmates in programs and in their housing units if they would like to participate in this voluntary process. We then mail surveys in to each inmate who provides us with identifying information. Inmates are assured that the CA has “privileged mail status,” permitting Department staff to open surveys only to search for contraband but not to read the contents, as is the case with regular mail. We also assure inmates that we do not include any names or identifying information in our reports, because retaliation by staff is a significant concern for survey participants. Due to a disagreement with DOCCS administration, regarding the treatment of “privileged” mail following our visit, we delayed the mailing of our surveys to the 333 Wallkill recipients for nearly two months. We believe that this long delay resulted in our receiving a significantly lower number of responses than usual, both because many participants may have been released or transferred and because the delay may have caused potential participants to question our interest in seeking their input.

We base this report on data supplied by the facility prior to our visit, findings from surveys, conversation with the Superintendent, the Executive Team, program staff and inmates, written correspondence with inmates, meetings with staff union representatives, staff of the many
prison programs, security staff, members of the Inmate Liaison Committee (ILC) and the Inmate Grievance Resolution Committee (IGRC), and observations made during our visit.

After providing a draft of this report to Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and Wallkill officials, we had a conference call on December 8, 2011 with prison administrators to discuss our findings and recommendations. We appreciate the prison officials’ input during that conversation and their response to our request for updated information about recent prison operations. We have included this information in the report.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Inmates at Wallkill are permitted to have some freedom of movement and hold the keys to their own cells. This unique environment leads to significantly less tension between staff and inmates, and among inmates themselves, compared to other medium-security prisons we have visited. A survey respondent aptly stated, “Overall, Wallkill C.F. gives you some degree of relief under conditions that were never designed for comfort.” Inmates may also feel this sense of relief due to several higher-paying job opportunities offered at the facility and the fact that many inmates are near their release date. Wallkill also appears to provide better access to and quality of sick call, specialty care services, and dental care as compared to other CA-visited facilities.

Despite the more positive environment at the facility, staff and programs appeared to be strongly affected by the economic challenges confronted by all state agencies during the summer of 2010. Many of the administrative staff at the time of our visit were temporary or in “acting” positions, leaving staff and inmates without strong leadership or a clear hierarchy through which to resolve disputes. Furthermore, low staffing levels created few job, industry, and vocational opportunities for inmates other than the at-capacity Optics and Mess Hall programs. Finally, the allocation of only one physician position to the facility resulted in long waits and poor access to primary medical care for many inmates.

Our principal recommendations to relevant state, DOCCS and prison officials include these measures:

- Reassess the high number of inmates assigned to porter positions and explore other jobs that more closely reflect work opportunities in the community.
- Review policies regarding outside clearance in order to ensure that all inmates with appropriate security status are offered these job opportunities.
- Fill the academic vacancy and increase Pre-GED and GED class enrollment.
- Initiate additional vocational programs so that inmates can learn skills that will benefit them upon release.
- Hire additional Transitional Services staff and correction counselors to facilitate new programs and decrease each individual counselor’s caseload.
- Expand postsecondary educational opportunities for inmates who have earned their GED or high school diploma.
- Review the quality of medical encounters between inmate-patients and clinic providers to ensure that inmates’ medical conditions are promptly diagnosed and properly treated.
Consider allocating two additional full-time providers to the facility’s medical team to decrease delays in accessing routine medical care.

**PHYSICAL PLANT**

Aside from the stables and recycling plant located on its grounds, Wallkill is limited to one three-story building. The facility relies on nearby Shawangunk for commissary goods and some specialty care services. Wallkill differs from most other medium security prisons in that inmates are housed in individual cells rather than dormitories. Inmates possess the keys to their own cells, a vestige of Wallkill’s original focus on rehabilitation and teaching responsibility to inmates. Aside from master population counts and required program attendance, movement is more open than at many other facilities.

Each housing gallery is connected by dayrooms, which contain cable televisions and stovetops available for inmate use. Each floor contains one five-bed dorm for new inmates. Several inmates with whom we spoke stated that double-bunked cells were too small, and inmates also expressed a desire for the communal refrigerators, stoves, and microwaves that are available at many other medium-security prisons.

Construction projects completed shortly prior to our visit included newly renovated sinks, plumbing, vents, and showers in the housing gallery bathrooms, and the completion of the first phase of a multi-phase project to replace all facility windows with new windows in two housing galleries. Staff also apprised us of plans to begin a solar power water heating project, but construction had not yet begun. During our follow-up call with the facility, we were pleased to learn that the solar power water heating project was completed in July 2011, and is now fully operational. We received numerous complaints during our visit that tap water was often brown and tasted bad. We were told during our visit to Shawangunk C.F., which shares a local water system with Walkill, that it too struggled with water quality. We learned during our recent follow-up call with Wallkill officials that a water filter system had been installed in the area water supply in April 2011, and that it had drastically improved the water quality. Administrative officials informed the CA that they had not received any complaints about water quality since the installation of the new filter system. We are pleased that the prison is now providing clean and safe water to inmates and staff.

**WALLKILL’S GENERAL INMATE POPULATION AND STAFFING**

Wallkill Correctional Facility had recently become a “step down” facility, meaning that the inmate population is more transient than it was in the past. Since many of the minimum security prisons in New York State have closed, Wallkill is now often an inmate’s terminal facility prior to release. The most recent system-wide racial demographics data was supplied by DOCCS in October, 2010, and at that time the demographics of inmates at Wallkill were significantly different than state-wide averages, with a far lower population of inmates (15%) identifying as White, and greater numbers identifying as African American (59%) and Hispanic (26%).

1 Seventy-four percent of all inmates were from New York City and its surrounding

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1 As of October 1, 2010, DOCCS system-wide averages were: white (23%), African-American (52%), and Hispanic (23%).
suburbs, larger than the 60% state-wide average. The median age of the Wallkill population was 37, the same median age for all DOCCS inmates. As of 2008, 71% of Wallkill inmates were serving time for a violent felony, compared to 58% for all DOCCS inmates.

As of April 1, 2010, the median sentence at Wallkill was 5.2 years, with inmates serving a median time of 7.3 months at the facility. Sixty-nine percent of the inmate population at Wallkill had a high school diploma, GED or higher degree, which is higher than the system wide average of 56%.

Wallkill had 155 officers on staff at the time of our visit. We did not receive information from the facility regarding the racial demographics of the prison staff, but received some complaints from inmates about racial tension between staff and inmates resulting from the absence of African-American correctional officers at the facility. We convened a meeting with staff union representatives and in general, staff appeared to enjoy working at Wallkill, describing it as “a very nice place to live and work.” However, as we have observed at prisons throughout the state, particularly smaller medium-security prisons, staff were extremely concerned about staffing levels and potential budget cuts. As will be noted throughout this report, Wallkill had a high number of vacancies. Staff explained that everyone is working hard to cover the vacancies, and often staff from Shawangunk assist in covering for the vacant positions. Staff also expressed concern about the transitory status of the majority of the executive team, explaining that many positions were only “acting” positions, and that the facility has had several superintendents over the previous six years, resulting in constant policy changes and making it difficult for staff to follow consistent procedures.

The CA was pleased to learn during our December 2011 call that the facility had obtained a permanent administrative staff including a Superintendent in December 2010; a Deputy Superintendent of Security in October 2010 and a Deputy Superintendent of Programs in August 2010. The Deputy Superintendent of Administration position had not yet been filled as of our December 2011 conference call. We also learned that Wallkill had received 20 additional security staff following the closings of Arthur Kill and Mid-Orange, and had not lost any security staff items.

PROGRAMS

The Visiting Committee toured the prison’s academic, vocational, and industry programs. At the time of our visit, 573 inmates had full-time program assignments, with no inmates programmed part time. Most of these inmates had morning and afternoon program assignments; although 101 inmates had early evening and 25 inmates had late evening program assignments. According to information provided by the facility, only five inmates (1% of the population) were idle. Similar to other CA-visited facilities, 89% of surveyed inmates had a job or program, and 34% reported being on a waiting list for a program, which is better than three quarters of CA-visited facilities.
Job Opportunities and Industry Programs

According to information provided by the facility at the time of our visit, 374 Wallkill inmates had job assignments, 203 of whom were assigned to porter positions, a rate higher than at most other CA-visited prisons. Sixty-one percent of Wallkill survey respondents reported being satisfied with their jobs, higher than the average of 49% of all survey respondents satisfied with their jobs at all CA-visited prisons. This satisfaction rating ranks Wallkill higher than three quarters of all CA-visited prisons for inmate job satisfaction. Wallkill offers four different industry assignments in Optics, Recycling, Mess Hall, and Corcraft, with 100, 23, 85, and 4 inmates enrolled, respectively. Overall, inmates enrolled in the four industry programs were positive about these programs, stating that they enjoyed working with other inmates. Industry wages are generally higher than other inmates’ jobs, with inmates on the first pay tier making 26, 29, or 32 cents per hour, compared to 16, 22, and 25 cents per hour for non-industry jobs. Industry pay can be as high as 65 cents an hour, depending on an inmate’s job and length of time in the position, although this pay rate is rare.

Inmates with whom we spoke who were not assigned to the industry programs complained that there were not enough other opportunities at the facility. We are concerned about the high proportion of inmates assigned as porters because these positions involve performing maintenance and cleaning tasks, and generally do not help individuals develop skills transferable to a career outside of prison. Inmates assigned to porter positions complained that the work was not challenging and that wages were too low. Staff with whom we spoke also expressed some concerns about limited job opportunities for the inmate population; however, they also stated that it was increasingly difficult to find inmates with clearance to work outside the prison. We recommend that the Department review its policies regarding outside clearance to ensure that all inmates with appropriate security status are offered these job opportunities.

The Visiting Committee toured both the Optics and Recycling programs. With 100 inmates enrolled and 88 inmates on the waiting list, Optics is the most popular industry program at Wallkill. The program’s popularity is due to both the fact that it pays higher wages than other programs and that it teaches inmates transferable skills. The program employs 11 civilian staff members and there were four vacancies at the time of our visit; however, according to staff, these vacancies have not impacted the number of inmates permitted to participate in the program. Wallkill’s Optics program produces all of the eyeglasses provided by Medicaid in New York State, totaling approximately 120,000 pairs per year. Inmates must have at least one year remaining on their sentence in order to be eligible for the Optics program, but according to facility staff, they were considering increasing the minimum sentence to one and a half years. Once they complete their training, inmate-participants are invited to take the American Board of Opticianry (ABO) certification exam to become ABO Board-certified opticians, which is offered at the facility once a year at a cost of $150 per inmate. In 2009, 100% of the eleven inmates that took the exam passed, which, according to staff, is higher than the national pass rate of 90%.

The Committee toured the three floors of the main building occupied by the Optics program and found them to be neat, productive work spaces with modern equipment. Inmates assigned to the Optics program earn from 16 to 65 cents per hour and are paid according to their education level and the skills and complexity of the job. If inmates meet their quota, they receive
a bonus. The facility informed the Visiting Committee that the weekly quota is usually met, and therefore, most inmates receive a weekly bonus. We were impressed with the focus and skill level exhibited by inmates we observed during our tour, and the inmates with whom we spoke had positive comments about the program. Inmates also expressed appreciation for Wallkill’s policy of placing an administrative hold on inmates in the program, permitting them to continue their classes rather than transferring them to another facility resulting in disruption in their education, a common problem experienced by inmates throughout the Department. Inmates also expressed appreciation of the “regular employment atmosphere” and skills acquired. Some inmates commented, however, that some civilian staff exhibited negative attitudes to their students.

The Visiting Committee also toured the Recycling program, which has been operating at the facility for 15 years and is located outside the facility’s perimeter fence. Unlike other programs, inmates are typically selected directly by the Sergeant for the recycling program, who then verifies that they are eligible for outside clearance. According to the facility, the recycling program has a capacity for 31 individuals and had a census of 24 at the time of our visit. The Wallkill recycling plant is responsible for sorting and processing all of the plastics, tin, mixed paper, and cloth for the entire Sullivan Hub; according to staff, all hubs will be required to have similar programs by 2014. Inmate-workers are responsible for compacting, bailing, and weighing materials before sending it to an outside plant, where the facility is paid for these materials by weight. Recycling program workers we observed appeared to be engrossed in their work and operating with a sense of purpose and expertise, and those with whom we spoke stated that the program was well-organized and that they enjoyed the working hours.

**Academic Programs**

Wallkill offers Adult Basic Education (ABE), Pre-General Equivalence Diploma (pre-GED), GED, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The Visiting Committee did not visit the Wallkill’s academic program due to the fact that the facility was operating on a summer schedule and classes were not operating on the day of our visit. According to information provided by the facility prior to our visit, Wallkill’s academic program had three instructors on staff and one vacancy. We were pleased to learn that the ESL instructor speaks Spanish. As the table below illustrates, the majority of the courses were filled to capacity and while waiting lists for ABE and ESL were smaller than at other facilities, more inmates were waiting for Pre-GED and GED courses. Wallkill in a unique position in that most of the inmates at the facility are nearing their release dates and have fewer disciplinary problems than other facilities. We are concerned that with the current staffing level, the facility is not taking advantage of this opportunity to help as many inmates as possible earn a degree prior to release. Earning a degree increases a recently released individual’s chances of success and decreases his potential for recidivism after release. We encourage the facility to fill this vacancy as soon as possible in order to expand its educational program.
Wallkill’s Educational Program Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List

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According to system-wide data, 31% of Wallkill inmates do not have their GED, compared to 44% of all inmates system-wide. According to recent data provided by the facility, 23 and 20 prisoners took the GED in 2010 and 2011, respectively, and 16 passed each year. The passing rate for inmates taking the GED at Wallkill is similar to the state-wide average in 2010 and surpassed the state-wide average in 2011.² This is significantly higher than the GED passing rate at Wallkill for 2009 and 2008; however, fewer inmates at Wallkill took the GED in 2010 and 2011 compared to the 38 in 2008 and the 42 in 2009. We are concerned about the low GED testing rates at Wallkill and, as discussed above, suggest that the facility make greater efforts to enroll inmates in academic programs in order to prepare for, and pass, this exam. Wallkill provides no post-secondary educational opportunities, but according to data provided by facility staff, eight inmates were participating in college correspondence courses at the time of our visit.

Wallkill inmates were the least satisfied with the facility’s academic program of all CA-visited prisons aside from Green Haven C.F, with 57% of inmates dissatisfied with the program, compared to an average of 42% at all CA-visited prisons. When asked to explain their ratings of the academic program, survey respondents complained of long waiting lists and insufficient class capacity, particularly for inmates who wished to be enrolled in GED classes. Despite the negative rating of the prison, inmates did say that civilian staff were very kind, respectful, and hands-on in their teaching style. These apparently contradictory comments lead us to conclude that the overwhelmingly negative score for the academic program may be attributed to the limited offerings and long waiting list, rather than the quality of the academic staff itself.

**Vocational Programs**

Wallkill offered three vocational programs at the time of our visit: Building Maintenance, Horticulture, and Horse Handling and Care, with 32, 20, and 28 inmates enrolled, respectively. Due to limited state funding, the Puppies Behind Bars and Farm Programs were closed in 2009 and 2008, respectively. Staff with whom we spoke expressed disappointment that these programs were eliminated, as they were popular among inmates and taught transferable skills. The facility employs three full-time vocational instructors, none of whom speak Spanish. The facility offers training to take the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certification in Building Maintenance, and one inmate attained his certification in 2010-2011.

² Wallkill has a 69% GED passing rate in 2010, and an 80% GED passing rate in 2011, compared to the 70% passing rate system wide.
Funded by the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, the Horse Handling and Care program is run on a 50-acre horse farm located outside the perimeter fence of the facility. The Horse Handling and Horticulture programs have no waiting lists because each program requires inmate participants to have outside clearance, a security classification that renders most inmates ineligible for the program. According to more recent data from the facility, the census for both of these programs has decreased slightly since our visit in 2010. There are now 23 inmates participating in the Horse Farm program and 17 participating in Horticulture. The Building Maintenance program was not running on the day of our visit due to the summer schedule. This program has a waiting list of 72 inmates, although according to staff, inmates are usually placed in the program within one month. Inmates in the Building Maintenance program occasionally work on the facility’s own repair projects.

The Visiting Committee did not have the opportunity to tour Wallkill’s vocational program, but inmate survey participants were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the program, ranking the facility third lowest for inmate satisfaction among all 28 CA-visited prisons. When asked to explain their rating, survey participants stated that there was insufficient variety of programs and long waiting lists, despite the fact that a large percentage of Wallkill inmates are at the end of their sentences and have completed vocational programs elsewhere. Staff with whom we spoke were aware of this need, stating that additional staffing resources would be beneficial to the facility’s inmate population by increasing both program availability and variety for inmates. As with Wallkill’s limited academic programs, we recommend that the Department examine the vocational program offerings at Wallkill and authorize additional staff positions in order to minimize idleness among inmates and provide opportunities to learn practical skills.

Recreation and Volunteer Programs

The Visiting Committee toured the recreation areas, which include two outdoor yards with free weight equipment, an indoor gym, and a weight room, which is accessible through the gym. The facility has one officer or a civilian on staff during program hours; inmates with whom we spoke generally expressed positive reviews of the Recreation Supervisor. The gym has a capacity for 270 people and is well-equipped with basketballs, weights, and televisions for special events. According to staff, wellness classes are offered to older inmates in the indoor space. The main yard is located in the building’s courtyard, and an additional outdoor yard is open in the evenings.

Wallkill offers an impressive variety of inmate-led volunteer programs and activities run by outside agencies, including over 15 religious groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, Housing Works, the Osborne Association, and a Veterans program. Each of these programs is led by civilian volunteers on a weekly or monthly basis and is typically not a part of inmates’ daily modules.

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3 Fifty percent of Wallkill survey respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with the facility’s vocational programs, compared to an average rate of 64% at all CA-visited prisons.
LIBRARIES

General Library

The Visiting Committee toured the general library, which was closed for six weeks due to repair of the library’s server and installation of new computers. During the closure, inmates were permitted to visit the resource and reading room located downstairs from the general library, which houses the library’s extensive collection, as well as a large selection of magazines and newspapers. Staff informed us that the reading room operates on an honor system that allows inmates to browse and take books as they please.

During our recent follow-up call with the facility’s administrators, the CA was informed that renovations to the library had been completed and the library is now fully operational. The library and the resource room are open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am to 7:30 pm and the resource room is open from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on Sundays and 12:30-3:00 pm on Saturdays. The library and resource room are staffed by inmate clerks, and no civilian librarian has been hired since the previous librarian vacated the position in the summer of 2010.

The general library maintains a diverse collection of 3,000 non-fiction, fiction, and reference books, including Transitional Services resources and approximately 280 books in Spanish. The Visiting Committee was pleased to see that the library was nicely furnished with chairs, tables, windows, plants, and computers with Career Zone software. Wallkill participates in the Inter-Library Loan program and, according to the Librarian, the program is very popular. At the time of our visit, the ILC had launched the new “Words Travel” program, in which inmates read donated children’s books on tapes to send home to their own children. The program was being funded by the ILC with funds from vending machines and aluminum can collection.

Wallkill survey respondents were generally dissatisfied with the facility’s general library, ranking the facility worse than three quarters of all CA-visited prisons. We are concerned about this low rating of library services, although this may be attributed to its closure during renovation. We suggest, however, that the facility take measures to ensure that inmates have access to reading and research materials.

Law Library

Staffed by a full-time correction officer and two inmate clerks, the law library has a capacity of 26 inmates and is open everyday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. According to staff, approximately 12 inmates visit the library per day, which operates on a first-come, first-served basis and therefore inmates are not required to sign-up in advance in order to visit the library. The officer told us that he has never had to turn anyone away. Since most Wallkill inmates are nearing the end of their sentence, there is a high turnover rate for clerks, most of whom are trained in their previous facility.

Wallkill installed the new computerized legal research system in April 2010, which consists of 17 computer work stations for inmate research. Both staff and inmates were pleased

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4 Forty-eight percent of Wallkill inmates were at least somewhat satisfied with general library services, compared to an average satisfaction rate of 62% at other CA-visited prisons.
with the new system. The law library officer and clerks underwent a three-hour training conducted by Central Office staff, which taught them how to assist inmates that may be new to the software. Wallkill’s law library also contains five typewriters for inmates and four typewriters for clerk use. Inmates with whom we spoke were very positive about the facility’s law library and appreciated that it was open every day. In contrast to the general library, survey respondents were more satisfied with Wallkill’s law library services than three-quarters of all CA-visited prisons.\(^5\) We commend the facility for its provision of these services and recommend that staff examine the reasons for its success and consider extending these policies and practices to the general library.

**OTHER SERVICES: VISITING AREA, MAIL/PACKAGES, FOOD, COMMISSARY**

### Visiting

Wallkill’s visiting area consists of one 140-capacity visiting room and a visiting pavilion which is used during warm weather. Like other medium-security prisons, visiting is permitted only on weekends. Visiting hours run from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The visiting room contains 30 tables and 100 chairs and has no seating restrictions. It also contains a microwave, lockers, a change machine, and a vending machine that generates profits used by the ILC to organize events such as the semi-annual ice cream party. Legal visits are also conducted in the visiting room. The visiting pavilion provides an extra capacity of 80 people and is accessible through garage doors. Inmates may participate in the Family Reunion Program (FRP) at Wallkill, and according to inmates, the FRP is an important and beneficial program for maintaining family ties.

We were pleased to learn that the pavilion contains a children’s center run by the FRP counselor and one inmate trained by the Osborne Association Family Works Program. This program enables incarcerated fathers to build, mend and maintain relationships with their children through a comprehensive fatherhood program. The children’s center was well furnished with toys, carpet, books, and videos; however, inmates were not allowed access to the children’s center and play items could not be taken out to the general visiting area. During our follow-up call with the facility, the CA was informed that the policies governing the children’s play area have changed. Since November 2011, the Osborne Association has run the Children’s Center program, which is staffed by two civilians and three inmates. Inmates are now allowed to access the play area to interact with their children and are permitted to bring play things to the general visiting area. We strongly commend the facility’s administration for seeking ways to maximize the bond between inmates and their children.

Seventy-six percent of survey respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with Wallkill’s visiting program, ranking the facility in the top sixth of all CA-visited facilities for visiting satisfaction. Although a majority of inmates were satisfied with the visiting program, some inmates with whom we spoke complained about unprofessional and disrespectful treatment of family members by certain correction officers, stating that sometimes there are delays of an

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\(^5\) Seventy-seven percent of Wallkill inmates were at least somewhat satisfied with law library services, compared to an average satisfaction rate of 58% at other CA-visited prisons.
hour or more in calling inmates for visits, thus reducing inmates’ time with their families.
Overall, the Visiting Committee was pleased with the conditions and resources available to
inmates utilizing the visiting program; however, we would like to see the facility take steps to
ensure that delays are reduced and visitors are treated in a respectful manner.

**Mail/Packages**

Overall, Wallkill inmates were more satisfied with mail and package services than at
other CA-visited prisons, with 25% of survey respondents stating that they were satisfied with
the mail and package services at Wallkill and 41% somewhat satisfied, ranking the facility third
highest of all CA-visited prisons for satisfaction with these services. Thirty-two percent of
survey respondents stated that they had experienced problems sending and receiving mail and
packages due to staff harassment at Wallkill, lower than responses from inmates at other prisons
and ranking the facility third of all CA-visited prisons for the lowest rate of package harassment.
Some inmates with whom we spoke expressed concern that mail and packages were delayed or	ampered with if inmates had conflict with certain officers, and that package room officers were
sometimes rude and did not permit inmates to ask questions. Inmates also complained that items
were sometimes missing from packages. We recommend that the facility review grievances filed
by inmates concerning mail and packages services to assess whether measures can be taken to
reduce the frequency of such complaints.

**Food**

The Visiting Committee toured the mess hall and kitchen. The Food Service
Administrator had retired shortly before our visit, and we appreciate the information given to us
by the two cooks. Wallkill’s kitchen, most recently remodeled in 2002, operates with a staff of
80 inmate employees. The mess hall has a capacity of 375, and according to staff, receives an
average of 350 inmates for breakfast, 480 for lunch, and 480 for dinner. Many inmates choose to
cook in their dorms on stovetops. Most of the food in the mess hall comes from the state’s cook
chill program, which is delivered twice a week. The facility’s kitchen cooks rice and mashed
potatoes, and buys bread and milk locally. Fifty-five inmates were on medical diets at the time of
our visit, and while religious diets are not served at Wallkill, an alternative meal is served at
lunch and dinner that any inmate may take. Overall, the area looked clean and well-kept, an
impression corroborated by Wallkill’s inmate population.

Thirty-four percent of inmates were at least somewhat satisfied with the food services at
Wallkill, ranking the facility in the middle of all CA-visited prisons. When asked to explain their
rating of food services, inmates complained that food was often cold, food included too much
soy and other additives, and that trays and utensils were often dirty. Numerous survey
respondents also complained that the facility often ran out of food at meals, a complaint that we
have not often heard at other CA-visited facilities.

During our follow-up conference call, we were pleased to learn that a new Food Service
Administrator had been hired in October 2010, and the prison administration felt that he was
doing an excellent job. Administrators reported that since his hiring, the facility had not
experienced any food shortages and the superintendent could recollect receiving only one
complaint concerning food services. The new Food Service Administrator has also reinstated the Food Service Training program for prisoners, and there were 10 program graduates in both January and June 2011.

**Commissary**

Wallkill does not have its own commissary; instead, inmate orders are sent to nearby Shawangunk where they are filled and available to inmates the following day. According to staff, the Shawangunk commissary runs out of certain products every day, so inmates have the option to list second and third choices on their buy sheets. Inmates visit the commissary once every two weeks and are permitted to spend up to $55. Like other facilities throughout New York State, this spending limit does not include stamps, tobacco items, and electronics, on which inmates are permitted to spend up to $93 at a time. Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with commissary services, ranking the facility in the top third of all CA-visited prisons.

**SAFETY**

**Inmate-Staff Relations**

Overall, Wallkill inmates’ assessment of all aspects of inmate-staff relations was fairly positive compared to all CA-visited prisons, although system-wide data for Unusual Incident Reports (UIRs) and misbehavior reports showed a moderate amount of incidents compared to other medium-security prisons throughout the state. Inmates’ rating of inmate-staff relations was better than the average at other prisons we have visited, with 52% of Wallkill survey respondents describing inmate-staff relations as bad, 30% as equally good and bad, and 17% as good, which ranks the facility in the top 40% of CA-visited prisons for inmate-staff relations. When asked to compare inmate-staff relations to other facilities, 35% of survey respondents characterized relations at Wallkill as better, ranking Wallkill fourth among all CA-visited prisons for this indicator. Additionally, Wallkill inmates were far more positive in their characterization of staff than inmates at other facilities, with inmates estimating that a median of 50% of Wallkill corrections officers do a particularly good job and 30% engage in serious misconduct. Facility administrators informed the CA during our December 2011 conference call that the superintendent maintained open communication between himself and the prison population; the superintendent either met with the ILC monthly or received a letter from them asking him to address certain issues.

Survey results indicated a lower rate of physical confrontations between staff and inmates than at other facilities, with 15% of respondents stating that they had experienced a physical confrontation with staff at least once while at Wallkill, compared to 26% at all CA-visited prisons, ranking the facility in the top quarter of all CA-visited prisons for fewer staff confrontations. Only 31% of respondents stated that physical confrontations were frequent throughout the facility, which is lower than the average of 58% at all CA-visited prisons, placing Wallkill in the top quarter of all CA-visited prisons for this indicator. Inmate perception of safety

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6 Inmates at CA-visited prisons estimate that an average of 30% of officers do a particularly good job and 50% of officers do a particularly bad job.
was much better than at other facilities, with Wallkill ranking in the top fifth of all CA-visited prisons for inmates’ perception of their level of safety in the prison. Inmates stated that staff assaults occurred throughout the prison and during all shifts, but stated that staff abuse was more frequent in the morning during the 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., unlike most facilities where inmates tend to report most abuse occurring during the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift.

A review of all Unusual Incident Reports (UIRs) for assault-on-staff incidents in 2007 through 2009 for all medium-security prisons reveals that Wallkill had an assault rate that was slightly less than average for these facilities. According to data provided by the facility, only one staff-inmate assault occurred in 2008, one in 2009, and one by the time of our visit in August 2010.

The most common forms of abuse cited among survey respondents were verbal harassment, false tickets, and threats and intimidation. Inmates attributed the better inmate-staff relations at Wallkill to its proximity to New York City, stating that “these officers can relate to you better than someone coming from the town of Attica.” However, many inmates complained that some officers try to provoke inmates because they are near their release dates and inmates do not respond to the provocation because they do not want to risk delaying their release. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents stated that video cameras throughout all areas of the prison would reduce abuse at least somewhat.

**Inmate-Inmate Relations**

Levels of violence between inmates at Wallkill were generally low, similar to other medium-security prisons in New York State. Inmates with whom we spoke stated that Wallkill had low levels of inmate-on-inmate violence because they appreciate the freedom within the facility awarded them by the administration. At a rate far lower than other CA-surveyed prisons, 15% of survey respondents reported having a physical confrontation with another inmate at least once, ranking Wallkill as the third best of all CA-visited prisons for infrequent occurrences of inmate fights. Three percent of surveyed inmates stated that physical confrontations between inmates were frequent throughout the facility, far lower than the average of 38% at all CA-visited facilities and ranks the facility third best for that indicator. Inmates stated that gambling, personal conflicts, and the stress of being in prison were major contributing factors to violence among inmates at Wallkill. Inmates said gang activity also contributed to violence, with 47% of survey respondents stating that gang activity was common at Wallkill, compared to an average of 74% at other CA-surveyed facilities, ranking it fifth lowest for gang activity. Only 24% characterized it as a source of violence at the facility, compared to 59% of all CA survey respondents, ranking it seventh lowest of all CA-visited prisons. Similar to other CA-visited facilities, 57% of survey respondents reported that drug use was common; however, only 21% cited it as a source of violence at the facility, ranking the facility fourth lowest for this indicator.

Wallkill ranked 19th out of 36 medium-security prisons for UIRs in 2007 through 2009, and according to data provided by the facility, Wallkill recorded four assaults on inmates in 2008, one assault in 2009, and zero at the time of our visit in 2010.

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7 Twenty-five percent of Wallkill survey respondents frequently felt unsafe compared to an average of 48% at all CA-visited facilities.
Staff with whom we spoke described the inmate population as not having a great degree of tension or cliquishness, explaining that gangs were present at the facility but seemed to stay under the radar. Staff attributed low tension levels to the high degree of freedom allotted to inmates, respective to other facilities. They explained that inmates appreciated their relative freedom, thus rarely exhibiting behavior that would lead to transfer.

**MEDICAL CARE**

The Visiting Committee toured the medical facilities at Wallkill and met with the Nurse Administrator. We appreciated the extensive information provided by the facility staff during our tour and following our visit. The medical facilities include two examination rooms, an emergency room that also houses a telemedicine unit, and an optometry exam room. The waiting room was brightly lit and contained several benches for waiting inmates. There are 13 automated external defibrillators (AEDs) located in Wallkill, some of which are located in the medical facilities. The facility does not have an on-site infirmary and inmates requiring this environment are sent to the Shawangunk infirmary. Staff explained that since housing areas never close, inmates who are feeling ill may use “medical no duty” excuses and stay in their housing area during program hours. Inmates experiencing medical emergencies are taken by ambulance to nearby St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital or to Albany Medical Center, depending on the severity of the condition.

Medical care is a primary area of concern of inmates at Wallkill, given that the majority of grievances are about medical care as compared to any other issue. Despite complaints of long wait times for routine appointments and poor quality of care when seeing the doctor, inmates rated Wallkill higher than most other CA-visited facilities for timeliness of sick call and quality of sick call staff, wait time for specialty care appointments, and access to medication. Eight percent of Wallkill survey respondents rated the overall quality of medical care as good, 65% as fair, and 28% as poor, placing the facility in the top quarter of all CA-visited prisons for quality of medical care.

**Staffing**

Authorized medical staff positions included a physician, a nurse administrator, four full time equivalent (FTE) permanent nursing items and one FTE per diem nursing item. At the time of our visit, the permanent nurse positions were filled by one full-time nurse and three half-time nurses; the per diem nurse item was being filled by nurse who worked two to three days a week. The facility had one part-time nurse position which had become vacant approximately one month prior to our visit. The full-time nurse was hired a week prior to our visit, filling a position that was vacant from January through July 2010. Staff mentioned having difficulty filling the vacant nurse positions due to the nature of working in a prison, low wages, and the lack of people looking for part-time positions. In addition to the physician, there had previously been a part-time nurse practitioner and then a part-time physician’s assistant until April 2009, but authorization for these positions were terminated. The nurse practitioner used to take histories, provide physicals and work with patients with asthma, back pain, skin rashes, and other minor issues, but now this work is included in the physician’s duties. The facility did have
authorization for an additional clinical provider who could work up to 10 hours per week to cover vacations.

Training and continuing medical education is available to the medical staff through Albany Medical Center via telemedicine and on site. Infection control nurses occasionally come to the facility to provide training, and hepatitis training is also available.

Given its current staffing numbers, Wallkill has one clinic provider (doctor) for every 595 inmates and one nurse for every 149 inmates, rates that are significantly higher than other CA-visited prisons. Also, none of the medical staff speak Spanish. We are concerned about these staffing loads and encourage the Department to allocate more medical staffing to the facility.

**Sick Call**

Sick call is conducted by one nurse four days per week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 7:40 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. In order to attend sick call, an inmate must fill out a sick call request slip by 3:00 a.m. The inmates requesting sick call are told to come to sick call at 7:30 a.m., but no call-out list is prepared. Instead of seeing patients first come, first serve, as was done in the past, the sick call nurse now sorts patients by severity, and see patients in the order of priority. Staff explained that the new sorting procedure has led to a decline in sick call numbers. Staff estimated that approximately 200 inmates per month are seen at regular sick call and 80 inmates per month at emergency sick call.

Seventy-two percent of surveyed inmates stated that they could access sick call when needed, ranking Wallkill as the fourth best prison among all CA-visited facilities for access to sick call. Concerning the quality of care at sick call, surveyed inmates were generally far more satisfied than at other CA-visited prisons, with 25% rating sick call nurses as good, 48% rating them as fair, and 28% rating them as poor, ranking the prison as the fourth highest of all CA-visited facilities for quality of sick call care. When asked to explain their ratings of sick call services, despite their positive ratings of sick call services, inmates stated that certain nurses are nice and try to be helpful, but some of the nurses are rude and threatening, and did not treat inmates humanely.

**Routine Medical Care**

Inmates who require care beyond sick call are seen in the medical area by the physician for a medical clinic call-out. The facility estimated that they see an average of 100 patients a month for call-outs. The physician prioritizes inmate call-outs based on need. According to staff, inmates may wait between two weeks to two months for routine appointments; however, inmates with urgent needs may be seen the same day. Staff explained that delays have increased significantly since losing the nurse practitioner. At a rate similar to responses from inmates at all CA-visited prisons, 36% of Wallkill survey respondents reported experiencing frequent delays in seeing the physician. The median wait time to see the physician was 30 days, longer than the average 21-day wait at all CA-prisons.
Overall, inmates rated the quality of medical staff as fair at a rate only slightly higher than the average rate at all CA-visited facilities, with 20% of survey respondents rating them as good, 29% as fair, and 51% as poor. When asked to explain their rating of the physician, Wallkill survey participants’ comments included that she was unprofessional, and showed little care towards patients. Inmates also complained that the doctor did not continue medications, treatments, and recommendations from previous facilities. Several inmates also complained of long wait times, asserting that they did not get to see the doctor even when they had serious medical concern.

**Chronic Care**

According to information provided by the facility, Wallkill housed 14 HIV-infected inmates, 13 of whom were receiving therapy at the time of our visit. Of these inmates, four had progressed to an AIDS diagnosis. Wallkill does not have an HIV specialist on staff; instead, approximately two to four HIV-infected inmates are sent to infectious disease specialists per month. According to staff, each of these inmates is seen approximately every three months. Destabilized patients may have an appointment every month. Staff explained that inmates co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) used to visit a gastroenterologist; however, this protocol was discontinued. Only inmates experiencing serious problems would be sent to the gastroenterologist.

Staff had identified 48 inmates with HCV, representing 9% of the prison population and equal to the average rate throughout the Department. Thirty-eight of these patients were chronically infected with HCV (79%), a rate comparable to the 75% rate in the community. According to facility data, none of these HCV-infected inmates were receiving treatment for the disease, far lower than the Department-wide average of 5%. The facility health services director told us that the prison offers liver biopsies to all chronically HCV-infected inmates, but more than half have refused this procedure. Two to three patients were receiving treatment but were paroled shortly before our visit, and two inmates may start treatment, pending a liver biopsy. The medical staff reported that zero to six inmates have been on treatment for HCV at one time. Medical staff cited the high turnover rate at the facility as the reason for low numbers of HCV treatment, and expressed concern that this turnover rate negatively affects continuity of care. We are concerned that Wallkill inmates are not being treated for this disease, and despite the high turnover rate, urge the medical staff to review the caseload to determine if anyone is eligible for treatment. Five inmates were co-infected with HIV and HCV, but none were on treatment for HCV.

Wallkill houses many inmates with other chronic medical conditions. At the time of our visit, there were 88 inmates with asthmas, 95 inmates with hypertension, and 46 inmates with diabetes. Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents stated that they suffered from a chronic medical condition, a smaller percentage than survey respondents at all CA-visited prisons and placing it in the bottom fifth of these prisons for prevalence of chronic medical conditions.

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8 Compared to average medical staff ratings of 14% as good, 36% as fair, and 50% as poor.
Specialty Care

Inmates who require specialty care services are seen in the facility at specialty care clinics or taken to outside specialists at the Coxsackie CF Regional Medical Unit (RMU), Shawangunk CF, or Albany Medical Center. Specialty clinics held at Wallkill include optometry, audiology and appointments to obtain prescription footwear. Inmates requiring physical therapy are taken to Shawangunk. Staff reported no delays in specialty care appointments; however, according to survey respondents, the median wait time was 60 days, equal to the median delay at all CA-visited prisons.

Wallkill survey respondents who had seen a specialist were generally more satisfied with the care than at other CA-visited prisons. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents reported seeing a specialist in the past two years, with 33% of these inmates experiencing a delay at least sometimes, ranking Wallkill third best of all CA-visited prisons for frequency of experiencing specialty care delays. Fifty-eight percent of those who had seen a specialist stated that Wallkill medical staff provided good follow-up with the specialists’ recommendations, ranking the prison in the top third for responsiveness of medical staff to these recommendations.

Pharmacy

Wallkill does not have its own pharmacy. Staff explained that medication requests are faxed to a pharmacy in New Paltz and medications are delivered to the facility the next day. Deliveries are made Tuesdays through Saturday. Inmates must submit refill requests five days in advance but generally receive their medications the next day. Wallkill does not have computerized pharmacy records. Wallkill inmates appeared to have fewer problems obtaining medications than at other facilities, with 21% of inmates reporting having difficulty obtaining medications at least sometimes, ranking the facility fourth of all CA-visited prisons for ease of obtaining medications.

Wallkill’s administration informed the CA that as of November 2011, the facility was now receiving its medication from the Ulster Regional Pharmacy and had been using the DOCCS computerized pharmacy system for recording patients’ medications.

Quality Improvement

Wallkill has a five-member Quality Improvement (QI) Committee that meets quarterly. The Committee reviews a set of charts for a particular condition during each QI meeting and the nurses review 10 randomly selected medical records of patients with this condition. Staff explained that during the most recent meeting prior to our visit, in July 2010, the QI committee reviewed treatment for asthma, and staff found some codes to be confusing and that some documentation needed to be fine tuned. A facility nurse conducts Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) audits of its HIV care and the last HIV audit determined that the facility was 100% compliant with the quality indicators. This nurse also conducts HIV tests, reviews HIV charts and consults with an infection control nurse when necessary.
DENTAL CARE

The Visiting Committee toured the dental area and spoke with the dental staff. At the time of our visit, Wallkill employed one dentist and one dental assistant. Staff explained that the facility cannot hire a dental hygienist because it had not received authorization from the state to fill this item. The dentist is in the military, so it is sometimes difficult to cover his absences. However, the dentist from Shawangunk C.F. or Downstate’s Regional Dental Director will often fill in, and Wallkill’s dentist reciprocates when necessary. An oral surgeon visits the facility every two months, and the dentist rarely refers patients out to specialists.

The dental staff told us that they see approximately 120 to 130 patients per month, and explained that they multitask when possible. The majority of the work is restorative care, while staff estimated that 40% is extractions, and that dental emergencies comprise approximately 20% of their workload. Emergency appointments are made either on the same day or the next day. According to staff, inmates wait approximately one week for a routine appointment, although inmates estimated that it takes 33 days to be seen. Despite this discrepancy, this wait is far shorter than the median wait time of 60 days at all CA-visited prisons.

Wallkill survey participants were significantly more satisfied with the facility’s dental care than at other CA-visited facilities, with 64% rating dental care as good, compared to an average rate of 29%. Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents had seen a dentist at least once within the past three years. When asked to explain their rating of dental care, an overwhelming number of inmates had positive comments, explaining that services were prompt and extensive, and that staff cared about people and did a great job. Several inmates did complain of long waits. We commend Wallkill’s dental staff for their caring attitude and efforts at ensuring that inmates are cared for in a thorough, timely manner, even with limited staff.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Wallkill is categorized as an Office of Mental Health (OMH) Level-3 facility, meaning that OMH staff are assigned to the facility on a part-time basis with the ability to provide treatment and medication to inmates with moderate mental disorders or who are in remission from a disorder and have been determined to be able to function adequately in such a facility. Thirty-three inmates were on the OMH caseload at the time of our visit, and OMH assigned a part-time social worker and psychiatrist to the facility, each for eight hours a week.

Two survey respondents reported being on the OMH caseload at Wallkill and one reported having been previously on the caseload. The two survey respondents reported seeing OMH staff at least once within the past year, one of whom reported having trouble obtaining his mental health medication. When asked to rate mental health services at the facility, survey respondents both on and off the OMH caseload generally rated services as fair.
GRIEVANCE PROGRAM

The Visiting Committee visited the grievance office and met with the full-time Inmate Grievance Program supervisor. The office is also staffed by one inmate clerk and two inmate grievance representatives. Inmates may file a grievance by placing them in the mail or submitting them to grievance staff directly. According to the supervisor, most issues are not informally resolved.

Inmates filed a total of 215 grievances in 2010, an increase from the 185 grievances filed in 2009. These figures, however, are down from the 245 filed grievances in 2008 and substantially lower than the 531 grievances in 2007. In 2009, the most grieved issues were medical (23% or 43 grievances), staff conduct (20% or 37 grievances), and housing/internal block (11% or 20 grievances). Other common complaints included those related to medical concerns, jail time credits, and post-release supervision. In 2010, the most grieved issue was again medical (21% or 46), staff conduct (16% or 34), and inmate rights received 8% or 17, a substantial increase from the previous years 2% or 4. The staff member postulated that grievances were higher than usual for 2010, and attributed this to the lack of permanent administrative staff at the facility who would typically resolve many of these issues. Given that many administrative staff at the time of our visit were temporary or in “acting” positions, inmates were unsure of whom to go to address their concerns and the only means for inmates to resolve disputes was to submit grievances.

Overall, Wallkill survey participants did not find the facility’s grievance system to be an effective means of resolving issues, although they considered it to be slightly more effective than grievance systems at other CA-visited prisons. We asked all survey respondents to assess the effectiveness of grievance program, and 69% rated the grievance system as poor and 29% assessed it as somewhat effective, compared to averages of 74% and 19%, respectively, at all CA-visited prisons and ranking the facility in the middle of all CA-visited facilities. Forty-one percent of survey respondents stated that they had used the grievance system at the facility, and of these individuals, 72% rated it as poor. Thirty-seven percent of inmates who used the grievance system reported having been frequently, or very frequently, retaliated against for filing grievances. Inmates with whom we spoke reported that retaliation was particularly an issue with one group of correction officers who worked during the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift. We are concerned about the perception of the grievance system as ineffective and inmates’ reports of retaliation. We recommend that facility staff examine the grievance system and investigate inmate allegations of retaliation and ensure that inmates are not dissuaded from utilizing this important inmate administrative remedy.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

The Visiting Committee visited Wallkill’s residential, six-month Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (ASAT) program, which was running over its 40-person capacity with 43 participants. The facility reported 85 inmates on the waiting list at the time of our visit. Wallkill employs one full-time civilian Program Assistant (PA), who facilitates morning and afternoon sessions of approximately 20 inmates each. There were no ASAT staff vacancies. Group sessions meet Monday through Friday and are divided between program area classrooms and the
dayrooms located between the housing blocks. Participants are assigned to either the morning or the afternoon sessions. Unfortunately, the PA was not present on the day of our visit, and we did not observe a formal class session; however, we were able to speak with an Inmate Program Assistant (IPA) and observe a community meeting.

ASAT participants at Wallkill are housed together in dorms and must maintain their cubicles up to the ASAT Therapeutic Community (TC) standard.\(^{10}\) According to the IPA with whom we spoke, community meetings are held in the dayroom every day for approximately thirty minutes. This meeting includes readings, announcements, and checking in about feelings. After the conclusion of this meeting, participants move to classrooms in the program area for formal group sessions. On Fridays, the group watches recovery-related films. Participants in the session we observed appeared to be engaged in the discussion.

DOCCS’ ASAT programs incorporate elements of TC, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and 12-Steps principles, but the emphasis on these elements varies by facility and treatment staff. The ASAT program at Wallkill appears to operate as a modified TC. Typical TC elements include community meetings, the use of push-ups and pull-ups, and some type of structured hierarchy.\(^{11}\) According to the IPA, group sessions are facilitated by a different group of program participants each day. He also informed us that pull-ups are used internally, and staff rarely write formal disciplinary tickets, but instead issued verbal reprimands. We only received two surveys from Wallkill ASAT participants, and one participant was somewhat dissatisfied and the other very satisfied with the therapeutic community elements of the program. Both participants were very satisfied with the CBT and 12-Steps approaches.

Inmates can be dismissed from the program because of: (1) a disciplinary removal—when an inmate is convicted of violating important prison or program rules and/or are given more than 30 days of keeplock; (2) an inadequate program performance removal, e.g., if an inmate fails to participate in the program or receives more than two negative program evaluations; or (3) an administrative removal, e.g., if an inmate is discharged or transferred to another facility unrelated to his performance in the program. The table below shows the numbers of graduations and removals for Wallkill’s ASAT program. We are pleased by the high number of completions, particularly given the small size of Wallkill’s ASAT program.

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\(^{10}\) TC cell standards include strict rules describing how an inmate’s bed should be made, how shoes must be aligned, and various other regulations regarding how an inmate’s possessions must be kept and organized.

\(^{11}\) Pull-ups are verbal concerns participants or staff give to other participants who may not be appropriately managing emotions, behaviors or tasks. Push-ups are verbal acknowledgements participants or staff give to other participants who have demonstrated good behavior and/or progress. DOCCS ASAT Program Operations Manual, 2002.
Wallkill ASAT Program Completions and Removals 2008 - 2010

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<th>2008</th>
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While the IPA explained that some inmates are selected to move to an aftercare dorm after completion of the program, the two survey respondents expressed concern about insufficient aftercare. Furthermore, neither survey participant had knowledge of any discharge planning for program participants. The two survey participants appeared committed to the treatment process, and both expressed anxiety about the aftermath of the program, including fear of relapse due to potentially residing in general population again and not being connected to sufficient treatment services upon release. We recommend that the facility make efforts to introduce formal discharge planning into the ASAT program and create an aftercare dorm for all program participants so that they do not return to general population, an environment which generally lacks necessary support for program graduates to maintain their recovery.

TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

The Visiting Committee toured the Transitional Services (TS) program, which conducted the following classes: facility orientation, Phase III, Aggression Replacement Training (ART), and Prisoners for AIDS Counseling and Education (PACE). The facility also offers Thinking for a Change (T4C), but the program was not running at the time of our visit. According to the information provided by facility administrators during our recent conference call, the T4C program at Wallkill had become fully operational and had a capacity for 24 participants and enrolled 12 prisoners, with two staff members trained in the T4C model. At the time of our visit, Wallkill employed one full-time corrections counselor, in addition to several IPAs. The Transitional Services office is staffed by several IPAs who may assist inmates with researching reentry resources. The office contained several desks and two typewriters for inmate use. Documents available to inmates included resume preparation worksheets, information about community resources such as housing and substance abuse treatment programs, and the Connections resource guide.

All inmates who are new to the facility must undergo a one-week orientation regarding the rules, programs, and services at Wallkill. Staff informed us that Phase I, an introduction to the DOCCS system, is run on an as-needed basis. Since most inmates complete the program at a previous facility, Phase I is only run several times a year. Thirty-eight inmates were enrolled in the program at the time of our visit.

Phase III, a five-week course, focuses on preparing inmates for their release and is the most common and crucial TS program at Wallkill Correctional Facility. At the time of our visit, the program was operating slightly over its 20-person capacity with a total 21 inmates. Four hundred fifty-three inmates were on the waiting list; staff informed us that preference is given to
inmates that are closest to their release dates. The class is led by the TS counselor, who sometimes has former inmates, representatives from the Division of Parole, and volunteers from the PACE give presentations. The Visiting Committee observed a program session and was generally pleased with the energy of the Transitional Services counselor and her ability to engage the class. We only received survey responses from three individuals who had participated in Phase III; one was satisfied with the program, one was somewhat satisfied, and one was not satisfied.

TS staff also assist Phase III participants in obtaining necessary documents prior to release, such as Social Security cards and copies of their birth certificates, although many of the Phase III participants may have already obtained these documents. In 2009, 120 inmates completed Phase III and 30 of those inmates received Social Security cards and 60 inmates received birth certificates. Eighty inmates completed Phase III by the time of our visit in August 2010 and 25 and 37 received Social Security cards and birth certificates, respectively. Staff told us that there is an emphasis on career development during the course, and all inmates are required to type their own resumes, which allows them to practice keyboard skills in addition to preparing this integral document for a successful post-release job search. We commend the facility for its emphasis on these skills and ensuring that each individual leaves prison with a typed resume.

ART classes were not running on the day of our visit; however, enrollment was near the 20-person capacity with 18 inmates enrolled, and 89 inmates on the waiting list. We were pleased to see that the classroom was spacious with decorative and informational posters on the walls. The program is supervised by the TS counselor and is usually run by two or three inmate IPAs whom she trains four times a year. Eight survey respondents had participated in ART and seven of them expressed satisfaction with ART at least sometimes.

The Visiting Committee toured the PACE program office, which was large and staffed by two IPAs. Classes are run twice a week in the evenings and are supported by the Osborne Association and AIDS Institute’s Criminal Justice Initiative. Two IPAs are qualified to teach the class and assist with clerical duties when outside volunteers are unavailable. Inmates may be tested for HIV by facility medical staff; however, the Osborne Association hoped to start an HIV testing program soon. Osborne transports inmates’ partners to the facility by bus twice a year so that the partners may be tested and learn about HIV/AIDS and STDs. The PACE office contained numerous educational materials in both English and Spanish.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend that state policy makers work with DOCCS Central Office administrators and facility officials to implement the following measures:

**Programs**

- Reassess the high number of inmates assigned to porter positions and explore other jobs that more closely reflect work opportunities in the community.
- Review policies regarding outside clearance and consider expanding eligibility requirements in order to ensure that more inmates are offered these job opportunities.
• Increase the rate of pay for inmate-workers at all DOCCS facilities to reflect increases in the cost of items in the commissary.
• Fill academic vacancy and increase Pre-GED and GED class enrollment.
• Initiate additional vocational programs and NCCER apprenticeships so that inmates can learn skills that will benefit them upon release.
• Expand the postsecondary education opportunities for inmates who have earned their GED or high school diploma.

Other Services
• Hire civilian staff to supervise the library services at the prison.
• Review the processing and treatment of visitors to ensure timely, courteous and professional treatment by the visiting staff.
• Review inmate grievances concerning mail and packages services to assess whether measures can be taken to reduce the frequency of such complaints.
• Raise the limit on the amount inmates can spend per commissary visit.

Safety, Discipline, & Grievance Program
• Assess the level and causes for tension between staff and inmates, particularly during the morning shift, and develop a plan to reduce tension and incidents of retaliation and verbal harassment, including diversity training for staff and inmates.
• Meet with the ILC and IGRC to discuss ways to reduce tension at the prison and to improve the effectiveness and credibility among inmates of the grievance system.
• Take steps to ensure that all staff, particularly security staff working the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift, understand the importance of the grievance system as the only means of redress for inmate complaints and explain the seriousness of interfering with this process.

Medical Care
• Review the quality of medical encounters between inmate-patients and clinic providers to ensure that inmates’ medical conditions are promptly diagnosed and properly treated.
• Consider allocating two additional full-time providers to the facility’s medical team to decrease delays in accessing routine medical care.
• Review the utilization of specialty care services.

Substance Abuse Treatment
• Implement formal discharge planning into the ASAT program.
• Expand the aftercare dorm so that all program participants do not return to general population after completion of ASAT, as the environment lacks the support necessary for them to maintain their recovery.