



## **OTISVILLE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY: 2011**

Otisville is a medium-security prison for men committed to the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) located in the town of Mount Hope, Orange County, New York, approximately 90 miles northwest of New York City. The facility operated as a tuberculosis sanitarium, a facility to house system-involved youth, and then a drug treatment center before it was acquired in 1976 by DOCCS and converted to a medium-security prison for male prisoners. The Prison Visiting Project of the Correctional Association of New York (CA) conducted a visit to Otisville on July 26, 2011. The purpose of our visit was to assess programs, physical facilities and conditions for both prisoners and staff within the prison.

At the time of our visit to Otisville, the prison population was 408, with a capacity for 513. All individuals incarcerated at Otisville are in general population; Otisville does not have a disciplinary housing unit.

Otisville has a range of programming including academic, vocational, transitional services, and industry. It also offers a range of volunteer opportunities for prisoners. Otisville continues to be one of the few facilities within the DOCCS system that operates the Puppies Behind Bars Program. During our visit, prison administrators informed the Visiting Committee that due to the 2011 prison closings, Otisville will obtain additional programming and staff, including an Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (ASAT) program with a capacity of 50 participants and an additional secondary educational program through John Jay College with a capacity for 12 students.

After providing a draft of this report to Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and Otisville officials, we had a conference call on May 24, 2012 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.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In order to accurately assess the services and conditions of the prison, the CA obtained surveys from 107 prisoners about general prison conditions. To acquire survey participants, the Visiting Committee obtains informed consent from each individual that they would like to

participate in this voluntary process, either on their housing unit or in their program area. The surveys were then mailed to each prisoner who provided us with identifying information. The CA ensures each participant that the information they provide is completely confidential and that the CA maintains “privileged mail status,” which prohibits the Department from reading the content of the mail, although it is allowed to open the mail in the presence of the prisoner in order to search for contraband.

This report is based on findings from data supplied by the facility and DOCCS prior to our visit; prisoner surveys; interviews with the superintendent, executive team, program staff and prisoners; and meetings with the staff union representatives and members of the Inmate Liaison Committee (ILC) and the Inmate Grievance Resolution Committee (IGRC). We appreciate the cooperation of the facility’s administration during our visit and the extensive information staff provided to us during and after our visit. We would also like to thank all those individuals confined at Otisville who participated in our survey.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

During our visit to Otisville, the CA was pleased to find low levels of tension between staff and prisoners and that both individuals incarcerated at Otisville and the staff worked to create a relatively calm environment. Otisville consistently ranked towards the top of all CA-visited facilities for prisoners’ satisfaction with the prison’s programs and their perception of prisoner-staff relations. The Visiting Committee was pleased to find that there were beneficial programs such as the Puppies Behind Bars program and an extensive array of volunteer programs. The CA was disappointed that prisoners reported a high level of dissatisfaction with the education program and that a significant percent of prisoner population was assigned to porter positions.

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

- Investigate any trends in the substantial increase in the number of grievances filed about staff misconduct for 2010 and 2011.
- Review UIR data for prisoner-on-prisoner assaults to investigate any trends that would account for the increase in these types of assaults.
- Ensure that all rules and regulations regarding mail and packages are made clear to the prison population.
- Review mailroom policies to ensure that all staff is operating under the same guidelines and interpreting the mail directive in the same manner.
- Review nursing procedures to eliminate inconsistencies in the treatment provided to prisoners during sick call encounters.
- Consider hiring additional clinical staff to decrease the clinical provider to patient ratio with the increase of the prisoner population.
- Increase job opportunities for the prisoner population so that individuals may learn additional skills aside from the very limited skill set needed for porter positions.
- Update the material and equipment available in the vocational programs.
- Provide vocational materials in Spanish.

- Expand the law library hours or capacity.

### **PHYSICAL PLANT**

Otisville is comprised of 1,300 acres of mountainous terrain, throughout which facility buildings are widely spread apart. Prisoners at Otisville are confined in dormitory-style housing, many of which include adjacent gardens. Prison officials informed the Visiting Committee that due to a new policy, the facility is no longer allowed to serve the produce grown on the Otisville grounds in the mess hall. We encourage the facility to review this policy as people incarcerated at Otisville are often unsatisfied with the fresh produce available to them through the mess hall. The Otisville dorms are divided into a North and South compound with five dorms in each compound. The Visiting Committee toured the dorms and found them to be neat and clean with each dorm containing a kitchen area with a stove, sink, microwave, and refrigerator. There was also a dayroom for each dorm with plants, a pool table, a television and books. Due to the five medium-security prison closures, prison administrators informed the Visiting Committee that two currently closed dorms at Otisville will be re-opened, with one of which being used for the return of a 50-bed ASAT program. This additional space will increase the facility's capacity to 600 persons. During our follow-up conference call with prison administrators, the CA was informed that the two additional dorms had been opened in August of 2011, one with a capacity of 48 and the other with a capacity of 41. One of the recently opened dorms will serve as a residential Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Program, and the other is general population. The facility has also hired a full-time ASAT coordinator, and is currently seeking to hire a full-time program assistant.

At the time of our visit, the facility was undergoing a series of construction projects, including replacement of damaged main water pipes, which facility administration informed us was 85% complete at the time of our visit. Repair on the water telemetry system was also underway, as well as additional construction on the road and a nearly finished door replacement project for some of the housing units. Facility administration also informed us that Building 104 and the gymnasium were scheduled for roof repair in August 2011. The Visiting Committee was pleased to see that the facility is taking steps to repair damage to the water pipes as a number of individuals complained of tainted water in two of the dorms.

The CA was also informed during our follow-up conference call that repairs to the water main system had been completed in August 2011. The Administration also informed the CA that there had been no further complaints about the quality of the water since the repairs had been completed. The quality of the water also continues to be tested monthly.

### **GENERAL INMATE POPULATION & STAFF DATA**

Otisville had a prisoner population of 408 at the time of our visit and according to information supplied by the facility, the prisoner population's demographic information differed slightly from system-wide averages. Fifty-six percent of prisoners at Otisville identified as African-American, 27% identified as Hispanic, and only 13% identified as White; this differs from the system-wide average with this prison having a higher percent of both prisoners identifying as African-American and Hispanic and a lower percent of prisoners identifying as

White.<sup>1</sup> The median age of Otisville prisoners is 44.5 years-old, which is substantially older than the system-wide median age of 37 years-old. Eighty-five percent of prisoners at Otisville are serving time for a violent felony, compared to the 63% system-wide and a much lower percent of prisoners at Otisville are serving time for a drug offense compared to system-wide data.<sup>2</sup> The median minimum sentence for prisoners at Otisville is 12.5 years, significantly higher than the system-wide average of five, and over half of the prison population was serving a minimum sentence of 10 years or more.<sup>3</sup> Seventy percent of the prison population had their high school diploma, GED, or higher education degree, significantly higher than the system-wide average of 57%. Only 10% of the population has a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level or lower. Three percent of population were Spanish speaking with no, limited or moderate English proficiency.

Otisville was staffed by 195 corrections officers and had 11 vacant positions at the time of our visit. According to facility data, 19 members of security staff identify as African-American, 19 identified as Hispanic, one individual identified as Asian, and 24 security officers were female. Although some staff expressed concern that several security staff would be removed due to higher seniority staff transferring to Otisville from closing facilities, administration informed the Visiting Committee that they did not anticipate that any of the current staff would be dislocated by the prison closures.

During our visit to Otisville the superintendent position was vacant, and being temporarily filled by the Deputy Superintendent of Security (DSS); we were pleased to learn during a follow-up conference call that the position had been permanently filled. Unfortunately, we also learned that the DSS position had been vacant for the past two or three weeks and the facility was unsure when permanent staff would be appointed. The facility had also hired 11 full-time security staff to address the growth in Otisville's population.

## **SAFETY**

The Visiting Committee was pleased to learn that there are relatively low levels of prisoner-staff confrontation at Otisville. Individuals incarcerated at Otisville reported low levels of staff misconduct, including physical abuse or verbal harassment. Incarcerated individuals also reported little tension between prisoners and overall survey responses rank Otisville within the top five of all 31 CA-visited facilities for the least amount of tension between security staff and prisoners or among prisoners. Staff attributed this to the fact that prisoners at Otisville were older, more mature, and serving long or life sentences. Staff also explained that prisoners have an incentive to remain at Otisville instead of being transferred to a higher security facility.

### ***Prisoner-Staff Relations***

Surveys from individuals incarcerated at Otisville indicated that individuals had a mostly

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<sup>1</sup> According to DOCCS January 2011, *Profile of Inmate Population*, 22.4% prisoners identify as White, 50.5% identify as African-American, and 24.9% identify as Hispanic.

<sup>2</sup> Only 5% of the prison population at Otisville is serving time for a drug offense compared to 15% of the population system-wide.

<sup>3</sup> Two-hundred and fifty-nine prisoners (63% of the population at Otisville) were serving a minimum sentence of 10 years or more.

neutral or positive view of prisoner-staff relations. Prisoners estimated that a median of 75% of officers do a good job and only 10% engage in serious misconduct. This is significantly better than at all CA-visited facilities for which survey participants estimated that 30% of security staff do a good job and 50% engage in serious misconduct. Thirty-six percent of respondents rated security staff-prisoner relations at Otisville as good and 43% rated relations between prisoners and security staff as equally good and bad. This ranks Otisville at the top of all CA-visited facilities for the highest positive rating of prisoner-staff relations. Thirty-two percent of survey participants also felt that prisoner-staff relations were better at Otisville than at other facilities and 29% felt that prisoner-staff relations were much better at Otisville than at other facilities. Although prisoners may be comparing Otisville’s security staff to security staff at maximum-security facilities and not to other mediums-security prisons, we are pleased that administration and line staff have encouraged a relatively peaceful and safe environment. **Table A - Survey Responses and Ranking<sup>4</sup> in Regards to Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment at Otisville**, on page 5, summarizes Otisville prisoners’ responses to questions pertaining to security staff conduct.

**Table A - Survey Responses and Ranking in Regards to Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment at Otisville**

<b>How common is:</b>	<b>Most Common</b>	<b>Common</b>	<b>Not Common</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
<b>Physical Assault</b>	5%	11%	84%	2
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	6%	7%	86%	22
<b>Verbal Harassment</b>	32%	32%	36%	1
<b>Racial Harassment</b>	11%	23%	66%	3
<b>Threats and Intimidation</b>	24%	36%	40%	1
<b>Abusive Pat-Frisks</b>	12%	29%	59%	9
<b>Turning off Lights and Water</b>	6%	13%	81%	17
<b>Retaliation</b>	25%	36%	41%	4
<b>False Tickets</b>	16%	36%	48%	2
<b>Destruction of Property</b>	11%	18%	71%	5

As indicated in **Table A**, individuals incarcerated at Otisville reported low levels of security staff misconduct and Otisville consistently ranked in the top third of all CA-visited facilities for the level of security staff misconduct, except for sexual abuse and turning off lights and water. For both these indicators (sexual abuse and turning off lights/water), the vast majority of Otisville survey participants reported this type of abuse as uncommon. Similarly, the majority of survey participants at most facilities also rate these types of abuse as uncommon, and therefore, Otisville ranks in the mid-range of all 31 CA-visited facilities for these indicators. Otisville survey participants also reported low levels of feeling unsafe, with 48% of survey respondents reporting that they never feel unsafe and 42% reporting that when they do feel unsafe it is only a little unsafe. Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents reported that physical confrontations between prisoners and staff never occurred, ranking Otisville fourth highest of the 31 CA-visited facilities for the least amount of physical confrontations between security staff and prisoners. Thirty-eight percent of survey participants also reported that verbal harassment never

<sup>4</sup> The 31-CA-visited facilities are ranked from best to worst, one being the best and 31 being the worst.

occurred, which ranks Otisville as the second best facility among CA-visited facilities for the least amount of verbal harassment. When asked how common racial tension was at the facility, 43% of survey respondents reported that there was very little racial tension, which also ranks Otisville the second best facility among the 31 CA-visited facilities for the lowest level of racial tension between staff and prisoners.

Survey respondents attributed the low level of prisoner-staff altercations to the relatively small size of the prison, as well as the perception that Otisville is “a going home facility for prisoners, and most officers are ready to retire,” so both groups avoid confrontation. One individual also noted that: “staff and prisoners hold to rules and regulations regarding such interactions. Officers here are doing their jobs.”

Otisville ranked as the second best medium-security prison for the lowest rate of prisoner-on-staff assaults for 2007-2010 with an average rate of zero incidents for the three-year period.<sup>5</sup> According to data provided by the facility, there were 318 misbehavior reports filed in 2010, 45% of which were Tier I and 13% of which were Tier III. Forty-one percent of survey respondents reported administrative staff prevent staff abuse of prisoners “a lot” or “somewhat,” ranking Otisville as the second best of all CA-visited facilities for how much prisoners feel administrative staff take measures to prevent staff abuse.

### ***Prisoner-Prisoner Relations***

The prison population at Otisville also reported low levels of conflicts between prisoners, attributing this to an incentive to stay at the facility, and many of the inmates being older and closer to their release date. Only 2% of survey respondents reported that prisoners fight frequently at Otisville, compared to the average of 27% at all CA-visited facilities. Otisville ranks in the top three of all CA-visited facilities for the lowest amount of reported prisoner altercations, and survey participants reported significantly less prisoner-on-prisoner assaults than the average at all CA-visited facilities.<sup>6</sup>

According to 2010 DOCCS Unusual Incident Report (UIR) data, there were two reported incidents of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and according to facility data, three prisoner-on-prisoner assaults had occurred in 2011 at the time of our July visit. Otisville ranks 29<sup>th</sup> out of the 36 medium-security facilities for the lowest rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults for 2007-2010.<sup>7</sup>

According to survey participants, the stress of being in prison and interpersonal conflicts were the biggest contributing factors to conflicts between prisoners.<sup>8</sup> Otisville survey participants reported that gang activity, drugs, gambling, and theft of property were less common factors in prisoner fights than at most other CA-visited facilities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The CA compiles and ranks facilities according to DOCCS Unusual Incident Reports for 2007-2010.

<sup>6</sup> Eight-two percent of Otisville survey participants reported never being in a fight with another prisoner at Otisville compared to the average of 70% at all CA-visited facilities.

<sup>7</sup> DOCCS Unusual Incident Reports for 2007-2010.

<sup>8</sup> Nearly half of all survey respondents reported that personal conflicts were common factors in prisoner-on-prisoner fights, and 40% reported that stress of being in prison was a common factor in prisoner fights.

<sup>9</sup> Eleven percent of Otisville survey participants reported that drugs were a common factor in prisoner fights compared to a 27% average of all CA-visited facilities. Thirteen percent of survey participants reported that gangs

Thirty-eight percent of survey participants reported that gang activity was very rare, and 26% reported there was none at all, ranking Otisville as the facility with the least amount of gang activity of all 31 CA-visited facilities. Fifty-three percent of survey participants reported that drug use was very rare at Otisville, and 74% reported that drug use was not a source of violence at all in the facility. These survey responses rank Otisville fourth and third best out of all CA-visited facilities for the least amount of drug use and the infrequency of which drug use is a source of violence.<sup>10</sup>

Although we have some concerns about an increase in the number of Unusual Incidents involving prisoner-on-prisoner conflicts in 2011, overall, Otisville ranks in the top of all CA-visited facilities for the least amount of altercations between prisoners and prisoners and staff. We commend the staff at Otisville for fostering an environment low in tension and altercations between staff and prisoners.

### **INMATE GRIEVANCE PROGRAM**

The grievance office at Otisville is staffed by one civilian supervisor and two inmate grievance representatives, as well as an inmate clerk. Individuals who wish to file a grievance do so in their housing area and then can mail or bring the grievance to the Inmate Grievance Program (IGP) office. Once the grievance is filed, a correction officer codes the grievance and an investigation is completed by one of the Inmate Grievance Representatives. If the grievance is not a non-calendar contact, in which a prisoner has a question and an IGR provides a satisfactory response, a grievance hearing is scheduled within 16 days, and if at that time the grievance is not informally resolved, it is sent to the superintendent for further action.

Individuals incarcerated at Otisville filed 234 grievances in 2010, an 81% increase from the 129 filed in 2009. Staff attributed this to the change in staff at all levels of the facility during 2010 and noted that the number of grievances filed in 2011 had decreased from the 2010 levels. According to follow-up data provided by the facility in June 2012, there were a total of 120 grievances filed in 2011, which is a 49% decrease from the previous year, returning the facility to its 2009 number. The Superintendent also informed the CA that she meets with the grievance staff regularly to address any issues the prisoner population may be having and that the facility makes an effort to informally resolve grievances before a grievance hearing is required.

At the time of our visit, medical problems were the most frequently grieved issue in 2010, with 54 grievances filed, an increase from 44 filed in 2009. The main areas of concern for individuals filing a grievance against medical care were both access to, and the quality of, medical services provided, as well as access to specialists. According to data provided by the facility after our follow-up call, medical issues were still the highest grieved topic in 2011 with 65 grievances, a 20% increase from 2010. The second highest grieved area at Otisville for 2010 was staff misconduct. During that year, 32 grievances were filed about staff conduct, a more than

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were a common factor in prisoner fights compared to an average of 32% of all CA-visited facilities; 27% said gambling was common compared to 31% for all surveyed prisons; and 21% said theft of prisoner property was a common factor in prisoner fights compared to a 31% average at all CA-visited facilities.

<sup>10</sup> Compared to an average of only 16% of prisoners who report drug use as rare and 33% who report drug use is not a source of violence at all CA-visited facilities.

400% increase from the seven filed in 2009. There were 17 grievances filed against staff conduct at the time of our visit in July of 2011, a rate consistent with the high figure in 2010. Staff informed us that none of the grievances filed in 2010 about staff misconduct were substantiated. According to our post-visit data, there were 26 grievances filed in 2011 for staff conduct, which is a decrease from the number filed in 2010, but still substantially higher than the number filed in 2009.

Some prisoners expressed concerns to the CA about the effectiveness of the grievance system and said they sometimes experience pressure to informally resolve their grievances; some also voiced fear of retaliation for filing a grievance. Despite these concerns, 45% of survey participants reported that the grievance system was somewhat effective and 14% reported it was very effective. This ranks Otisville as the second highest prison for the effectiveness of its grievance system. While there may be some concerns regarding retaliation, the majority of survey participants at Otisville report that retaliation for filing grievances or submitting complaints is not common; ranking Otisville in the top five of CA-visited facilities for how infrequently retaliation occurs.<sup>11</sup>

## **PROGRAMS**

The Visiting Committee toured Otisville's academic, vocational, and Transitional Services programs. Since we conducted our tour during the summer when programs were not fully operational, we were unable to adequately observe all academic and vocational programming, but we did have an opportunity to speak with staff and participants about the programs. According to information provided by the facility, 100% of persons currently incarcerated at Otisville were programmed full-time, with at least two modules per day; including a morning, afternoon, early evening, or late evening module. None of the prison population was idle. This is a significant accomplishment, and we commend the facility administration for providing the Otisville prisoner population with full-time programming. However, of the 408 individuals assigned to facility jobs, 54% were assigned to porter positions, where prisoners conduct cleaning and maintenance tasks and typically do not learn productive skills that could help them find jobs outside of prison. The number of prisoners at Otisville assigned to porter positions is significantly higher than at other CA-visited facilities, ranking Otisville the second worst prison out of all CA-visited facilities for the high number of prisoners assigned to porter positions. We urge the prison to find more meaningful employment for the prison population so that they will gain useful skills for post-release jobs.

The facility's three industry programs, Mess Hall, Recycling, and Construction were all operating at capacity with 65, 7, and 5 individuals, respectively. Otisville ranked in the middle of all CA-visited facilities for job satisfaction with 78% of survey participants reported being satisfied with their job at least sometimes.<sup>12</sup> Survey comments revealed that prisoners enjoyed the work they were engaged in and the skills they were learning; however, there were numerous

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<sup>11</sup> Forty-one percent of survey participants reported that retaliation for filing a grievance or complaining was not common, compared to the average of 27% of survey participants at all CA-visited facilities who feel it is not common.

<sup>12</sup> Compared to an average of 71% of survey respondents at all CA-visited prisons for job satisfaction.

complaints about low-wages and the number of porter positions, which are not providing prisoners with additional skills.

### *Academic Programs*

Otisville offers three educational programs: one Adult Basic Education (ABE) class, two Pre-GED classes, and one GED class. Otisville also offers a Multi-Level course during the evenings, which is available to those individuals who are programmed during the day. At the time of our visit, there were 16 prisoners participating in a college or post-secondary accreditation correspondence course, and Otisville also offered a course on social change provided by Vassar College.

The classrooms the Visiting Committee toured had plenty of light, were clean and had prisoner-created art work and informational posters decorating the walls. At the time of our visit, Otisville employed two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher for the Multi-Level evening class, and each class was staffed by two Inmate Program Assistants (IPA). Otisville does not provide an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, and a number of prisoners reported that this made it difficult for those individuals who were Spanish dominant to participate in the educational program or to prepare for the Spanish GED. During our visit, staff informed the Visiting Committee that they can provide Spanish-speaking prisoners textbooks written in Spanish, which the facility previously had used in the now-defunct ESL class, and that four individuals had already taken the Spanish GED as of the time of our visit in 2011.

The CA was pleased to learn that a bilingual teacher had been hired in October 2011. This instructor is teaching a bilingual ABE class during the morning module with a capacity for 20 and 14 students enrolled and a bilingual combined pre-GED and GED course in the afternoon with a capacity of 20 and 20 students enrolled. The CA is very pleased that Otisville has taken the necessary steps to provide educational opportunities to Spanish-dominant individuals.

Otisville offers two courses during the summer which meet three days a week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. **Table B - Otisville's Educational Program Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List**, on page 10, summarizes the facility's general educational program, the capacity and waiting list for the regular school year programs.

**Table B - Otisville's Educational Program Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List**

	Capacity	Enrollment	Waiting List	<b>Total Enrolled + Waiting List</b>
ABE	20	15	13	28
Pre-GED	40	37	34	71
GED	20	17	15	32
Multi-Level*	20	19	18	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>168</b>

**\* Since our visit the Multi-Level class is now bilingual class with a capacity of 40.**

According to data provided by the facility, 70% of Otisville prisoners have their high school diploma or GED, significantly higher than the system-wide average of 57%. According to

the facility, seven of the seventeen prisoners who took the GED exam in 2011 passed. Thirty percent of the Otisville population is without their GED, high school diploma or equivalent, yet only 14% of those without their GED are enrolled in a GED class. This ranks Otisville in the bottom 20% of CA-visited facilities for a prison's ability to place those without a GED in a GED class.

At the time of our visit there were 16 individuals enrolled in college or a certification correspondence course through such institutions as Ashworth College, Ohio University, Penn Foster, and the Berean School of the Bible. Prisoners must pay for correspondence courses with these accredited institutions with their own funds, but DOCCS does proctoring for the classes. Fifteen prisoners were also enrolled in the Vassar College social change course. Administrators informed the Visiting Committee that the recently closed Arthur Kill Correctional Facility's John Jay College program would be introduced at Otisville, with a capacity for 12 individuals.

Otisville staff informed the CA during a follow-up conference call that the John Jay College Program is now operating at the facility, and has 15 students enrolled in four courses. The courses are held once per week for three hours, and the program also offers academic workshops, where once each month students taking the same courses on John Jay's campus are brought to the facility to attend a presentation by a John Jay professor with both the campus and prisoner students. The facility also informed the CA that the number of courses will increase to six courses in the second and third years, and eight courses will be offered in the fourth and fifth years. The CA is pleased that the John Jay College program will continue to expand, providing those incarcerated with much needed access to higher educational opportunities.

Individuals incarcerated at Otisville reported significant levels of dissatisfaction with the academic programming available to them. Otisville ranked in the bottom third for all 31 CA-visited prisons for prisoner satisfaction with educational programming. Fifty-one percent of survey participants reported not being satisfied with their academic programming at Otisville. This level of dissatisfaction is higher than the 42% average at all CA-visited facilities. Many survey participants also noted that the teachers did not teach during class, but instead relied on work sheets or the teachers' aides.

### ***Vocational Programs***

Otisville operated five vocational programs at the time of our visit and three industry programs. A sixth vocational program, Horticulture, had been closed as of August 2011 due to the instructor retiring and the facility not being authorized to fill this position. Data provided by the facility indicates that there were three full-time vocational instructors; none of whom spoke Spanish. The CA was informed during our follow-up call with the facility that the administration was looking into providing vocational materials in Spanish, but was having some difficulty obtaining the materials. This outreach included contacting a company in Puerto Rico to try to obtain some vocational materials in Spanish. We suggest the facility seek assistance from program administrators in DOCCS Central Office, who may have additional resources for Spanish-language vocational materials.

The Visiting Committee was able to tour three vocational programs: Printing, Small Engine Repair and Puppies Behind Bars. The Visiting Committee was pleased that the printing

equipment was relatively new and that work in the Small Engine Repair program involved work on the facility's equipment. **Table C** below summarizes the program capacity, enrollment, and waitlist for each vocational and industry program at Otisville.

**Table C – Otisville’s Vocational and Industrial Program Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List\***

	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Waiting List<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Total Enrolled + Waiting List</b>
Building Maintenance	32	23	23	46
Puppies Behind Bars		30**		
Printing	26	14	14	28
Composting Operation	10	7	7	14
Small Engine Repair	30	22	22	44
<i>Industry Programs</i>				
Food Service	65	59	59	118
Recycling	10	7	7	14
Construction	10	5	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>274</b>

\* This table reflects the vocational and industry programs available at the time of our visit in July 2011; since then, the facility has opened a Masonry and Asbestos program.

\*\* There were 30 inmates enrolled in the program at the time of our visit, but only 20 puppies currently in the program.

Seventy-nine percent of survey participants reported not being enrolled in a vocational program and only 4% of survey respondents were on the wait list for a vocational program. Seventy-two percent of survey participants reported that they were at least somewhat satisfied with their vocational program compared to the 64% average at all CA-visited facilities. Prisoners were pleased that Otisville’s administration allowed prisoners to take an additional vocational class, even if they had been previously enrolled in a vocational program at their previous facility.

Survey participants’ main concerns were that much of the equipment and materials were out-of-date and there were an insufficient number of vocational programs. Respondents also questioned whether the skills they were gaining in these courses would be applicable to readily available jobs in their communities. Prisoners felt that programs in computer repairs and green technology would be most helpful to individuals once back in their communities.

During our follow-up conference call with the facility, the CA was informed that due to prison closings, two additional vocational programs had opened at Otisville. The Masonry program was opened in January 2012 and has a total capacity of 32 and has 24 students enrolled in the morning and afternoon modules, respectively. The Asbestos program opened in October

<sup>13</sup> The data in **Table C** was supplied to the CA prior to our visit to Otisville. We are uncertain whether the data for prisoners on the waiting list is accurate since the number of prisoners enrolled and on the waitlist are identical for each program. Following a conference call with the Administration, the facility sent us information indicating that three people were on the waitlist for Small Engines, and five people were on the waitlist for Building Maintenance.

2011 and has a capacity of 20 with 12 students enrolled between the AM and PM modules. The CA is pleased with the increase in vocational training available at the facility.

The Visiting Committee toured the Small Engine Repair vocational program and was pleased to find that the instructor emphasized transferrable skills and real world examples in this class, something that was reflected in the positive comments from surveyed prisoners who had taken the course. Prisoners in this course perform repairs of prison equipment, including work on generators, pumps, construction, brick-laying, and welding. The instructor provides a training at the beginning on basic tools and using them safely. This class is staffed by one civilian staff member and a full-time teacher's aide who is Department of Labor (DOL) certified.

Otisville offers DOL apprenticeships in three vocational programs; Print Shop, Small Engine Repair, and Building Maintenance. One prisoner each year during 2009 through 2011 attained his DOL certification at Otisville. Otisville also offers the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) apprenticeship through Building Maintenance; unfortunately, no one at Otisville has yet attained his NCCER certification.

The Puppies Behind Bars has been operational with DOCCS since the late 1990s and is operational at three facilities: Otisville, Bedford Hills and Fishkill. Puppies Behind Bars trains Labrador Retrievers as service animals and as explosion detection canines (EDC). Prisoners are considered eligible for the program if they have at least two years remaining on their sentence, have no mental health needs and no serious medical problems,<sup>14</sup> have attained a GED, have a good disciplinary record, and are not disqualified due to the nature of their crime. Prisoners are interviewed by a senior trainer of the Puppies Behind Bars organization to determine their eligibility for the program. Prisoners receive the puppies when they are 8-weeks old and are the animal's primary care giver and trainer for the next 18-24 months. Once they have trained their first puppy, prisoners remain in the program and receive an Animal Care Taker certification from the organization. Prisoners who qualify may also participate in a correspondence course run through the organization to become a veterinary assistant.

At the time of our visit, there were 30 prisoners enrolled in the program and 20 puppies. Prisoners enrolled in the program attend a full day of training with an outside trainer each Wednesday. Otisville staff informed the Visiting Committee that enrollment in the program is rolling, and that the program has exhausted its waitlist and only has one individual waiting for the program.

As previously mentioned, a significant portion of the prisoner population is assigned to porter positions. Facility administration justified the large number of porters because they assert there are many areas in the facility that require additional cleaning, such as the housing units and the gym. However, both the CA and the prisoner population raised concerns, noting that porters mostly engage in menial tasks, which do not provide transferable skills to employment upon release to their respective communities.

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<sup>14</sup> Both medical and mental health needs are assigned by level within DOCCS. To qualify for the Puppies Behind Bars program, prisoners must be assigned an OMH Level-6 indicating no mental health needs, and a medical Level-3 or higher indicating no significant or no medical problems.

The CA's survey data indicates that 96% of prisoners at Otisville had a job at the time of our visit. Of these individuals, 78% were at least somewhat satisfied with their job placement, as compared to 71% of all CA survey respondents. Comments by Otisville survey participants about job satisfaction displayed a correlation between high satisfaction and having a job placement that involved learning useful skills. One individual wrote, "I love my job! My boss has taught me a great deal about the electric trade. I look forward to going to work each and every day." Another appreciated "having responsibility and trust to handle equipment." Survey participants seemed most satisfied when they were engaging in work outside of the facility's perimeter and interacting with other individuals. Survey participants were most concerned about the low wages they received for their work. Prisoner pay has not increased since the 1970's although prices in the commissary have increased with inflation.

### ***Volunteer and Recreational Programs***

According to facility data, 71% of the population, representing 290 prisoners, was involved in volunteer programs at the time of our visit. Otisville offers an impressive array of volunteer programs, including AA meetings, faith-based study groups, family workshops, yoga, theater, and a real estate course. Staff expressed concerns, however, that, due to the fiscal climate, volunteer programs were being cut, resulting in prisoners having fewer opportunities to occupy their time.

Prisoners interviewed by the Visiting Committee were particularly pleased with programs such as the Prisoners for AIDS Counseling and Education Program (PACE), run through AIDS-Related Community Service, the Osborne Association, and Fortune Society. Otisville also has a Lifer's and Long Termers group, which is one of the few program and support groups for individuals serving a life or long-term sentence. Given that a significant portion of the population at Otisville is serving long sentences, we strongly recommend that the facility inquire into additional programming or volunteer opportunities for this segment of the population.

The Visiting Committee toured the recreation area, which is open to prisoners whenever they are not in their programs. The outside recreation area includes a track, basketball courts and a yard on which organized sports are played. It also includes a smaller open area referred to as the "shack," which holds sports equipment and weights that prisoners must sign out to use. The "shack" is also open during the winter with additional coverings. Otisville also has an indoor gym, which is only open during the winter. The recreation program at Otisville runs a number of organized sports teams, as well as a music program, weekend movies, chess club, bingo and various holiday tournaments. The recreation program also runs an indoor and outdoor basketball and soccer program, summer softball, and fall flag football.

### **TRANSITIONAL SERVICES PROGRAM**

At the time of our visit, Otisville operated all Transitional Service (TS) programs, including Phase I, T4C, Phase III, and ART. Otisville also offered a specialized program called the Network Program. The TS program employs one full-time correction counselor, who supervises Phase I, ART, T4C and Phase III, and five Inmate Program Assistants (IPA) who assist the correction counselor in facilitating each program besides T4C. **Table D - Otisville's**

**Transitional Services, Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List**, on page 13, summarizes the capacity, enrollment and waitlist for each TS program.

**Table D - Otisville’s Transitional Services, Capacity, Enrollment and Waiting List**

	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Waitlist</b>	<b>Completed 2009</b>	<b>Completed 2010</b>	<b>Completed 2011</b>
Phase I	25	4	4	357	123	99
T4C	15	15	15	14	71	44
Phase III	20	16	16	99	140	117
ART	15	14	14	12	18	35
Network Program	50	44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Phase I is a general introduction to DOCCS policies, life in prison, facility specific protocols, and is facilitated by two IPAs. Thinking for a Change (T4C) replaced DOCCS Phase II program and was implemented at Otisville in 2009. T4C is completely staff run at Otisville and utilizes a cognitive behavioral approach (CBT). Only 15% of survey participants had taken T4C while at Otisville and of those who had taken the program 43% reported being satisfied and 24% reported being satisfied at least somewhat. Prisoner’s satisfaction with T4C at Otisville was slightly higher than the average of 60% of prisoners who report being at least somewhat satisfied with T4C at other CA-visited facilities. Although the majority of prisoners at Otisville reported being satisfied with the T4C program some individuals expressed concerns with the T4C facilitator, reporting concerns with the number of individuals on her caseload.

Phase III is a 4-week program that works to prepare prisoners for their discharge and address some of the barriers they might face upon their release back to their communities. Otisville operates Phase III as a 4-week program, which meets once a day in the afternoons. Prisoners are eligible for Phase III when they have four months or less remaining on their sentence. At Otisville, those who are about to begin Phase III complete a reentry needs assessment in order for the individual and staff to determine what areas the individual should focus upon during the program. During Phase III, prisoners engage in job readiness training, as well as participate in mock interviews and family reintegration. The Phase III staff conducts mock interviews with prisoners within the classroom setting in order to provide interactive feedback about interview skills and techniques. All prisoners who engage in Phase III complete the program with a typed resume, and when a participant has a need for community-based substance abuse treatment or housing, he is set-up with those contacts prior to leaving the facility. TS staff and IPAs also help prisoners obtain Birth Certificates and Social Security Cards and 12, 15, and 21 Social Security Cards were issued in 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively, and 66, 78, and 18 Birth Certificates were issued in 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively.

TS staff also informed the Visiting Committee that there had recently been a meeting between parole and TS staff in order to discuss ways to enhance coordination regarding prisoners reentry into the communities, since there had previously been a significant disconnect between these two services. We commend the TS and parole staff for taking the necessary steps to improve the provision of assistance about reentry issues such as housing, services in the community, and social security eligibility. The transition from prison to communities can often

be a difficult and overwhelming process, and we encourage Otisville TS and parole staff to continue to work together to ensure the easiest transition for individuals returning home. Twenty-eight percent of survey participants had been in Phase III, and 75% were at least somewhat satisfied with the program, a significantly higher satisfaction rate than the 51% average at all CA-visited facilities.

Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) is a 7-week prisoner-run program. The number of prisoners who have this program on their recommended program list is usually much higher at other facilities than at Otisville. TS staff attributed the low number of prisoners on the waitlist to the fact that most prisoners have already fulfilled this requirement at a previous facility. ART is facilitated by one IPA, and classes range in size from 12 to 15 individuals. The ART curriculum involves lectures and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT); program participants receive an approved course manual, flow-charts and additional handouts. The ART classroom the Visiting Committee toured was well organized, with a clear curriculum outlined on the classroom chalkboard.

Twenty-four percent of survey respondents reported having participated in the ART program at Otisville. Eighty-six percent of those who had participated in ART were at least somewhat satisfied with the program. This is significantly higher than the 65% average satisfaction rate for responses from all CA survey participants.

Although there were some concerns about the limited number of correction counselors, prisoners we interviewed and survey participants expressed satisfaction with the assistance they received from the TS Inmate Program Assistants, noting that they worked exceptionally hard and were dedicated to helping prisoners obtain the information and resources they would need once released. However, prisoners were concerned with the lack of community-based organization involvement especially regarding issues of housing. Prisoners felt that the Transitional Service Program would benefit from updated reentry information, and additional courses on aspects of rehabilitation and behavior modification, which would enhance their employability once released.

Otisville operates a prisoner-run supportive housing program called The Network Program. The Network Program is a 50-bed program sanctioned by DOCCS and coordinated by an outside organization. The program's goal is to create an environment based on positive outlook and accepting responsibility. Participants in the program have bi-weekly community meetings where individuals engage in reading community philosophy, sharing personal experiences of progress, admitting incidents of regression, and offering mutual support. At the time of our visit, there were 44 individuals enrolled, and staff expressed an interest in seeing the program expand.

## **MEDICAL CARE**

The Visiting Committee toured the medical area during our visit to Otisville and was able to meet with medical staff. We appreciate the extensive information that was given to us prior to our visit and during our tour. The medical facilities at Otisville were remodeled four years prior to our visit, and the Visiting Committee was pleased to see the clean and well-kept quality of the

space. The waiting room for medical services has a capacity of 28, and included two private bathroom stalls, two water fountains, and several benches. The facility also had a respiratory room, a telemedicine exam room, a phlebotomy lab, and light therapy treatment equipment. Otisville’s 6-bed infirmary includes two isolation rooms. There were three patients in the infirmary at the time of our visit, which medical staff informed the Visiting Committee is the average census. The average stay in the infirmary is several days, although about once per month an individual is required to stay for an extended time, which can amount to a week or more. Doctors make rounds to the infirmary every other weekday.

Prisoners at Otisville had mixed reviews of the medical care provided to them at Otisville, with about half rating overall medical care as poor and half rating medical care as fair. **Table E - Summary of Otisville Survey Participants’ Response about Prison Medical Care** summarizes the medical care survey data along with the prison ranking compared to all CA-visited prisons.

**Table E - Summary of Otisville Survey Participants’ Response about Prison Medical Care**

Medical Service	Yes	Sometimes	No	Rank	Good	Fair	Poor	Rank*
Can you see an RN when needed	68%	24%	8%	5				
Rate Nursing care					8%	43%	49%	22
Do you experience delays in seeing a clinic provider *	38%	42%	20%	18				
Rate Physician care					10%	38%	52%	24
Experience delays in specialty care	40%	16%	44%	9				
Good follow-up to specialists	35%		65%	21				
Problems getting medication	15%	18%	29%	13				
Rate Overall Healthcare					9%	44%	47%	20

\* CA-visited facilities are ranked from 1-31, one being the best and 31 being the worst.

\* The three categories for this variable are: Yes=Frequently; Sometimes=Once or once in a while; and No=Never.

***Medical Staffing***

Otisville’s medical area is staffed by two part-time doctors, who are present at the facility on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, representing a total physician presence equal to one full-time doctor. Otisville also has seven full-time equivalent (FTE) nursing items, consisting of six full-time and two part-time nurses. At the time of our visit, two of the full-time nurses were out on medical leave and one was retiring, but the facility had authorization from Central Office to fill the latter position. The nurse-to-patient ratio at the facility, when all items are operational, is about one nurse to every 50 to 60 patients, much lower than the system-wide average of about one nurse to every 80 to 100 patients. When the facility expands the population to 600 prisoners the nurse-to-patient ratio, with all staff operational, will be about one nurse to every 80 to 90 patients, which is equal to the system-wide average. The CA is concerned with the reported

number of nursing vacancies at the time of our visit, which leaves the facility inadequately staffed to serve its current population and will only worsen when the population expands.

The ratio of clinical staff, one FTE doctor, to patients is about one doctor to every 400-410 patients, which is similar to the system wide average of 1:400. However, when Otisville expands and opens the two additional dorms, increasing the population to 600 prisoners, the ratio of doctors to patients will be about one to 600, which is significantly higher than the system-wide average. We strongly recommend that the Department evaluate whether additional clinical and nursing staff is needed with the expansion of Otisville's population. Medical staff did inform the Visiting Committee that both FTE doctors spoke Spanish, as well as one of the nurses, and patients were permitted to bring a prisoner translator with them if they wanted, though medical staff never encouraged them to do so.

During our follow-up call with facility administrators, the CA requested an update on medical staffing items allocated to the prison. We were informed that since our visit, one of the two part-time physicians had retired in September 2011, leaving the facility with one part-time physician, who was at the facility Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, during which time he conducts clinical call-outs from 6:00am to 8:00am. Otisville administration informed the CA that they have authorization to fill the second vacant part-time physician's position and are interviewing candidates, but there was no plan to increase the overall number of clinical staff at the facility despite the increase in the patient population. We are concerned about the current shortage in physician staffing and urge to prison to quickly fill the vacant position.

The CA was pleased to learn that the Nurse Administrator position was filled in May 2012, but the facility seemed to be struggling with the number of medical staffing turnovers in the past year. Administrators noted that although there was significant turnover in the medical staffing, they were not having problems finding suitable candidates to fill vacant positions. Since July 2011, one nurse position had been terminated, one had retired and one part-time nurse had been transferred. The facility had also hired one full-time nurse in addition to the Nurse Administrator, and had received authorization to replace the half-time nurse. The CA is still concerned that the number of medical staff, both clinical and nursing, may not be sufficient to adequately address the needs of the population. We continue to encourage Central Office to review the number of medical staff to determine whether Otisville could benefit from additional staff.

### *Sick Call*

Sick call is conducted on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and starts at 6:00 am for those patients housed in the South Compound and at 7:30 am for patients in the North Compound. Sick call is usually completed by 8:30 am. Medical staff estimated that between 145-180 patients are seen each month for regular sick call and about 35 patients are seen per month for emergency sick call. Medical staff informed the Visiting Committee that they do not issue tickets for abuse of emergency sick call.

As indicated in **Table E** above, over half of all survey respondents reported that they could access sick call when they needed, which ranks Otisville at the top of all CA-visited

facilities. However, survey participants had mixed reviews of the quality of the sick call encounters with about half reporting that the sick call nurses were poor and most of the other respondents reporting that the nurses were fair.<sup>15</sup> According to survey comments, some sick call nurses did a good job and cared about the patients they were treating, while other nurses did a less favorable job. Survey participants were most concerned by the instructions to drink water and take ibuprofen for most ailments. Some survey participants also reported that some sick call nurses were unprofessional and rude. Due to the inconsistencies in the nursing services patients reported they were receiving, we suggest that the facility medical administration review the quality of the sick call encounters to ensure that each nurse is providing timely and appropriate care.

### *Clinic Call-Outs*

Clinical call-outs by the doctors are conducted five days a week and the physicians see between 140-160 patients per month. Medical staff estimated that it takes about two weeks to see a doctor; though patients may be seen by a physician right away if the sick call nurse deems it is necessary. Over 50% of survey participants reported experiencing delays in seeing the doctors, and survey participants estimated that it takes a median of 18 days to see a physician, which is actually less than the estimated 21 day median average at all CA-visited facilities. As with the sick call nurses, patients had mixed reviews of the quality of their clinical encounters with about half rating them as good or fair and half rating them as poor. The biggest concern expressed by survey participants was that the doctors often seemed like they were in a rush and therefore patients felt that they were not being provided with adequate time to communicate their concerns and be thoroughly examined. The CA is very concerned that with the increase in the population and vacant physicians positions, there will be further delays and a greater likelihood that patients will not receive appropriate care. We strongly urge the Department to hire additional clinical providers for Otisville as part of the expansion of the prison's capacity.

### *Care for Patients with Chronic Medical Problems*

Otisville, like most other facilities in the DOCCS system, has a significant portion of its prison population who suffer from a chronic medical condition. **Table F - Summary of Otisville Inmates with Chronic Medical Conditions** details the chronic medical conditions, number infected, percent of the prison population, and number treated for several illnesses as of the time of our visit. Patients at Otisville who suffer from a chronic condition are not assigned to a particular practitioner; instead, specific nurses are responsible for monitoring a group of patients suffering from the same chronic medical condition. These chronic care nurses primarily perform administrative/paperwork duties and scheduling of laboratory tests associated with these patients' care. The physicians regularly examine these patients to monitor their medical condition and conduct much of the patient education. One chronic care nurse is assigned to all HIV-infected patients; one nurse is responsible for all the patients with diabetes and hypertension, and a third nurse monitors hepatitis C and B, and asthma patients. Patients with a chronic condition receive a clinic call out at least once every three months. Patients, who suffer from diabetes, self-inject insulin in the medical area from 7:15 to 8:00 am under the supervision of the nursing staff.

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<sup>15</sup> Eight percent rated the sick call nurses as good; 42% rated them as fair and 49% rated them as poor.

**Table F - Summary of Otisville Inmates with Chronic Medical Conditions**

	<b>HIV</b>	<b>AIDS</b>	<b>HCV</b>	<b>HIV &amp; HCV</b>	<b>Asthma</b>	<b>Diabetes</b>	<b>Hypertension</b>
<b>Infected</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>% Infected</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>12.25%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>
<b>Treated</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>105</b>

Both of the doctors at Otisville were certified as HIV specialists by DOCCS. Otisville medical staff informed the Visiting Committee that there has been a relatively low number of individuals infected with HIV housed at the facility in the past 2-3 years. HIV-infected patients are not assigned to a particular doctor; instead, they see whoever is available at the time. Otisville’s doctors conducted one infectious disease clinic for patients in the past month and see about two to three patients for specialty appointments each month. The percent of inmates at Otisville infected with HIV is significantly lower than the estimated 5% to 6% of the entire DOCCS population who are currently believed to be infected with HIV based upon NY Department of Health studies. However, we are extremely pleased to see that all HIV-infected patients are currently receiving treatment.

Otisville had 46 inmates infected with hepatitis C (HCV) at the time of our visit, representing 11.3% of the inmate population. Otisville had only one patient currently undergoing treatment, which is 2% of the HCV-infected population, significantly lower than the system-wide average of about 5% of the infected population being treated. We urge the facility’s medical staff to review the population of HCV-infected inmates in order to determine whether any of those currently not receiving treatment may be appropriate candidates for therapy.

***Specialty Care***

Prisoners in need of care outside the limits of the Otisville clinic’s capabilities are generally sent to Fishkill’s Regional Medical Unit (RMU). Medical staff estimated that on average about 30 patients are sent to the Fishkill RMU each month. Planned hospital visits are done at Mt. Vernon Hospital, and patients in need of emergency attention are sent to Horton Hospital. Medical staff informed the Visiting Committee that a total of 100 medical trips are made from Otisville each month. Liver biopsies are conducted at the Fishkill RMU or Horton Hospital. The medical staff informed the Visiting Committee that an optometrist and podiatrist come to Otisville to conduct treatment and that X-rays are also done on site. The medical staff expressed some concern that it was often difficult to get an orthopedist at the facility. Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents reported having seen a specialist in the past two years, and 56% reported experiencing delays at least sometimes in seeing a specialist, which ranks Otisville in the top third of CA-visited prisons for fewer patients reporting specialty delays. Patients reported an estimated average wait of 31 days to see a specialist, which is half the estimated average number of days survey respondents at all CA-visited facilities reported waiting to see a specialist.<sup>16</sup> Otisville survey participants rated the medical staff’s follow-up to specialist recommendations slightly lower than average, with 35% saying follow-up care was good, as compared to an overall average of 38% for all CA survey respondents. There were also reports

<sup>16</sup> Prisoners at all CA-visited facilities estimate that they wait an average of 60 days to see a specialist.

by survey participants of Otisville doctors changing the specialists prescribed medication without their previous knowledge.

### ***Medication***

Otisville does not have a pharmacy and for most medications, patients' prescriptions are sent to a local pharmacy to be filled. Prescription refills are submitted similarly to sick call requests, although the doctor does not have to see the patient prior to refilling his medication. Patients are instructed to submit refills for medication five days prior to running out to ensure that they do not miss doses. Medication arrives at the prison at approximate 2:30 pm each weekday. Since the medical staff does not notify a patient when their medication has arrived, patients must continuously check the medical area for their prescriptions.

Twenty-nine percent of survey participants reported they experienced no problems in receiving their medication, 15% reported experiencing problems and 18% reported sometimes experiencing problems getting their medication. This is compared to the average of 23% of survey participants at all CA-visited facilities who reported experiencing problems getting their medication and ranks Otisville in the top half of all CA-visited prisons for the least amount of problems patients have receiving their medication.

### ***Quality Improvement***

The Quality Improvement Committee at Otisville meets quarterly and is made up of the superintendent, one clinical provider and two nursing staff. Medical staff informed the Visiting Committee that this year HIV and asthma were the two treatment conditions reviewed. At the time of our visit, the last QI audit of HIV care had been conducted on May 18, 2011, during which all medical charts of HIV-infected prisoners were reviewed. The staff informed us that during this review, the prison was found to be compliant in the standard of care provided to HIV-infected patients.

### **DENTAL CARE**

The Visiting Committee toured the dental area at Otisville and found it to be clean, bright and in good condition with two new dental chairs. The dental department at Otisville is made up of one dentist and one dental hygienist. The dental staff explained that they do some extractions and X-rays, but all patients in need of oral surgery are sent to Eastern C.F. Fifty-two percent of survey participants rated the dental care they received at Otisville as good and 33% rated it as fair, ranking Otisville fourth among the 16 CA-visited facilities for which we have comparable data. According to survey participants, the dentist did a good job and one individual commented that the dentist "enjoys his work and has the patient's interests at heart."

## **ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

### ***General Library***

The Visiting Committee toured both the general library and the law library at Otisville. The general library is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays, and from 11:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There are no call outs to the library; prisoners must visit during non-programmed hours. The library has a maximum capacity of 25 persons and according to the library staff, operates at its maximum capacity during the evenings it is opened. We recommend that facility administration look into ways of expanding the library's evening hours. The limited capacity and hours of operation of the library are unnecessarily restrictive and may be impeding prisoners' access to this valuable resource.

One librarian, five inmate clerks and one porter staff the library, but it is only open when the civilian librarian is present. There are three computers in the library, two of which have the Department of Labor program for Transitional Services. The general library contains 10,000 books, approximately 15-20 percent of which are written in Spanish. The Visiting Committee was pleased to note that the card catalogue is up-to-date. Prisoners are free to browse the stacks, and can check out four books at a time in two-week cycles. New books are ordered by the clerks through a catalogue program every 2 to 3 months, based on a vote by the prison population. Suggestion boxes are available for new book purchases. Otisville also participates in the interlibrary loan system in which 47 facilities participate, and it takes about one to two weeks for a requested book to arrive at Otisville.

Overall, most survey participants were satisfied with the general library. Otisville ranked third out of the 31 prisons for which the CA has comparable data, with 73% of respondents reporting being satisfied with the library, as compared to 39% of survey participants at all CA-visited facilities. Few prisoners raised serious concerns with the library and only 6% of Otisville survey participants reported dissatisfaction with the library compared to 36% of respondents at all CA-visited facilities.

### ***Law Library***

The law library is open every day, from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m., and again from 5:15 p.m. until 7:15 p.m. The law library is staffed by one corrections officer and eight prisoner clerks and is only open when the corrections officer is present. There is no legal course at Otisville; all inmate clerks have received training at another facility. The corrections officer assigned to the law library has passed the notary exam and was waiting for the official stamp. The maximum capacity of the law library is 14, and law library staff informed the Visiting Committee that the library fills quickly and to ensure a place, prisoners must sign-up beforehand and therefore be scheduled to attend library hours.

The law library equipment includes 16 legal research terminals for general population use, and prisoners have access to one printer to print their cases and a photocopy machine on which they can make copies although they must pay per page. Prisoners may also utilize the three typewriters available in the law library for drafting documents or writing legal briefs. The

law library clerks have access to four computers separate from the 16 research terminals and three separate printers. The library clerks expressed concern to the Visiting Committee that at the time of our visit one of the computers and one of the printers was not working, which they felt greatly impeded their work. They also informed the Visiting Committee that a grievance had been filed regarding both the broken computer and printer, but they had yet to hear from the facility's administration. When the Visiting Committee raised this concern with administrative staff, they assured the Visiting Committee that Otisville would be receiving additional computers from Mid-Orange, once the facility had closed. According to a June 2012 Law Library Monthly Report from Otisville, one computer still remained broken and the facility was still indicating that it was waiting for a replacement monitor from pending facility closures.

Prisoner reviews of the law library at Otisville were mixed according to our survey data. Thirty-five percent of prisoners surveyed at Otisville reported being satisfied with the law library, 29% were somewhat satisfied, and 35% expressed dissatisfaction. This ranks Otisville third best out of the CA-visited facilities for which we have comparable data.

### *Visiting*

The visiting room has a maximum capacity for 185 individuals, is open 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, and is staffed by three correction officers. During our tour of the facility, prisoners expressed appreciation of the facility's efficiency in the processing of visitors. There is a parking lot directly outside the visiting room, and if visitors arrive prior to the start of visiting hours at 9:00 a.m., they must wait outside the front gates until visiting begins.

The Visiting Committee was pleased to find that the visiting room at Otisville is spacious, and clean. Prisoners told the Visiting Committee that loved ones are never turned away due to insufficient capacity. However, both prisoners and the Visiting Committee noted extremely warm temperatures inside the visiting room. The visiting area is equipped with lockers, a packaging room, and a room for processing, and visitors are given the opportunity to deposit money. There are vending machines available in the room, as well as four microwaves. The Visiting Committee noted that the coffee machine was out-of-order at the time of their visit, although a company comes to the facility twice a week to do repairs. Legal visits occur in the visiting room at Otisville. There are no non-contact visiting rooms.

The children's room at Otisville is open to prisoners and their children from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Osborne Association volunteers operate the children's area and are available to look after visiting children. Although the room has a relatively small capacity of 15, the Visiting Committee noted that this did not appear to be an issue. The area includes tables, chairs, games, and books, and the walls have been painted nicely by a prisoner. The CA was pleased to find a positive environment in which prisoners can spend much-needed time with their children, a crucial part of maintaining connections with family outside the prison system and facilitating the successful eventual reentry of prisoners into their communities.

A relatively low percentage of prisoners at Otisville (15%) reported being satisfied with the visiting program and 33% reported being sometimes satisfied, responses that place Otisville

within the bottom third of all prisons surveyed. Dissatisfaction ratings were slightly lower than average (51% as opposed to 52%). We suggest that facility administration, along with the ILC and IGRC address any concerns prisoners may have with the visiting room, to ensure that all prisoners' needs are being adequately met.

### ***Commissary***

Two full-time civilian employees and three prisoners staff the commissary. Prisoners may visit the commissary once every two weeks and must submit a buy-sheet the night before. There is a \$55 limit on purchases, but commissary staff informed the Visiting Committee that not many prisoners reach the buy limit. Prisoners may return cans and bottles to the commissary in exchange for a deposit. With input from the prison population, the ILC annually chooses ten items to be added to the buy list, replacing less desirable items currently on the list.

Survey respondents rated commissary services at Otisville higher than most prisons, placing it in the top third of all surveyed facilities. Sixty-two percent of all respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with these services, while only 38% of respondents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied at all CA-surveyed prisons.

### ***Mail and Packages***

The mailroom at Otisville was one of the most highly grieved areas at the facility for 2010. Among some of the reasons grievances were filed were for destruction of property, items not authorized by the facility, missing items and interpretation of the Directive governing mail and package procedures. The facility administration attributed this to the mailroom not having permanent security staff. Prisoners the Visiting Committee interviewed noted that receiving packages or mail could be problematic depending on the officer in charge at the time. Specifically, survey responses indicated that prisoners felt that there were inconsistencies in what items were allowed depending on security staff and that the facility did not notify prisoners when there was a change in mail or package policies. When the CA raised this concern with facility administrators, they informed the CA during our conference call that the mail directive is available during orientation and is posted throughout the facility. The CA was also informed that if complaints are raised the area captain addresses those issues.

There were also concerns regarding mail or packages being lost prior to delivery and that the mailroom staff would often hold packages so long that the food was spoiled by the time it reached the intended individual. Although prisoners voiced concerns regarding the mailroom, survey responses rank Otisville within the top third of CA-visited prisons for satisfaction with mail and packages services. Fifty-eight percent of prisoners were at least somewhat satisfied as compared to a 35% average at all CA-visited facilities.

### ***Food Services***

The Visiting Committee toured the mess hall at Otisville during our visit, which is staffed by five full-time civilian staff and 60 prisoner workers. At the time of our visit, there were plans to renovate the kitchen by rearranging the kettles and ovens. The food service staff informed the

Visiting Committee that the number of prisoners attending each meal ranges up to 350 prisoners. Meals are served three times daily, breakfast is from 7:00-7:40, lunch from 11:40-12:20, and dinner is from 4:15-5:00, and about four meals per day are sent to prisoners eating remotely. The food service staff informed the Visiting Committee that the average cost of food is \$2.85 per prisoner per day. Prisoners are given 20 minutes to finish each meal, although according to staff there is “no real time limit.” The significant distance between the mess hall and the housing areas was an issue for many survey respondents, some of whom found walking to meals to be physically taxing.

There were 21 prisoners on special diets for medical reasons at the time of our visit, and four on kosher diets. Those on special diets receive whole wheat bread, but generally there are not many whole grains and fresh produce available to the prison population, something prisoners noted with concern in survey comments. Forty percent of food served during meals at Otisville comes from the DOCCS Cook-Chill program. Bread and dairy products are procured through a local provider, as are fresh fruit and vegetables, which the facility bids on each week. Although the facility rarely runs out of food, and tracks a history of attendance at meals, prisoners expressed concerns over the reuse of food in the mess hall. According to survey responses, prisoners were also concerned by the unavailability of fresh fruits and vegetables, the large amounts of soy products used in the menu, and the decreasing portion sizes.

Our survey data indicates that food services generally receive low satisfaction rankings at all CA-visited facilities, with an overall average of 69% of prisoners expressing dissatisfaction. In comparison, Otisville placed within the top third of all prisons surveyed for food satisfaction, with 49% of prisoners, significantly less than the overall average, expressing dissatisfaction with food service. Otisville consistently ranked at the top of all CA-visited facilities for satisfaction with food quantity, nutritional content, temperature, whether individuals had enough time to eat, and cleanliness of utensils and trays.

### **Recommendations**

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

#### ***Safety and Inmate Grievance Program***

- Review Unusual Incident Reports, grievances and misbehavior reports to assess whether there are patterns of violence within the prison, whether specific staff members are more frequently involved in inmate-staff confrontations, and whether certain areas within the prison are more frequent locations for violence. Following this review, develop a plan, including additional staff training, to continue to reduce violence between prisoners and staff.
- Investigate any trends in the substantial increase in the number of grievances filed against staff conduct for 2010 and 2011.

### *Programs*

- Increase job opportunities for the prisoner population so that individuals may learn additional skills besides the very limited skill set needed for porter positions.
- Implement additional vocational programs and update the material and equipment available in existing vocational programs.
- Provide vocational materials in Spanish.

### *Medical and Dental Care*

- Promptly fill all nursing and physician vacancies.
- Consider hiring additional clinical staff to decrease the clinical provider to patient ratio with the increase of the prisoner population.
- Review the quality of care provided during both sick call and clinical call outs to ensure that patients are receiving adequate medical attention and care from all providers.

### *Other Services*

- Ensure that all rules and regulations regarding mail and packages are made clear to the prison population.
- Review mailroom policies to ensure that all staff is operating under the same guidelines and interpreting the mail directive in a consistent manner.
- Expand the law library hours and/or capacity.
- Considering hiring a civilian law librarian.
- Review whether the staff working in the law library can be certified as a notary to increase the population's access to notary services.