

PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

To: Warden Trevor Wingard
From: Angela Damiano, Pennsylvania Prison Society Prison Monitoring Manager
Noah Barth, Pennsylvania Prison Society Prison Monitoring Director
Matt Dugan, Pennsylvania Prison Society Prison Western Region Director
Claire Shubik-Richards, Pennsylvania Prison Society Executive Director
Regarding: ACJ Monitoring Tour November 17, 2025
Date: January 29, 2026
Copied: Sara Innamorato, County Executive
Members of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board
Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

The Prison Society serves as Pennsylvania's independent prison monitor. We assist people in custody resolving issues related to their health, safety and dignity. To better assist the county, we have prepared the following memorandum summarizing our walkthrough of the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ) on November 17, 2025.

On this walkthrough there were notable improvements in:

- Out of cell time,
- Unit management.

That said, as in our previous walkthroughⁱ we observed, and/or people reported:

- Insufficient food,
- Delays in access to healthcare, and
- Unprofessional staff.

On November 17, 2025, Prison Society representativesⁱⁱ conducted a monitoring walkthrough of the ACJ, escorted by several ACJ staff including newly appointed unit managers. The walkthrough included a tour of three housing units. Structured interviews were conducted with 72 incarcerated men. All interviews were voluntary, anonymous, and interviewees were randomly selected. We also toured the Juvenile unit and the kitchen. Our staff escorts brought us to all sections of the jail that we requested, and they answered all of our questions.

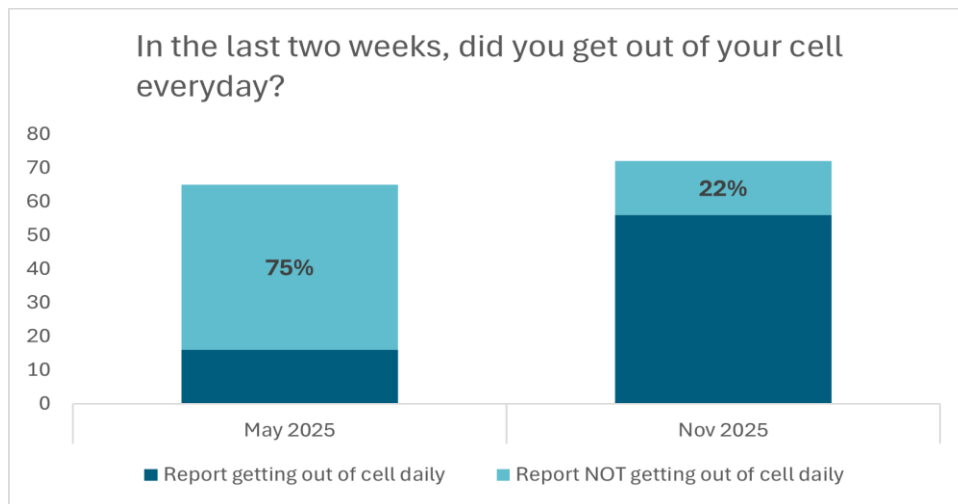
Unit	Classification	Number of interviewees
3D	Men's medium security	23
3C	Men's medium security	31
8E	Men's restricted housing (RHU)	18
TOTAL		72



A note of caution in interpreting the findings from our interviews with incarcerated people: the small sample size means that answers may be skewed. In addition, any survey conducted in a corrections setting should be viewed with the understanding that people in custody are likely unhappy with their circumstances and that this may lead them to enlarge complaints. While the survey findings should not be read as a completely accurate depiction of what is happening for the reasons discussed above, they nevertheless indicate there are issues. Many of these questions are asked over time, and answers have evolved over time, a strong indication of change in conditions. As the saying goes, where there is smoke, there is fire. Our interviews with incarcerated people indicate there is smoke but are insufficient to determine the precise scope and heat of the fire.

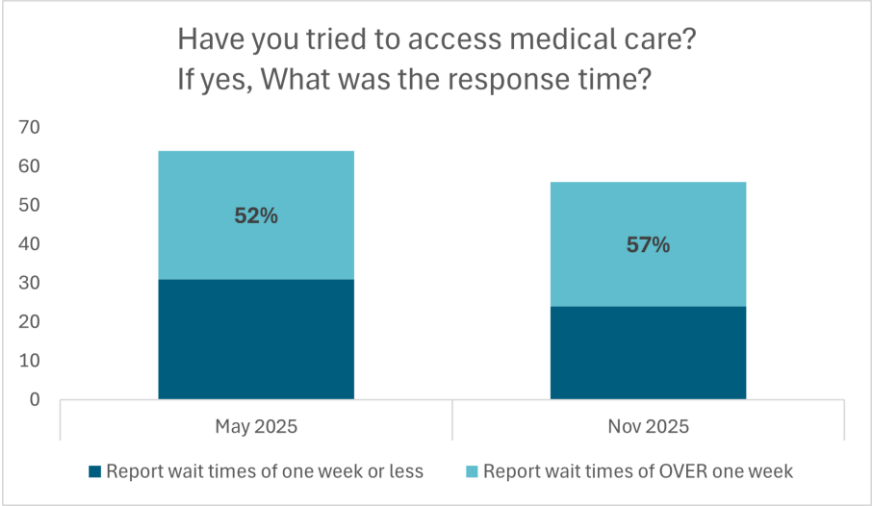
Out of cell time

The majority of people we asked (78%) said they are let out of their cell every day. This is a marked improvement from our last walkthrough when only 25% of people said they could leave their cell on a daily basis. As in our prior report, people in every unit we visited reported being locked in their cells on weekends - especially during football games and holidays. They consistently reported however that this is happening less frequently and largely depends on which Corrections Officer (CO) is on duty.



Access to healthcare

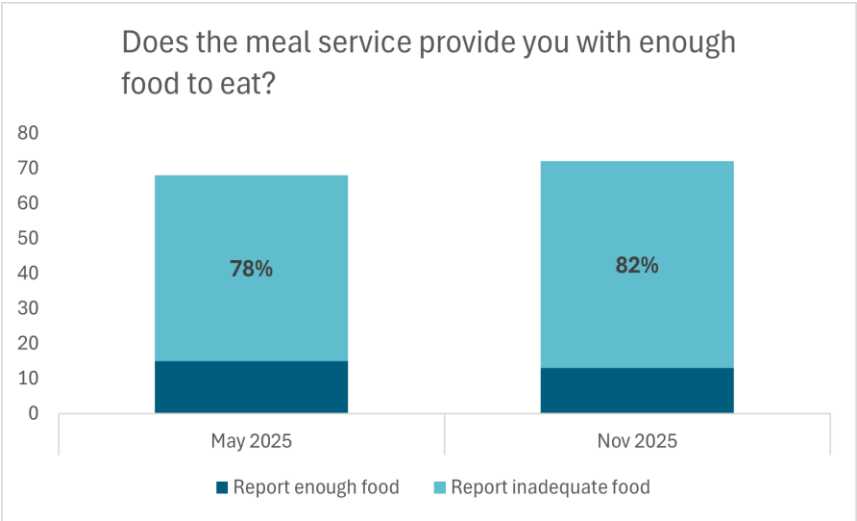
Of the 56 people we asked who reported attempting to access healthcare, 32 (57%) reported a wait time of over one week; some reported wait times of over one month. People we spoke to report a lack of treatment for suspected MRSA, not receiving test results, lack of counseling services for mental health diagnoses, not getting pain management for broken bones, and no access to dental or vision services among other medical concerns.



Food

Fifty-nine of the 72 people we asked (82%) reported that the ACJ does not provide them with enough food to eat. One man stated, “The portions are for kids, not grown men.” Numerous residents reported that the only way to get enough food is to have money for commissary. Another man stated, “I’m never not hungry and it will stay that way till I get out of here or my family can give me money for commissary.”

While we did not ask a specific question about food quality, many residents we spoke with reported concerns of receiving food that was rotten, cold, the wrong food according to their approved diets, and evidence of rodents in the kitchen. We did not observe any rodents when we toured the kitchen.

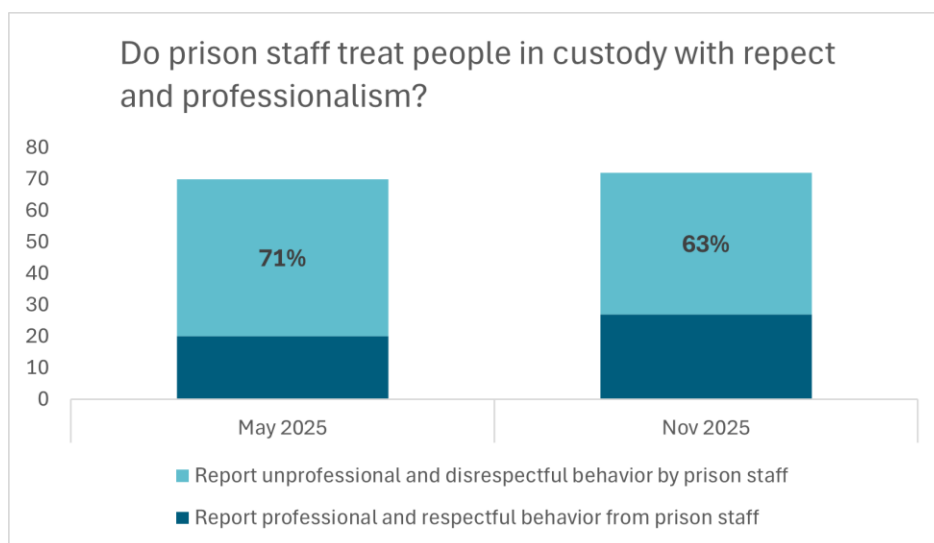


Staff

Forty-five of the 72 people we asked (63%) reported that staff were unprofessional and/or disrespectful. While this constitutes an eight percent decline from our last walkthrough, the severity of the issue and the fact that the majority of interviewees reported it is a cause for concern. Many of the people we interviewed noted that there were good staff members who treated them well, but also some “bad apples.”

During our last walkthrough in May 2025, the jail’s first unit manager had just been assigned; during this visit, eight units had managers assigned. This structure which the Warden adopted from his time working with the state DOC allows for more autonomy as well as accountability for the manager of each housing unit. They are able to resolve issues with residents and staff quickly and with more flexibility.

The unit managers appeared to be well liked and respected by the majority of the jail residents we spoke with. Several residents reported that the Unit Managers help resolve problems more easily and they appreciated being able to identify an accessible authority figure to bring issues to and general sense of greater fairness.



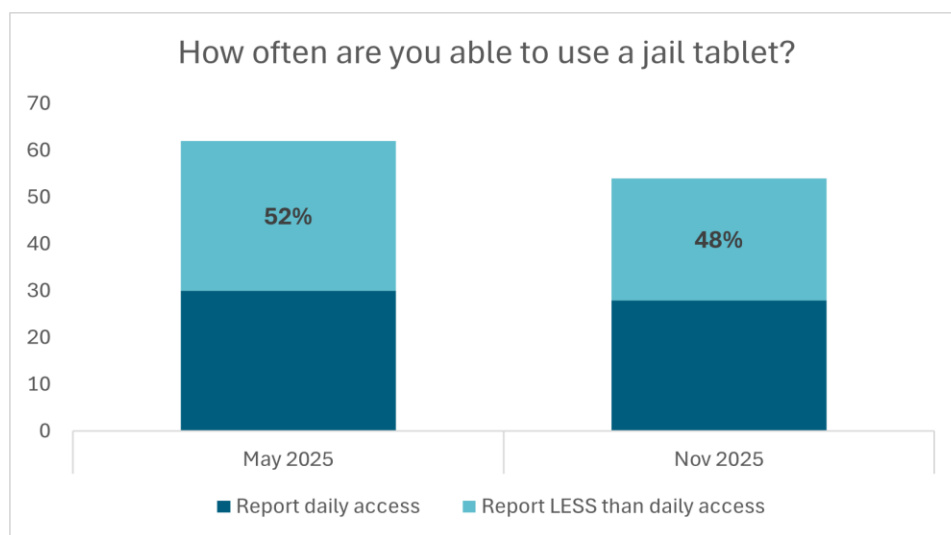
Tablets

Twenty-six out of the 54 people we asked (21%) reported difficulty gaining access to their jail provided tablets. This was most pronounced in the RHU where fifteen of the eighteen people we spoke with (83%) reported having limited or no access to their tablet. Jail staff explained that this was expected, because people in the RHU have restricted access to all privileges.

Battery life issues were a repeated concern; with many people we spoke to reporting batteries that only last two-to-three hours per day. Staff confirmed that only people in privileged units have access to tablet charging stations during the day. In other units charging tablets is reportedly left to the discretion of the COs working that shift.

While tablet access was not a concern for the majority of people we spoke with, spotty internet and the length of time it takes to get a tablet fixed when broken were concerns raised. Tablets are the only way to access the law library and the primary way to access grievances and request slips, mail, messaging, and books, making access important.

The Warden has advised us that the county is currently in the process of contracting with a new tablet provider that they believe will address battery life and wi-fi access issues. We will monitor the roll out and performance of these tablets.



Thank you once again for facilitating this walkthrough. It is our intention that this memorandum will be of assistance to the administrators of the Allegheny County Jail. We look forward to our continued work with the residents and staff of the ACJ.

ⁱ <https://www.prisonersociety.org/resources/reports>

ⁱⁱ Prison Monitoring Regional Manager Angela Damiano, volunteer prison monitors Sharon Bongvolia and John Bolanos

Allegheny County Appendix May 2025 – November 2025

	May 2025		Jan. 2025	
	#	%	#	%
Total Interviewed:	70		72	
In the last two weeks, did you get out of your cell everyday?				
Yes	16	25%	56	78%
No	49	75%	16	22%
Have you tried to access medical care? If yes, What was the response time?				
Report wait times of one week or less	31	48%	24	43%
Report wait times of OVER one week	33	52%	32	57%
Does the meal service provide you with enough food to eat?				
Report enough food	15	22%	13	18%
Report inadequate food	53	78%	59	82%
Do prison staff treat people in custody with respect and professionalism?				
Report professional and respectful behavior from prison staff	20	29%	27	38%
Report unprofessional and disrespectful behavior by prison staff	50	71%	45	63%
How often are you able to use a jail tablet?				
Report daily access	30	48%	28	52%
Report LESS than daily access	32	52%	26	48%