

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds supported a collective effort by tier reps, patients, and DOC healthcare staff to make improvements in healthcare services for incarcerated individuals at Stafford Creek Corrections Center. The OCO fostered meaningful spaces where they came together to share their concerns and discuss creative and thoughtful ways to create a system that better responds to emergent health care needs. Now, the SCCC Urgent Care Pilot Model has expanded to Coyote Ridge Corrections Center. The OCO encourages the expansion of Urgent Care, in place of Sick Call, to all prison facilities.

Summary

Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) Tier Representatives invited the OCO to attend a tier rep meeting to hear more about patient concerns at the facility. The tier reps requested OCO's assistance in inviting Health Services leadership to the table to discuss their twelve-point list of concerns gathered from patients as well as their ideas for solutions. As a result of these meetings, DOC at Stafford Creek established an Urgent Care process for patients to address appointment access and medical emergencies. Feedback from the patient population and health services staff has been overwhelmingly positive: several people have mentioned improved appointment timing, quality of care, and healthcare staff caseloads.

Background

In July of 2023, the OCO joined SCCC tier reps at their general meeting. Tier reps shared a twelve-point list of concerns from patients at the facility along with ideas for solutions. The OCO continued to track progress with the tier reps and DOC Health Services.

In October 2023 and February 2024, the OCO, tier reps, and DOC Health Services met to review progress on medical access concerns. By May 2024, SCCC transitioned to offering Urgent Care instead of Sick Call. As of September 2024, DOC has extended the Urgent Care model to CRCC.

As of September 2024, the OCO has received positive feedback from patients, healthcare, and custody staff regarding the implementation of Urgent Care at SCCC. After four months of operation, OCO staff engaged with tier representatives to gather additional feedback. Patients have expressed that the availability of urgent care has led to reduced delays in receiving emergent care appointments, resulting in an enhanced quality of care experience.

Patients now have access to urgent care services from 7 am to 8 pm every day, including weekends, with medical movements scheduled every 30 minutes. This new system has replaced the previous sick call model, where patients had to request appointments through kites and wait to be added to sick call lists, a process that often led to longer waiting times for medical attention. Instead of staff spending extensive time triaging written kites from patients about their symptoms and concerns, staff are able to assess the person based on

the symptoms presenting at the time of the appointment. This both improves the triaging process for staff and allows for patients to be seen by a medical provider regardless of their ability to provide enough relevant information on a written note.

Feedback from tier representatives suggests that the waiting room lines have notably decreased since the implementation of this new approach, compared to the previous sick call movements. The success of this initiative highlights the positive impact on patient care and access to medical services at SCCC, showcasing improvements in healthcare collaboration and progress tracking.

Medical staff report the population is utilizing urgent care for necessary care requests, which is also improving response times and resources for emergency care situations. Additionally, because patients are able to be seen by nursing or providers during urgent care hours, there are less instances of patients having to call medical emergencies from their units. Patients and custody staff have mentioned that medical emergencies in the units are more likely to be actual emergencies now that patients can be seen for emergent care needs through Urgent Care, reducing the impact of unit closures on custody staff, other incarcerated individuals, and programming. Updates to the nursing standard orders have helped ensure nursing staff are able to work within the full scope of their licenses, which also contributes to employee satisfaction. SCCC Health Services leadership is expanding trainings for nursing staff and working with providers to develop specialized classes for nursing to expand their knowledge of practice.