



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Cynthia Brann, Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner
75-20 Astoria Blvd., Suite 305
East Elmhurst, NY 11370

718 • 546 • 0890
Fax 718 • 278 • 6022

June 8, 2018

Derrick D. Cephas, Acting-Chair & Vice-Chair
NYC Board of Correction
1 Centre Street, Room 2213
New York, NY 10007

Re: Response to New York City Board of Correction Second Study on the Inmate Grievance System

Dear Mr. Cephas:

The New York City Department of Correction (“Department”) appreciates the New York City Board of Correction’s (“Board”) second study in regards to the inmate grievance system. We share the Board’s commitment in ensuring that all inmates in our custody have an effective outlet to communicate and resolve issues of concern. The Department reviewed the Board’s study on the inmate grievance system within the Office of Constituent and Grievance Services (OCGS) and continue to share the Board’s mission to strengthen the inmate grievance system.

In 2017, the Office of Constituent Services and the Inmate Grievance Resolution Program merged to create the Office of Constituent and Grievance Services. The Department merged the units to streamline the entire inmate complaint system - including complaints received through 311 - and to eliminate redundancies. As further demonstration of the prioritization of the grievance process, since the merger, OCGS now reports to the Office of the Commissioner. The Department has achieved many of its goals toward improving the grievance system, including implementing several recommendations from the Board’s first grievance study in October 2016, such as:

- Utilize a technological system designed to track the lifecycle of all complaints from inception to completion;
- Create consistent and weekly reports;
- Increase responsiveness to inmate complaints;
- Hire additional Grievance Coordinators and Grievance Officers to support this effort;
- Circulate new posters in the facilities to promote awareness on how to file a complaint;
- Revise the current grievance directive to ensure policy is aligned with practice;
- Update grievance forms.

These are just a few highlights from the last year, but there is much more the Department plans to do. The Department continues to explore best practices by visiting other correctional jurisdictions and using technology to advance our grievance work, such as launching a pilot program at GRVC and later OBCC wherein mobile tablets were used to capture and more quickly resolve inmate grievances. This was a highly informative initiative, and the outcome provided insight on how to possibly address several primary complaint issues, like discrepancies in inmate accounts and status on property. The Department also

continues to monitor the Service Desk system and refine it in order to capture pertinent information and better align it with the current grievance process.

The Department believes it has improved the inmate grievance system, and will continue to do so. The Department welcomes the Board's ongoing support and feedback in this effort. The Department is currently in discussion with the Board regarding scheduling training and a presentation on Service Desk in order to provide the Board staff access to it. The Department is committed to improving the grievance system to better serve the needs of the inmate population and strategically explore ways to address the population's primary complaints.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Board in the Department's endeavor to improve the inmate grievance system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Brann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Brann

cc: Martha King, Executive Director