



Attica 50 Years Later

A retrospective

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# **“Attica is every prison; every prison is Attica”**

## **The McKay Commission Report**

This is how Robert B. McKay summarized his 1972 tome entitled, *The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica*.

It examined the September 9-13, 1971, riot at the maximum-security prison in Western New York that left 11 employees and 32 incarcerated individuals dead. While 10 employees and 29 incarcerated individuals were killed in the re-taking of the prison, it should also be remembered that one employee and three incarcerated individuals were murdered during the stand-off by the incarcerated individuals who incited the riot in the first place.

Attica was representative of penology across the nation in 1971; the riot made it the flashpoint for reform. It stands today as an example of the best penological system has to offer in the new millennium, in terms of staff professionalism and an incarcerated individual's treatment – the lack of which were labeled in the 1972 report as contributing to what was called at the time “the bloodiest one-day encounter between Americans since the Civil War.”

Here is a baker's dozen of the major shortcomings the McKay Commission found existed at the time of the riot:

- A mere 10 hours of out-of-cell time per day per incarcerated individuals because the state did not want to spend money providing meaningful programs or the security staff to support them.
- The majority of the incarcerated individuals' assignments that did exist were cleaning and maintenance.
- A virtually all-white correctional staff in a system becoming increasingly minority.
- A lack of any type of uniform training for staff, with no consideration given to interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, ethnic differences or any other concept that might allow officers to better relate to incarcerated individuals.
- A lack of any type of organized interaction or representation by incarcerated individuals with senior prison management to air their grievances.
- Only rudimentary medical care was available and mental health care was non-existent.
- Many indigent incarcerated individuals were frustrated by their lack of access to trial and appellate courts.

- A refusal to recognize many religions and a denial of most religious observances.
- Strictly non-contact visits that denied incarcerated individuals even the most fleeting physical interaction with family members, in a system that did not welcome children as visitors.
- Dehumanizing conditions that included limiting showers to one a week, arbitrarily minimizing the clothing incarcerated individuals could possess, and a lack of any “free time” out of their cells.
- Incarcerated individuals felt isolated from the outside world because they were denied access to telephones, while the newspapers, magazines, and books available to them were strictly limited.
- An absence of any plan on the part of the administration to communicate with the incarcerated population and a lack of any means to peacefully resolve even the smallest protest or disturbance.
- No planning to retake the prison with the least amount of force in the event of a violent incident.

## **An Overview of Changes**

The Attica riot spurred a reflection upon those issues not only at Attica, but throughout the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), as well as at prisons and among systems across the nation.

At Attica in particular, changes led to a safer institution, staffed by professionally trained uniform and non-uniformed personnel who provide the “best practices” developed since 1971 that are accepted today as national standards for prison operation and administration. The facility has also been accredited triennially since 1989 by the American Correctional Association (ACA), which establishes and then audits compliance with nationally accepted standards for the administration and operation of correctional facilities.

DOCCS has, over the past five decades, become a national and international leader in correctional policy. It is as much a symbol of penology today as it was the focus of national policies that existed in 1971.

The most significant changes are these key components designed to provide DOCCS with the in-house capability of resolving incarcerated individuals’ issues and prison incidents without the use of excessive or outside force:

- A statewide U.S. Justice Department-certified Incarcerated Individual Grievance Program, wherein responsive supervisors provide a venue where complaints can be addressed and answered in a timely fashion.

- Incarcerated Liaison Committees at each facility, representing the population in regular meetings with the facility's administration.
- The Crisis Intervention Unit (CIU), formed in 1979, composed of security and civilian staff trained in negotiations and other techniques at every prison to defuse situations before the use of force.
- Correctional Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) of Correction Officers and supervisors specially trained in 20 teams strategically located at facilities around the state, and a team based out of the Albany Training Academy, whose specific roll is hostage rescue; which, since 1977, have used the least force required to quell disturbances within prison walls.

CERT (with CIU after 1979) was used to resolve multiple hostage incidents without serious injury to staff or incarcerated individuals during four such incidents since 1971 – at Eastern NY in 1977 (14 hostages), at Sing Sing in 1983 (19 hostages), Coxsackie in 1988 (five hostages) and Southport in 1991 (five hostages).

Ongoing monthly training for both of these specialized units demonstrates DOCCS' continued commitment to providing unparalleled public safety, a safe, humane institutional environment, for both staff and incarcerated individuals, and the ability to quickly respond to any emergency at a moment's notice. Attica has both CERT and CIU Teams.

DOCCS' facilities lead the nation in providing extensive, mandatory, and state-of-the-art, in-service training for all its employees. Attica's employees participated in 48,148 hours of training in 2019.

DOCCS has over the past 50 years made a commitment, and has maintained that commitment, to providing meaningful rehabilitative programming for incarcerated individuals, most of whom will return to society.

Since 1971, a Vocational School and a gymnasium have been constructed at Attica. There are currently 11 vocational shops, with State Education Department-certified instructors teaching General Business, Printing, Welding, Floor Covering, Custodial Maintenance, Painting and Decorating, Building Maintenance, Electrical Trades, Plumbing and Heating, Small Engine Repair, and a Licensed Barbering program.

The Academic Education program, employing nine NYS certified teachers, provides for instruction in Adult Basic Education, Pre-High School Equivalency, High School Equivalency, English as a Second Language, and Cell Study. All DOCCS' facilities make education mandatory for incarcerated individuals who do not possess a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma.

A Guidance Unit, comprised of four Senior Offender Rehabilitation Coordinators and 19 Offender Rehabilitation Coordinators, provides for Transitional Services programming plus group counseling in specialized areas. Various counseling programs are offered, such as Aggression Replacement Training and Sex Offender Counseling.

Attica has a 100-bed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment program providing seven-and-a-half months of intense therapeutic treatment, staffed by certified alcohol and substance abuse treatment specialists. In addition, Attica offers a voluntary Alcoholics Anonymous Program, available in the evening, for those incarcerated individuals wishing to augment their participation in the ASAT program.

In partnership with the Office of Mental Health (OMH), DOCCS provides for an extensive array of mental health services at Attica. Attica was the first prison in the state to provide a Group Therapy Program (GTP), which is a mental health group and individualized treatment program for those incarcerated individuals whose disruptive behavior led to their long-term confinement in disciplinary Special Housing Units (SHUs). Attica is in the national forefront in providing this type of treatment.

Opened in 1983, Attica has had a 78-bed Intermediate Care Program (ICP), a physically separate residential treatment program for incarcerated individuals, who by virtue of a debilitating mental illness, are unable to function in the general prison population. Also provided is an OMH Satellite Unit dormitory and observation unit.

Attica is currently in the planning stages of a new 30,000 square foot, state of the art, program building. This new building will be built over the site of the original building lost in the 1971 riot. This new program building will encompass additional vocational programs, all of Attica's academic programs, a new multi-purpose room, chaplain offices, and a satellite mess hall.

Attica provides a full array of medical services to the incarcerated individual population. In 1995, a 30-bed \$6.5 million infirmary was added at Attica. The medical unit is staffed with one full-time and two part-time doctors, along with a nurse practitioner, two physician assistants, one Nurse Administrator, 16 nurses, and additional support staff. Attica also has a radiology technician on staff. A full range of dental services is also provided.

The Family Reunion Program (FRP) (pictured on page 21) and extensive visiting programs allow incarcerated individuals unparalleled access to and time with their spouses, children, and all other family members.

Religious services and studies are provided by five chaplains at Attica (three full-time and two part-time), assisted by over 200 volunteers. Religious services and studies in a large number of faiths are provided on a weekly basis to meet the varied spiritual needs of the population.

An up-to-date law library that has a computerized system, and incarcerated individual assistants trained to assist their peers, provide resources and access to the legal system. The general library offers incarcerated individuals a variety of choices as well as access to periodicals of all types.

Attica's Industry is a sheet metal fabrication program making storage cabinets, filing cabinets, lockers, library shelving, and metal desks. The program operates five days a week and employs up to 200 incarcerated individuals. It offers a true industrial setting for incarcerated individuals to learn viable skills and develop a strong work ethic needed for employment upon release.

One area that remains an on-going challenge to the Department is the recruitment of minority staff, but it is encouraging to realize that minority staff has increased greatly in recent years. By collective bargaining agreements, however, employees are free to choose the facilities at which they work based upon their seniority. State law and equal protection statutes prevent this Department from enticing minorities to work at Attica by offering them any incentives not available to all employees. Those obstacles notwithstanding, the Department mounts intensive advertising and recruitment campaigns in minority communities whenever it plans to offer a Correction Officer exam.

## **Attica's Legacy was to Transform Penology**

Tremendous change has taken place in Attica over the last five decades. This Department is proud of the job that staff at Attica and our 49 other facilities perform each day. They are representative of the best correction professionals in the country, providing for the utmost level of public safety in a humane, progressive environment.

The following section of this report details the changes that have been made at Attica. It attempts to address individual issues as found and listed in the McKay Commission Report, allowing readers to see for themselves the vast improvements that have occurred over the past five decades.

As Chairman McKay found in 1972, the following section documents that Attica remains representative of prisons across New York, but ahead of many around the nation. It provides a safe and secure environment for a professional, prepared, and well-trained staff.

The environment also allows willing incarcerated individuals to participate in full and productive rehabilitative programming, while meeting our obligations to meet or exceed constitutional minima in providing medical and mental health services, access to the courts and outside world, maintaining family ties and a host of other programs—offerings that increase prison safety while affording incarcerated individuals the best chance of success upon their release from prison.

Attica has for 50 years been at the forefront of changing the face of penology. DOCCS has recalled its past in order to write a better future. The true legacy of Attica is that today's correctional system in New York bears no resemblance to the one McKay examined in 1972.

## **An overview**

### **Facility Description**

Attica Correctional Facility, which opened in 1931, is a maximum-security facility with 2,143 beds that include single cells, infirmary, and some small dorms for special populations.

The facility is surrounded by a wall approximately 30 feet high and 1 ¼ miles long. The area within this secure perimeter contains approximately 55 acres.

### **Administration**

The current administration denotes Julie Wolcott as Attica Correctional Facility's first female Superintendent. Her executive team consists of: First Deputy Superintendent, Patricia Ciulla; Deputy Superintendent for Security Services, Sean White; Deputy Superintendent for Administration Services, Bradley Babin; Deputy Superintendent for Program Services, Michael Hill; Deputy Superintendent for Health, Susan Beck; Assistant Deputy Superintendent for Programs, Lena Russi; Assistant Deputy Superintendent for Correctional Mental Health, Roger Romesser; and Assistant Deputy Superintendent PREA, Kim Adams.

### **Accreditation**

Attica Correctional Facility, like every other prison in the state, is accredited by the American Correctional Association, a national non-partisan organization that reviews facility operations and administration. Attica was originally accredited in a May 1989 audit by achieving compliance with 100 percent of mandatory standards and 98.5 percent of non-mandatory standards. Reaccreditation audits were conducted every three years, thereafter. The most recent reaccreditation audit was conducted in February 2020 and resulted in compliance with 100 percent of mandatory standards and 98.2 percent of non-mandatory standards.

### **PREA**

The United States Congress unanimously voted to adopt the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in 2003. This statute is a national mandate to all correctional departments to adopt strategies to prevent, detect, respond to, and investigate sexual abuse of incarcerated individuals. Attica Correctional Facility fully supports PREA and the National PREA Standards issued by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2012. Correctional Facilities

are routinely audited for PREA compliance and Attica Correctional Facility successfully met and exceeded many of the national standards since inception of the audits. Through prevention, education, and ongoing victim support programs, Attica works to eliminate all forms of sexual violence within the Department, and to provide access to appropriate and meaningful emotional support services for victims of sexual abuse.

## Staff Training

Even before the annual in-service training for all staff cited on page 6, security staff have already received extensive scrutiny and training. Officer candidates must undergo a psychological screening, and a background check is also completed on all candidates. Their employment begins with eight weeks (320 class hours) at the Albany Training Academy that cover more than security issues. This training includes non-violent conflict resolution, cultural awareness, diversity management, conduct in visiting rooms and with the public and incarcerated individual families, how to identify and deal with incarcerated individual drug problems, avoiding inappropriate incarcerated individual contact, recognizing abnormal incarcerated individual behavior, interaction with the mentally ill and suicide prevention. That is followed by three weeks of on-the-job training. In 1971, there was no pre-hire screening, and training consisted of giving a new hire a baton and sending the Officer onto a cell block to learn the job, often on his own.

## Current Staffing

There are a total of 629 uniformed staff allocated to Attica, consisting of the Deputy Superintendent for Security, 3 Captains, 12 Lieutenants, 38 Sergeants and 575 Officers. In addition, there are 240 civilian positions in administration, support, programs, and medical services. Some civilian staff areas include facility direction, recreation, teachers, vocational instructors, chaplains, medical staff, guidance staff, volunteer services, grievance supervisors, librarian, cooks, maintenance staff, and support staff.

## Staffing 1971 v. 2021

Here is a comparison of staffing today to that which existed in 1971:

### 1971 v. 2021

	1971	2021	Change
Incarcerated individuals	2,243	1,628	-27%
Officers	390	575	+47%
All Staff	478	821	+72%

## Capacity Breakdown

Attica's capacity is 2,143 incarcerated individuals. Here is a breakdown on how those beds are utilized:

General Confinement: 1912	Special Housing Units (SHU) cells: 112
Infirmary: 41	Intermediate Care Program (ICP): 78

## Physical Plant

Many changes have occurred in Attica's physical plant. New construction has included a gymnasium, vocational school building, an additional visiting room, a new storehouse, a new power plant located outside the facility wall, a records storage building, permanent duplex units to house the Family Reunion Program, and a new infirmary. This infirmary provides for both out-patient care and a 30-bed in-patient unit.

In addition to new buildings, the front gate area has been expanded to accommodate visitors more comfortably. The west side of D Block was reconstructed in 1977. A total of 246 cells were reconfigured to result in 132 L-shaped Earned Housing cells, each one-and-one-half times larger than the original cells. These cells are used for incarcerated individuals who exhibit exemplary behavior. The reconstruction also provided for a day room on each of the three floors of the unit. Other internal construction has given additional commissary, business office, visiting and staff training space.

Although much of the original physical plant remains unchanged, additional investments have been made to improve both facility security and staff safety in Attica Correctional Facility. Security windows have been installed in many buildings including the Special Housing Unit, A and B Block, Chapel Mess, and A and B Mess Halls. Additional windows are scheduled to be installed in D Block. Heating upgrades and individual cell rehab were completed in conjunction with the window installation. Together these upgrades have resulted in a significant reduction in utility costs. More than 1,875 cameras with audio capability have been installed throughout the facility. Motion detectors have also been installed in various restricted areas to detect unauthorized access. There has been a complete overhaul of the civilian personal alarm system; the new devices have GPS capability and when activated allow security staff to identify the alarm user's location within the facility. In 2017, the facility began a project to rehab all 15 towers located on the perimeter wall. The towers, which were in their original condition as built in 1929, are receiving a total overhaul which includes new windows, doors, floors, plumbing and electrical service.

## Diversity Inclusion

Attica's staff includes in its security ranks, two Hispanic male Lieutenants, a Hispanic male Sergeant, an African American female Sergeant, two white female Sergeants, 13 African American male officers, seven Hispanic male officers, and 30 female officers that includes one African American female officer.

## Incarcerated Individual Profile

- Attica has 42 Incarcerated Individuals serving sentences of life without parole.
- With 710 incarcerated individuals serving sentences of 20 years or more, that's the most among maximum-security prisons except for Green Haven (844).
- Attica incarcerated individuals current age breakdown is as follows:  
0 between 18-21, 61 between 21-24, 237 between 25-29, 293 between 30-34, 278 between 35-39, 206 between 40-44, 157 between 45-49, 131 between 50-54, 143 between 55-59, 75 between 60-64, and 54 are 65+.
- Attica's population is comprised of 901 African Americans, 331 Hispanics, 359 Whites, 16 Native Americans, 8 Asians and 20 listed as other.
- 438 incarcerated individuals were convicted in New York City, and 119 more from the four counties surrounding it.
- Only 41 incarcerated individuals self-report any post-secondary education.

## Daily Operations

### Typical Incarcerated Individual Day

The typical incarcerated individual day at Attica has been changed and improved significantly since 1971. Additional out-of-cell time is a direct result of vastly increased activities, not only during the day, but in the evening and weekend as well.

In 1971, a typical Attica incarcerated individual would awaken at 7:30 a.m., go to breakfast around 8 a.m., and then return to his cell. At 9:30 a.m., he would attend his morning programming or work assignment, return to his cell around 11:30 a.m. and then to go to lunch. He would return to his cell after lunch, then attend his afternoon module around 1:00 p.m. He would go back to his cell around 3:00 p.m. and attend the evening meal around 4:00 p.m. The incarcerated individual then would return to his cell and be locked in for the night at 5:20 p.m.

Today, the program day extends into the evening. Until approximately 10:00 p.m., incarcerated individuals are offered the opportunity to participate in recreational activities or a wide range of self-improvement programs offered by both staff and volunteers.

## **Providing Basic Amenities**

Guidelines on receipt of packages by incarcerated individuals have changed significantly since 1971. Incarcerated individuals may receive packages from family or friends. Incarcerated individuals are also allowed to purchase items from outside vendors. Commissary purchases at the facility are permitted twice a month. Each incarcerated individual can spend up to \$75 per purchase. In addition, \$29 may be used for the purchase of postage stamps and \$170 toward tobacco. The commissary stocks a wide range of food items, tobacco products, and personal hygiene items.

Clothing restrictions have been relaxed significantly since 1971. State-issued clothing is now green permanent-press pants and shirts. Incarcerated individuals are required to wear the state-issued pants, but have wide latitude in other clothing items. Personal shirts are permitted although, blue, grey, black, orange, and multi-colored shirts are prohibited. Styles of personal shoes, socks and underclothing are permitted, as long as they are within approved prices and if they meet the parameters in the Directive.

Personal hygiene items such as soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, toilet tissue and razors are provided by the facility. Each incarcerated individual receives at least three showers per week, as opposed to only one in 1971. Two shower stalls have been installed on each housing block company. There are also showers available in the yard; the large bath house is no longer used.

Meals continue to be served cafeteria-style in the two main mess halls and the satellite mess hall serving the school population. Breakfast is served at about 7:30 a.m., lunch at around noon and dinner at about 4:30 p.m. In most instances, meals are optional, with the exception of programmed incarcerated individuals being required to attend breakfast and lunch in order to facilitate movement to educational program sites. Incarcerated individuals are escorted from their housing blocks to the new satellite mess hall and then escorted directly to school. The time saved by not returning to the blocks allows for increased classroom contact. Incarcerated individuals are not required to eat meals, but they must report to the mess hall as many program movements start from there. The nutritional content of every meal is monitored. Menus are planned by the Department's licensed dietician and a non-meat entree is made available at every meal. The same menu is served at each of the Department's 50 facilities through its centralized Food Production Center.

## **Religious Services**

Religious services represent an important component of facility life. Staff chaplains provide leadership, guidance, and services to a multitude of religious faith groups. There are also many volunteers that offer a variety of activities, including religious offerings, study groups, choirs, retreats, and revivals.

During times of crisis such as illness or death, chaplains are called upon to counsel and assist incarcerated individuals and family members. Chaplains also make routine visits to incarcerated individuals confined to medical units inside and outside of the facility.

## **Earned Housing**

Attica's Earned Housing Unit exists in order to provide reinforcement for positive behavior. Advantages in the block include larger cells, hot water in each cell, some cooking privileges, and more freedom of movement than in other blocks. Large day rooms with televisions and a variety of quiet games are located in the Earned Housing Unit. The Earned Housing Unit has a capacity of 132 in cells.

## **Rules and Discipline**

Facility rules are in place in order to provide staff and incarcerated individuals with the safest possible environment and to ensure a coordinated, effective, and efficient daily routine. A rule book is issued to every incarcerated individual upon arrival at the facility. Changes or additional local facility guidelines are posted on each housing block bulletin board. Incarcerated individual possession of rule books and the posting of changes ensure that both staff and incarcerated individuals are operating from the same set of rules, which eliminates favoritism and the arbitrary imposition of punishment found to exist in 1971.

Enforcement guidelines for incarcerated individuals' behavior is governed by the New York State Codes, Rules and Regulations. The three-tiered system of sanctions is designed to address allegations of incarcerated individuals misbehavior at an appropriate and commensurate level. Tier I hearings for minor infractions are usually conducted by a Sergeant. Violations of a somewhat more serious nature, Tier II's, are addressed by a Lieutenant. Superintendent's proceedings are conducted for the most serious Tier III violations. Tier III hearings are usually held by a civilian Commissioner's Hearing Officer, Captain or Deputy Superintendent.

The three-tier system is designed to allow the incarcerated individual to present a defense in a due process setting. Incarcerated individuals may request and are provided with the assistance of an employee for the preparation of a defense. An incarcerated individual may call witnesses and also has appeal rights. Tier III appeals are submitted to and reviewed by the Office of the Commissioner.

## **Programming Today**

### **Incarcerated Individual Programming**

Incarcerated individual programming can be divided into two broad categories: identified program needs and those necessary for the operation of the facility that oftentimes teach incarcerated individuals a useable skill. An incarcerated individual's identified program needs may include academic education, vocational education, alcohol/substance abuse treatment, aggression replacement training, orientation, transitional services programming, and sex offender treatment. Work assignments based on facility needs include mess hall workers, porters, laundry, and lawns and grounds crews. Some additional programs available are Industry, recreation aide, commissary, program assistant, law library clerk and library clerk.

### **Incarcerated Individual Pay**

Incarcerated individuals in both the school programs and facility maintenance job assignments are paid wages ranging from \$.60 a day to a top rate of \$1.55 per day. The facility physical plant and staffing allow for the programming of approximately 1,600 incarcerated individuals, including school and industrial programs, ensuring that all areas are operating at capacity. The pay scale is somewhat higher for incarcerated individuals working in Corcraft Industries shops, than that of incarcerated individuals holding other assignments. Corcraft pay is approximately 26-65 cents an hour. Corcraft incarcerated individuals work approximately seven hours a day.

### **Academic Education**

The academic program serves a wide range of an incarcerated individual's needs. All incarcerated individuals are provided with the opportunity to achieve a high school equivalency diploma. The program is designed to allow entry to any achievement level with particular attention given to those with minimal reading skills.

The current staffing of nine New York State certified teachers hold classes in the morning and the in the afternoon. An additional benefit for incarcerated individuals is an educational outreach program. It provides service to incarcerated individuals at various locations throughout the facility, including the offering of the education program to SHU incarcerated individuals.

Attica holds a graduation ceremony for those incarcerated individuals who earn their high school equivalency diploma or associate degree. This ceremony has been expanded to include incarcerated individual family members in recognition of the graduates' accomplishments.

In 2011, Attica started an Associate College Program in conjunction with Genesee Community College, funded by the Sunshine Lady Foundation. Incarcerated individuals who have completed their coursework have received their associate degree. In 2021, in

conjunction with Ashland College, correspondence college courses are offered using the incarcerated individual's tablet. In Fall 2021, Attica has partnered with the Rochester Educational Justice Initiative to offer higher level college classes to allow incarcerated individuals to pursue a bachelor's degree.

## **Vocational Education**

The vocational program is designed to provide incarcerated individuals with technical knowledge and practical experience. Eleven shops provide learning and live work experience. They included welding, floor covering, printing, general business, custodial maintenance, building maintenance, small engine repair, painting and decorating, licensed barbering, electrical trades, and plumbing. The live work experiences have the additional benefit of minimizing operational and maintenance costs at the facility. Incarcerated individuals enrolled in these shops work with certified instructors on various projects throughout the facility. Apprenticeships certified by the NYS Department of Labor, and National Center Construction Education and Research (NCCER) credits, can also be earned.

## **Alcohol/Substance Abuse Training (ASAT)**

ASAT provides intensive substance abuse and alcohol treatment in a therapeutic community setting where all participants are housed together. The full-time seven-and-a-half-month program accommodates 100 incarcerated individuals. The program provides a highly structured milieu, with program stages through which incarcerated individuals must progress. Emphasis is placed on self-help. Group and community meetings provide a forum for community members to address personal and interpersonal issues and are based on openness and honesty. The goal of the ASAT therapeutic community is to develop a drug-free lifestyle, change negative patterns of behavior and to develop a healthier living and working relationship with others.

## **Corcraft**

Attica's industrial program, known as Corcraft, is a sheet metal fabrication program. The program operates five days each week and employs up to 200 incarcerated individuals. The number of individuals employed is governed by the volume of orders received.

The Corcraft product line at Attica includes storage cabinets, file cabinets, signposts, lockers, library shelving and metal desks. Corcraft products are sold at competitive prices to state agencies and local governments, as well as some nonprofit organizations. Sales have expanded to similar agencies in other states.

Civilian Industrial Training Supervisors monitor production on each shift. In 1994, a new powder paint line was installed to keep products modern and competitive. The installation was completed almost totally by incarcerated individuals' labor, under the supervision of industrial foremen and a few outside consultants.

## **Health Services**

### **Medical**

Attica employs the following health care staff: three physicians, two physician's assistants, one nurse practitioner, one nurse administrator, 16 registered nurses, one senior radiological technician, three dentists, one dental hygienist, three dental assistants, four pharmacists, three pharmacy aides and five clerical staff.

Routine health services are available to incarcerated individuals daily. Nurses and physician's assistants regularly visit various areas of the facility to address routine health concerns. Serious problems are referred to a physician who then determines the appropriate course of treatment.

The facility infirmary can accommodate 30 in-patients. Acute care patients are referred to one of several metropolitan medical centers for treatment. Most radiology and laboratory services are provided locally. Optometry, dermatology, orthopedic, oral surgery, and full dental services are also part of the health service offerings.

### **Psychiatric Care**

The Mental Health Unit at the facility is staffed by employees of the State Office of Mental Health (OMH). The professional staff includes 17 staff members consisting of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, registered nurses, a discharge coordinator and support clerical staff. Regular ongoing therapy, psychiatric assessments, parole evaluations, individual counseling, group therapy and crisis intervention is available.

In addition, a 78-bed Intermediate Care Program (ICP) was opened in 1983. This unit is operated through the joint efforts of DOCCS and OMH. The unit provides a closely managed environment and support services to emotionally and mentally dysfunctional incarcerated individuals, in an attempt to ultimately return them to the general population. The facility also maintains a 10-bed satellite unit for acute care patients.

The Group Therapy Program (GTP) was added to the facility in the past several years. This joint program venture between OMH and DOCCS provides specialized psychiatric treatment and counseling, in both a one-on-one and group setting, to those incarcerated individuals who are serving extended periods of Special Housing Unit confinement time due to disruptive behavior.

### **Counseling**

Attica's guidance staff provides both individual and group counseling to incarcerated individuals. Areas of counseling include behavior modification, life skills, substance abuse, anti-violence and aggression programs, sex offender counseling, adjustment to incarceration and victim awareness. A transitional services center offers a wide range of programs designed to assist incarcerated individuals as they prepare to return to society.

## **Giving Incarcerated Individuals a Voice**

### **Grievance Resolution Committee**

The Grievance Resolution Committee is a formal mechanism for the resolution of incarcerated individual grievances. The committee consists of a non-voting chairman, two incarcerated individuals and two staff. The committee investigates incarcerated individual complaints, and a hearing is held where the incarcerated individual can present information and call witnesses. The committee makes a recommendation which is forwarded to the Superintendent for acceptance or modification. That decision can be appealed to the Commissioner. There were 2,166 formal grievances answered last year.

### **Incarcerated Liaison Committee (ILC)**

The ILC is a group of incarcerated individuals elected by the total general population as representatives of the various housing units. The primary function of this body is to meet with the Superintendent and Executive Team to discuss issues affecting the total incarcerated population.

### **Incarcerated Organizations**

Incarcerated individuals are allowed to form various organizations at Attica, most of which were denied in 1971. Present active organizations include African Cultural Awareness, Veterans, Hispanos Unidos, and a Lifer's Organization. Facility staff advisors, as well as volunteers from the community, assist these organizations.

## **Communication with the Outside**

### **Access to Media**

Attica incarcerated individuals, like those around the system, are eligible to be interviewed by bona fide media on virtually any topic. Subjects to be discussed during these interviews do not have to be revealed to or approved by the Department. Interviews are held during normal weekday business hours. The only incarcerated individuals not allowed interviews are those in disciplinary housing.

### **Radios and Tape Players**

AM/FM radios and tape players can be no larger than 8" by 14". Radios and tape players are for in-cell use only and must be used with an earplug or earphone. Also, each cell continues to be equipped with earphones for reception of three channels of various public broadcasts through the facility public address system. Regular polls are conducted among the incarcerated individuals by the Incarcerated Liaison Committee to determine programming preferences.

## **In-Cell Televisions**

An addition to recreation activities is the in-cell television program which began in 1991. Incarcerated individuals may purchase a flat screen color television set through the Commissary for \$115. The ILC television committee utilizes funds to pay for a cable package consisting of 52 channels. Programming through internal circuitry also enables the facility to offer movies or educational programs to the population along with information.

## **Tablets**

In 2019, DOCCS implemented a tablet program. Tablets, which are preloaded with free applications, are provided to the incarcerated individuals at no cost. The Department also provides incarcerated individuals with access to kiosks for the ability to purchase music, videos, e-books, and other media. The tablets also offer the opportunity to use a secure messaging system to communicate with friends and family.

## **Books and Periodicals**

Printed material is readily available with very few restrictions. "Community standards" are applied and most magazines found on newsstands throughout the state are generally considered acceptable. Publications which incite violence, racial hatred, or disobedience of law or that present a clear and immediate risk to the facility are unacceptable. Publications that are considered obscene in the general community or depict illegal acts such as child pornography are prohibited. Questionable publications are submitted to the facility's Media Review Committee.

## **Legal Services**

Perhaps one of the most significant changes over the past 50 years is incarcerated individual access to legal service. Attica's law library is open and available to all incarcerated individuals unless they are confined for disciplinary or medical reasons. However, even confined incarcerated individuals have access through a Law Library tablet, satellite services and daily rounds by officers. Incarcerated individual paralegal assistants are onsite to help with various legal problems.

## **Access to Volunteers**

Attica provides additional services to incarcerated individuals utilizing active community volunteers. The volunteer programs include post-secondary education, substance abuse, religious programs, veteran's affairs, counseling, and alternatives to violence programs.

## **Telephones**

Attica has a self-dialing, collect call-only telephone system with one individual telephone on each housing gallery for incarcerated individuals use. Phones are also available in recreation areas and yards. Phones are available at scheduled times through the day and evening. Incarcerated individuals are able to make at least one call per week. The telephone system will accommodate only outgoing collect telephone calls. Telephone numbers must be approved in advance.

## **Correspondence**

In general, an incarcerated individual may correspond with any person or business as long as that person or business has not notified Attica that they do not wish to receive mail from a particular incarcerated individual. Correspondence to unrelated persons under 18 years of age, persons under probation or parole supervision, or individuals in other correctional facilities require special advance approval.

There is no general censorship of incoming or outgoing mail. All outgoing correspondence except for business mail may be sealed by the incarcerated individual. Incoming mail is inspected for contraband but is not read. All incoming legal mail remains sealed until it is inspected for contraband in the presence of the incarcerated individual.

Incarcerated individuals are also eligible for free postage equivalent to five first class stamps per week for mail to their attorneys, the courts, or privileged recipients, such as elected officials or religious officials.

## **Fostering Family Ties**

### **Incarcerated Individual Visiting**

Visiting takes place seven days a week from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. An incarcerated individual may be visited by up to three persons at a time.

Since 1971, a second visiting room has been added to accommodate the increase in visitors. General visiting areas have tables to accommodate four people. There are no screens or partitions separating the incarcerated individual from visitors, as there were in 1971. A third visiting area, located in the Reception Building, is designated for incarcerated individuals serving a disciplinary confinement sanction.

Private rooms are provided to allow incarcerated individuals to confer confidentially with media, attorneys, or legal representatives.

Visiting rooms have been enhanced to promote a family atmosphere. A children's play area with toys and videos is now part of Attica's visiting area. A facility photo program provides an opportunity for incarcerated individuals and visitors to have pictures taken individually or together.

## Hospitality Center

The Attica Hospitality Center has been in operation since 1977 and is believed to have been the first established at a prison in New York State. It was organized by various local churches that saw the need to provide assistance to the families of the incarcerated individuals who must often travel long distances to visit. It is located on facility grounds and provides a comfortable area for visitors on weekends and holidays, before they are processed into the facility.

## Family Reunion Program

The program provides eligible incarcerated Individuals and their immediate family members with enhanced visiting access. Family members allowed to participate include legal spouses, children, parents, grandparents, and foster parents. After special review, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters may be included.

The program is a positive resource for developing and meeting the needs of incarcerated individuals and their families. Incarcerated individuals must have good institutional records to participate; this program acts as an incentive for good behavior.

The program consists of six modular units where immediate family members may visit with the incarcerated individuals for a 46-hour period. Each furnished 2-bedroom or 3-bedroom unit contains a full kitchen, living room, and bathroom. A children's play area and picnic tables are available outside.



## Recent Special Events

### GlimmerGlass Opera

Starting in 2015 artists from the GlimmerGlass Festival performed operas at Attica for the population. Some of the productions include Macbeth, Porgy and Bess, and Westside Story.

### Jazz Behind Bars

In 2016, Barbara Levy Daniels and the Jazz Trio performed for the population.



## Season for Non-Violence

In 2018, Attica participated in its first Season for Non-Violence. The Season for Nonviolence marks the 64 days between the anniversaries of the deaths of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30<sup>th</sup> and Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Incarcerated individuals are invited to sign a contract to practice nonviolence for those 64 days. A booklet used as a teaching tool is given to each participant with a given theme each day which includes words to live by, a reflection and a take action suggestion for peaceful living. Opening and closing ceremonies are held featuring Arun Ghandi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, and a formerly incarcerated individual, Jonathan Jones, who co-founded this program at Groveland CF. Throughout the 64 days, participants are encouraged to express their concept of peace through art, essays and poetry/music. These will be presented at the closing ceremony.

## It's a Wonderful Life

In 2018 the incarcerated population participated in a question-and-answer session with two of the original cast members; Jimmy Hawkins (Tommy Bailey) and Karolyn Grimes (Zuzu Bailey). This included Karolyn Grimes (Zuzu Bailey) reenacting her famous scene from the movie while ringing a bell, "Daddy, teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings" to the delight of everyone in attendance. The event was well received by the population. At closing, incarcerated individuals were encouraged to write a brief letter describing what the movie meant to them, which had been broadcast over the facility internal circuitry. Several of these responses were donated to the "It's A Wonderful Life" Museum and are on permanent display along with letters received from incarcerated individuals who viewed the movie in 1946 at San Quentin.



# TEDx

In 2019, Attica hosted a successful TEDx event. Staff, guest speakers, and incarcerated individuals gave short presentations regarding Wellness. Incarcerated individuals talked about how reflection, exercise, hobbies, and music are helping them overcome despair, anxiety, and depression and on how they are trying to make themselves healthier physically, emotionally, and spiritually, as well as help at-risk youth from the community. This program was well received and has made a lasting impact.

