

Review panel finds Oregon prison food quality "adequate"

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Corrections reiterates commitment to serving meals that are safe, nutritious, and within budget

The first of two review panels commissioned by Oregon Department of Corrections Director Max Williams to look into aspects of the agency's food services practices has completed its work and submitted its findings. In January, a federal investigation was made public regarding the Department of Corrections' former food services administrator who is alleged to have taken kickbacks for directing purchases of food items from particular vendors. In the wake of the allegations, Director Williams empanelled two groups of independent authorities to evaluate food quality and fiscal controls in the state prison system. The food quality review group submitted its findings and recommendations last week. The summary in the panel's report says: "It was the perception of the review team members that the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) operates safe, secure, and sanitary food service operations. Inmates are provided with nutritionally adequate meals that are prepared and served in a manner that meets established governmental health and safety codes. The food purchased on the "Spot Buy" program for consumption by the inmates is of acceptable quality and is stored and transported in a safe manner. The employees supervising food service operations possess necessary expertise and receive a high level of support from executives and supervisors. "The panel's observations support DOC's commitment to preparing meals that are safe and nutritious while carefully managing public resources," Williams said. "As we asked, they observed many of our food handling and management practices, visited a number of our facilities, inspected and consumed the food, and returned a thoughtful list of recommendations. "The recommendations relate to kitchen operations, menu and recipe management, and nutritional considerations," Williams added. "The Department of Corrections is eager to develop an action plan to review and address each finding within the context of providing wholesome, palatable and healthy meals while carefully managing public resources." Review panel members were:

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Tom Issermoyer, National Food Service Administrator, Federal Bureau of Prisons;
Darren Sisk, Investigator, United States Department of Agriculture;
Eric Pippert, Section Manager, Department of Human Services Public Health Division;
Mary Cluskey, Ph.D., RD, Associate Professor of Nutrition, Oregon State University; and
Dalton Hobbs, Assistant Director, Oregon State Department of Agriculture.
Once the fiscal controls review panel completes its work, its report will be released as well.

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