

# **Aroostook County Jail**

## **Board of Visitors Annual Report**

### **2024**

The Aroostook County Jail serves the County of Aroostook, the largest county in the State. The jail services 11 different law enforcement agencies in Aroostook County. The facility is licensed to house 117 individuals and maintained a daily population of 91 individuals during 2024. The Daily population was 25% lower than 2023. The building was first constructed in 1889, with renovations occurring in 1935, 1959, and 1986. The Aroostook County Jail is linear in design (cells located along a corridor or in rows adjacent to a day room with staff periodically conducting observation rounds in the area).

The jail staff comprises a Jail Administrator, an Assistant Jail Administrator, Sergeants, Corporals, and Corrections Officers.

The Board scheduled six meetings for 2024. We were able to hold five, with two full jail tours and interviews with male and female residents.

Current programs offered within the jail include Bible study, Prime for Life, Workforce Program, Healthy Relationships (Aroostook Mental Health), 12 Step program, 12-Step program-female, Recovery Coaching, Pastoral Visitation, Hope and Justice (Healthy Relationships), and Adult Education.

The Aroostook County Jail contracts with Alternative Correctional Healthcare to provide healthcare services. Mental Health services are provided by contract with Alternative Correctional Healthcare. Acadia Psychiatric Hospital in Bangor provides psychiatric services both in-person and through telehealth. The nursing staff is on-site daily with 12-hour coverage. Provider coverage is 1-2 days weekly, depending on need. The charge nurse accepts calls during off hours and has come into the facility during off hours if needed. Diamond Pharmacy provides medications online and by mail for prescription delivery. Twin Pines offers dental services on an emergency basis.

Food service for the Aroostook County Jail is contracted through Trinity Services Group. A four-week cycle menu, approved by a dietician, offers a variety of meals for the population. Accommodations are made for those individuals needing meal planning based on therapeutic and religious restrictions.

The Aroostook County Board of Visitors comprises six individuals with two current vacancies on the Board. The current members are Heidi Rackliffe, the Director of Programs for the Aroostook County Action Program. Erik Lamoreau works for the MicMac Tribal Health Center as a

Substance Use Disorder Counselor. Erik is in long-term recovery and was formally at the Aroostook County Jail. Janice Jackson works for Cary Medical Center and teaches Prime for Life; Sarah Wright is the Director of Crisis Services for the Aroostook Mental Health Center. Martin Puckett works for the Central Aroostook Association as the Executive Director; the sixth and seventh board position is currently vacant. Chief Mike Gahagan, retired from the City of Caribou as the Police Chief and operates the only holding facility in Aroostook County. Chief Gahagan attended our first two meetings for 2024, and his position on the Board is open.

The Board reviewed the recommendations they submitted in January 2024 with the Jail Administrator and the Sheriff. Below is the list of recommendations from the jail visit and interviews with individuals at the jail;

1. Increase access to programming, specifically ACAP assistance with workforce development skills.

The Aroostook County Action Program has increased programming in the jail. The Workforce Program was active in the jail for 2024.

2. Connect with employers to try to line up employment once released.

ACAP's Work Force directly addresses this recommendation.

3. Look into automatic lights.

Automatic lights are unable to be engineered into this current jail.

4. Funding for 2 "in-house" Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder counselors.

We have not been able to fund any additional MH/SA counselors. However, the increase in telehealth has increased access to providers at no extra cost.

5. Agreement or MOU with an in-patient MH facility.

State facilities will not contract for in-patient space.

6. Women are to be treated equally with trustee status. When was the last female trustee?

Sentenced female inmates who can work have been a challenge again this year. With an average daily population of ten women in jail, nine of the ten are pre-trial and not eligible for work programs.

7. Stop using prescribed medication as a disciplinary tool. Medical staff uses medication as a compliance tool.

This recommendation was unfounded. Medical care is strictly the purview of Alternative Correctoin Health, not of the corrections staff.

8. More case management.

Some gains in case management have been realized. 2024 had an ADP reduction of 25% this year. Our case managers have fewer residents to service, leading to more individual attention to the residence's success.

9. More learning opportunities.

We have more work to do to create more education opportunities. The lack of a classroom space is a hindrance. The tables inmates receive have a lot of educational programming that the residents do not take advantage of.

10. Look into multipurpose rooms for visiting and education.

We are still working on how this would work.

11. Put educational material on the iPad, possibly in groups via video.

Educational material is available on the tablets provided by Securus. Space for programs is always an issue. The BOV had suggestions for meeting places that are outside the jail for programs, such as community spaces to rent, adult education classrooms, and private conference rooms may be available.

The Board discussed the recommendations in further detail and offered possible suggestions on how the recommendations could be implemented.