



Department of
Correction



Annual PREA Report FY 2024-2025

Tennessee Department of Correction | Office of Inspector General



Executive Summary

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was established in 2003 under the leadership of President George W. Bush. The act mandated the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop standards to eliminate prison rape in all correctional settings. PREA aims to eradicate sexual abuse and sexual harassment of incarcerated people. The standards require all prisons, local jails, juvenile detention facilities, police lockups, and community confinement facilities to adhere to the provisions set forth by PREA.

An annual report is required to meet the requirements set forth in the DOJ PREA standard 115.88. This report includes, as required, progress made in addressing sexual abuse, current fiscal year data, a comparison of data from the prior year, and corrective actions taken.

Key Points

- TDOC has met all audit requirements to maintain certification by the DOJ.
- All facilities under the direction of TDOC are PREA compliant.
- TDOC is committed to a zero-tolerance stance toward sexual abuse and harassment.
- TDOC added three (3) Regional Compliance Specialists who assist in providing oversight of PREA compliance at all TDOC facilities.

Progress

TDOC met all audit requirements

The PREA standards require annual audits of one-third of the facilities under an agency's jurisdiction, along with the Governor's certification of statewide compliance in all facilities under the operational control of the state's executive branch, including privately managed facilities operated on behalf of the executive branch to house offenders. Failure to comply with standards will result in the loss of 5% of the identified federal grant funding.

During Fiscal Year 2024-2025, the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) completed year three in cycle four of the DOJ PREA audit cycle (see Figure 1).

All facilities under the direction of TDOC are certified PREA compliant.

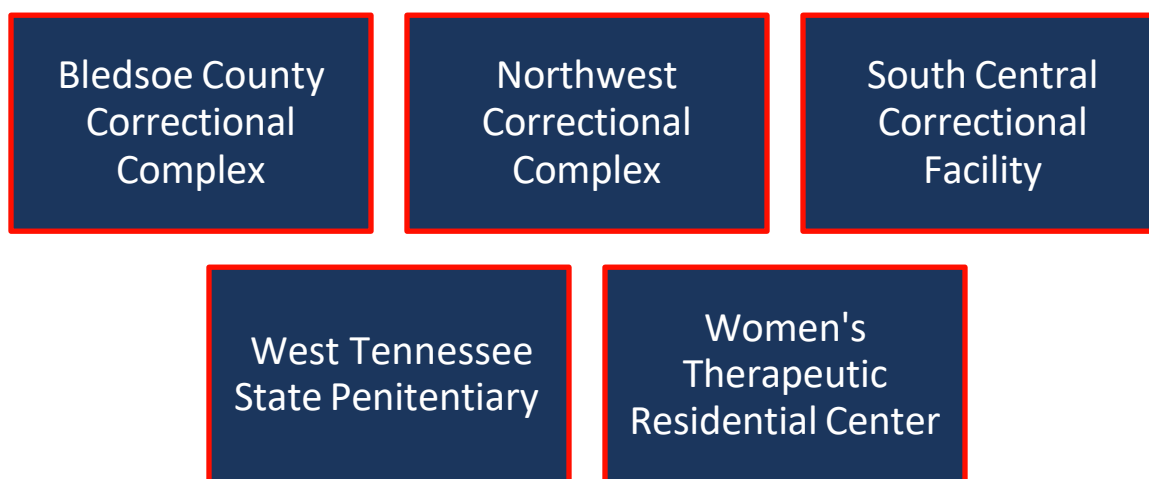


Figure 1. Facilities audited in FY 2024-2025

All DOJ PREA audits were conducted by an independent certified DOJ auditor using the DOJ's Online Audit System (OAS). In addition, compliance with PREA standards is reviewed during Annual Inspections conducted at all sites. All facilities under the direction of TDOC are certified PREA compliant.

All PREA allegations are thoroughly investigated.

As defined by the DOJ PREA standards, each allegation made must have one of the following determinations:

Substantiated allegation

- an allegation that was investigated and determined to have occurred.

Unsubstantiated allegation

- an allegation that was investigated, and the investigation produced insufficient evidence to make a final determination as to whether or not the event occurred.

Unfounded allegation

- an allegation that was investigated and determined not to have occurred.

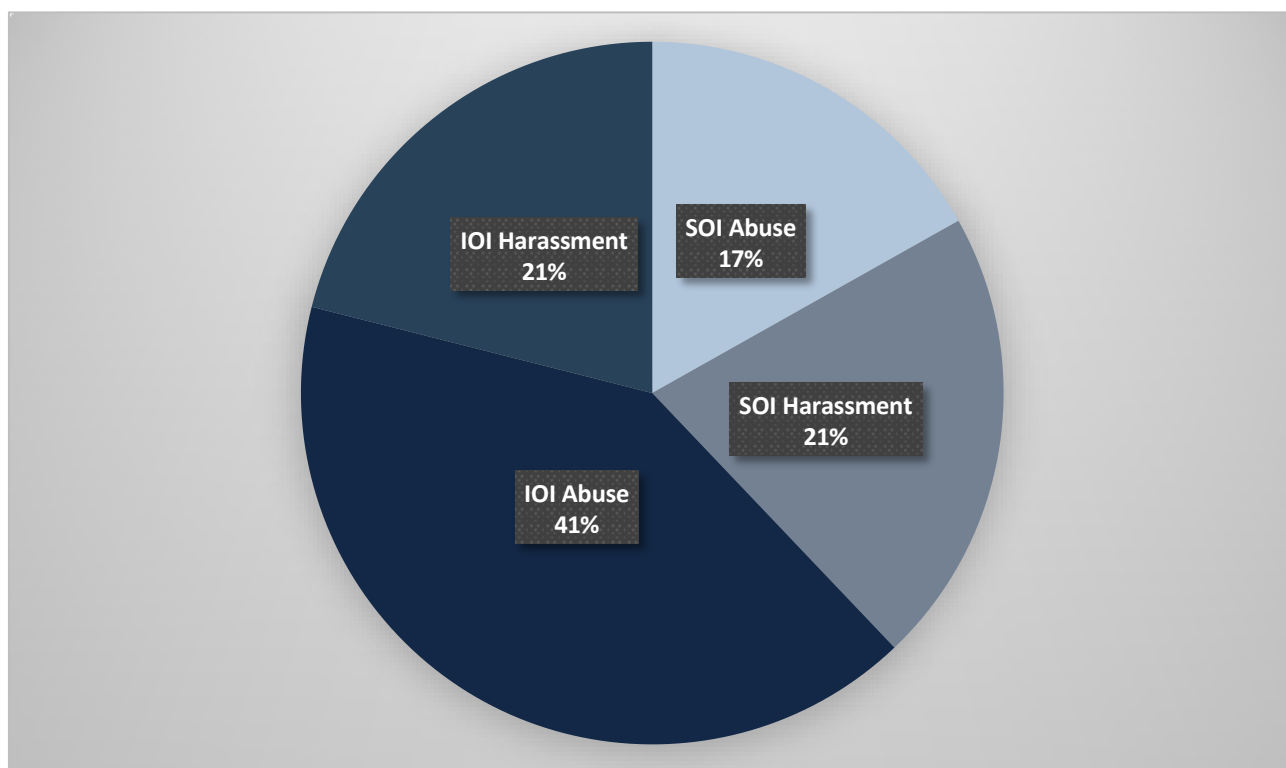
The Institutional Investigators at each facility thoroughly investigate all allegations to determine if an allegation is substantiated, unsubstantiated, or unfounded. In compliance with DOJ standards, all allegations are documented in the TDOC PREA Allegation System (PAS). The PAS system contains the investigative steps taken by the investigators, the results of the steps, and documentation to support the outcome determination. Each allegation determination is reviewed by the TDOC Office of the Inspector General to ensure that the evidence gathered supports the determination made.

TDOC collects data regarding PREA allegations.

During Fiscal Year 2024-2025, there were a total of 421 allegations entered into the PREA Allegation System. Each allegation is classified into one of four categories:

- Inmate on Inmate Sexual Abuse (IOI Abuse)
- Inmate on Inmate Sexual Harassment (IOI Harassment)
- Staff on Inmate Sexual Abuse (SOI Abuse)
- Staff on Inmate Sexual Harassment (SOI Harassment)

Figure 2. Percentage for each allegation category for Fiscal Year 24-25.



Of the one hundred seventy-three (173) inmate-on-inmate sexual abuse allegations, twelve (12) were substantiated and one hundred thirty-three (133) were unsubstantiated/unfounded. Twenty-eight (28) of the inmate-on-inmate sexual abuse allegations are pending completion of the investigation. Of the seventy-one (71) staff-on-inmate sexual abuse allegations, thirty (30) were substantiated, and forty (40) were unsubstantiated/unfounded, with one (1) pending completion of the investigation.

Comparison of Data

Allegation Category	FY 24/25	FY 24/25 Substantiated	FY 23/24	FY 23/24 Substantiated
IOI Abuse	173	12	101	14
IOI Harassment	88	10	63	4
SOI Abuse	71	30	84	33
SOI Harassment	89	3	88	3
Totals	421	55	336	54

Figure 3. Comparison of FY 23/24 and FY 24/25 Data

TDOC has a limited number of substantiated cases.

While the number of allegations increased, it is worth noting that the number of substantiated cases remained unchanged. The increase in allegations could be attributed to the introduction of the new inmate tablet system, which has provided inmates with additional access to report allegations. Oftentimes, inmates admit to reporting a PREA allegation to get a response to another request. In fact, on average, 85% of reported allegations across both reported fiscal years were either unsubstantiated or unfounded. When an inmate is found to be abusing the PREA reporting system by not making allegations in good faith, they are counseled and may be subject to disciplinary action when warranted.

85% of reported allegations across fiscal years are either unsubstantiated or unfounded.

TDOC is responsive to substantiated allegations.

Substantiated allegations are processed for disciplinary action for inmates and staff. Inmates were disciplined as appropriate for substantiated sexual harassment and referred for criminal prosecution for incidents of substantiated sexual abuse. Staff disciplinary action for sexual harassment ranged from counseling and written warnings up to termination for substantiated sexual harassment, depending on the severity of the act. For substantiated cases of Staff on Inmate Sexual Abuse, staff were terminated and referred for criminal prosecution based on the nature of the incident.

An incident review of each allegation of sexual abuse was conducted unless the incident was determined to be unfounded. The review included security staff, the Associate Warden, medical and mental health staff as appropriate, and the Institutional Investigator. The review committee can recommend corrective action after reviewing the incident. Recommendations for this fiscal year included the installation of additional cameras, blind-spot mirrors, and enhanced inmate supervision.

TDOC takes preventative action through education and inspections.

The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) at each facility conducts a PREA compliance inspection monthly to identify and eliminate blind spots and other potential PREA concerns. SART members utilize the PREA audit spreadsheets while conducting the monthly PREA compliance inspection. The inspection enables staff to continuously assess their PREA knowledge and provide constant on-the-spot training. It also allows facilities to measure how acclimated offenders have become with facility staff, which is essential for inmates to be comfortable reporting PREA allegations.

Staff and inmate education are essential factors in preventing, detecting, and responding to allegations of sexual abuse or sexual harassment. The Department continues to provide in-person PREA training for new employees and computer-based PREA refresher training annually for all staff. Continuing education keeps our staff alerted to our zero-tolerance policy and our actions to protect everyone. The department's Statewide PREA Coordinator holds monthly conference calls with Facility PREA Coordinators and PREA Compliance Managers to administer PREA refresher training and convey pertinent information and changes. Staff are provided with tools to support PREA compliance and are reminded of the importance of their roles in ensuring TDOC remains vigilant and compliant with PREA standards.

Inmates are provided with PREA education, including pamphlets and inmate handbooks, upon intake at a new facility. Memos and posters are posted throughout housing units and programming areas to provide reminders of the information and the appropriate ways to report a PREA, including phone numbers and addresses. New to TDOC this fiscal year, the inmate tablet system provides further PREA education to inmates. In addition to education, the tablets allow inmates to file PREA allegations at any time and in the more private setting of their cells.

The Statewide PREA Coordinator oversees PREA compliance across all facilities and is supported by three regional PREA staff. Each regional external compliance specialist is assigned to a specific group of facilities and provides direct oversight, technical assistance, and monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance.

TDOC is committed to a zero-tolerance stance toward sexual abuse and harassment.

The Department of Justice PREA Certification requires regular audits of our facilities. During the upcoming fiscal year, Lois DeBerry Special Needs Facility (DSNF), Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center (DJRC), Riverbend Maximum Security Institution (RMSI), Hardeman County Correctional Facility (HCCF), and Whiteville Correctional Facility (WFCA) will have their PREA Audits as mandated by the Department of Justice.

TDOC continues to work towards reducing PREA incidents and fostering a safe environment for inmates and staff. The Department continuously evaluates and improves the reporting methods for inmates, employees, and third parties to ensure swift responsiveness. While PREA compliance is a continuous pursuit, TDOC is committed to a zero-tolerance stance toward sexual harassment and sexual abuse.



Frank Strada, Commissioner