

SCOC Background and Resource Guide
Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier
March 25, 2022

Background

For those in upstate counties interested in pursuing information from the State Commission of Correction (SCOC) and countering its mandates, here is some basic information in addition to the notes available at the [JUST website](#). Freedom-of-information requests (FOIL) to the SCOC are often necessary; you file requests at [this location](#).

The SCOC is the state 'oversight' [body](#) for jails (and state prisons). There are three SCOC commissioners, all former law enforcement officers, with an average salary and state pension of [\\$286,084](#). In practice the SCOC has long mandated and legitimized the expansion and building of jails as [long-term](#), [recent](#), and [local](#) studies chart—not to mention local news reports. Here is a [list of expansions and new jails](#) for the 2011-2019 period as an example. The SCOC demands can be resisted, as in [Cortland County](#). The SCOC'S power also mandates required staffing levels and thus funding of jails, even if the number of persons in a jail dramatically fall as many have recently.

In short, the SCOC has for decades been central to building mass incarceration in our counties. It has irrevocably failed over the years to provide oversight for and humane conditions in state prisons and jails--as Assembly Member Emily Gallagher of Brooklyn [summarized recently](#). Its power and failures are, however, most numerous and hidden outside New York City. And revealed in part by their own rarely noticed documents

Some useful SCOC Information and FOIL targets

The SCOC [website](#) has links for their meetings, annual reports, and incomplete data on [covid numbers](#) and [deaths](#), an [organizational chart](#), [regulations](#) for minimum standards, manuals and forms for Sheriffs, and a link to file freedom-of-information-requests among other tabs and links.

In October 2021 the SCOC in response to pressure issued [a transparency report](#) which led to new reports on incarcerated individuals, covid status, Halt and MAT implementation, and related matters. These are slowly coming out with mixed results.

There are some hidden sources of information for jail activists and targets for foils. Here are a few.

- [Monthly meeting dates and agendas](#) includes minutes of previous meeting, changes to individual jail's physical facilities, and often grievance counts as reported by the SCOC 'Citizens' Policy and Complaint Review Council'. Changes in jails' internal layout and variances of size permissions also often appear here. You can search by county name or tag. Note: members of the Jails Justice Network in past years attended some SCOC meetings in person; with covid they went online. However they regularly go into private session within a few minutes, blocking access to all discussion regarding jail conditions or renovations or the like. Using annual and monthly reports here are JUST members' calculations of a grievance rejections:

Date	Grievances accepted	Grievances accepted in part	Denied	Percent Denied
Dec 14, 2017*	9	7	320	95%
Oct 12, 2017*		9	261	97%
Aug 10, 2017*	2	5	269	97%
2019 annual**	4	21	3829	98%
2020 annual**	1	47	3620	99%
Feb 10, 2022*	0	1	311	99.7%

Notes: *source: Monthly meeting minutes

**includes rejected grievances

These figures will be updated upon receipt by FOIL of more annual grievance tallies

- [Commission Annual Reports](#) includes problems in county jails found during annual inspections of jails that year, lists of variances in approved capacity, etc. One can FOIL the separate individual inspection reports for each county jail which take place every several years. These often reveal irregularities, evasion of state regulations, and other problems: one should FOIL them. Major omissions in grievance procedures, as reported by incarcerated persons, were confirmed in these reports for Broome County as reported [here](#).
- [Most Problematic Local Correctional Facilities \(Feb 2018\) report](#)
- [Manuals and forms](#): the SCOC requires counties to file regular reports and provides forms for Sheriffs. These forms reveal compilations of information and asking specifically by name is key to a successful FOIL. They include these of note:
 - [Sheriff's Annual Report](#) - [Sample of a Sheriff's Annual Report](#) includes admissions and populations that will reveal for example sex/gender/race of incarcerated and admissions, reported incidents
 - [Reportable Incident Manual](#) (you can foil your counties incidents (injury, death, emergency, etc. events) over time)
 - Samples of [Inmate Grievance Form](#) and [Grievance Investigation Form](#)
 - SCOC [Memorandum on Solitary](#) (February 2021)
- [Minimum Standards and Regulations](#) for county jails set by state law, covering from hygiene and food to commissary, visitation and discipline requirements (does your county jail meet regulations? Many do not—you need to cross check regulations related to incarcerated persons' grievances/information.

County/Jail FOILS

An additional source of information is more local: reports and information from county sheriff or “public safety” departments. One may request by FOIL copies of jail manuals that contain rules and regulations that are often not followed ([example](#)), commissary lists and prices revealing pricing exploitation ([example](#)), revenues generated by boarding in persons for the federal government or state readies, profits from phone/video contracts ([example](#)), medical and food contracts ([example](#)), death reports, and the like. County websites have FOIL links. County budgets reveal incarceration budgets.