

**OKLAHOMA COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
OFFICE OF JUVENILE SYSTEM OVERSIGHT**

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**Name and Location of Facility:** Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center  
Tecumseh, Oklahoma

**Dates of Visit:** June 3- 4, June 8-11, and June 17, 2009

**Oversight Reviewer:** Dana S. Holden, Oversight Specialist

**Focus of Visit:** First Biannual Visit, 2009

**Date:** August 19, 2009

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### **Introduction**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) initiated an unannounced visit at the Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center (COJC) on June 3, 2009, and resumed the visit on June 4 and June 8 through June 11, 2009. The visit was completed on June 17, 2009. The facility is a medium-secure rehabilitation program for juveniles adjudicated Delinquent or Youthful Offender who are in the custody of the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA). The facility is licensed for 119 residents by the Oklahoma Child Care Services (OCCS) division of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). On the first day of the OJSO visit, the census was sixty-nine male residents and twenty-six female residents.

The foci of the visit were to assess the facility's compliance with established responsibilities and facility policy and procedures and to assess the facility's progress in implementing the corrective action plan the facility had submitted to the OJSO on April 2, 2009. The action plan was the facility's response to the areas of concern and the violations listed in the OJSO report issued to the facility after the OJSO's visit at the facility in November 2008. During the June 2009 visit, the OJSO interviewed residents and staff about their knowledge of a "step down program" for residents.

### **Interviews Conducted**

- Entry interview and an exit conference with the facility superintendent
- Three staff members
- Thirteen residents

### **Documents Reviewed**

- Six resident files
- Three staff files

- Grievance log for January 1, 2009, through May 31, 2009
- OKDHS OCCS Residential Child Care Facility inspection report dated March 19, 2009
- Oklahoma State Department of Health Food Inspection report dated June 8, 2009
- Office of the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal report dated May 18, 2009.

## **Findings**

### Resident Interviews

On June 9 and June 11, 2009, the OJSO interviewed thirteen residents. The focus of the interview questions was to determine the residents' perceptions of safety, treatment, and overall quality of life at the facility. The OJSO noted:

- Ten interviewees rated the quality of the food served as bad or fair. The primary complaints were that the food lacked seasoning and the food was not the type the residents were used to eating.
- Eight interviewees reported that they had not participated in the development of their treatment plans. Each of the eight interviewees stated that his/her plan was developed by a facility juvenile justice specialist, who requested the resident to sign the treatment plan without the resident being allowed to make changes or suggestions to his/her treatment plan.
- Nine interviewees reported that they had been cursed at by staff or had witnessed other residents being cursed at by staff.
- Seven interviewees stated they either did not feel safe or only felt safe part of the time. Fear of the staff was the reason each of these interviewees gave for not feeling safe at the facility.
- All of the interviewees stated that they were unaware of any program where they could discharge early from a facility and transfer to a lower-secure facility.

### Staff Interviews

The OJSO interviewed three staff members. The OJSO noted:

- One interviewee reported that a resident was discharged to a lower-secure facility only when OJA State Office staff contacted COJC staff to advise of an available bed at a lower-secure facility and to request a list of eligible COJC residents. According to the staff member, the juvenile justice specialists then prepared a list of the residents eligible for transfer, and the list was provided to the OJA State Office. The staff member stated that the only criteria for a resident to be considered for placement in a lower-security facility was that the resident must be on one of the top three levels of the COJC program. According to this staff member, the list of eligible residents was not reviewed by COJC administration before the list was sent to the OJA State Office staff.
- Two interviewees reported that each security officer assigned to work the yard area carried a hand-held video camera to record restraints of juveniles. Both

interviewees reported that the cameras did not always work properly and sometimes shut themselves off.

- One interviewee reported that a male security officer had been ordered not to respond to any calls for assistance on the female resident units.

### Grievance Log Review

The OJSO reviewed the facility grievance log for January 1, 2009, through May 31, 2009. During this time period, 436 grievances had been filed. The OJSO noted:

- Fifty-one grievances had not been resolved within the required timeframe.
- Thirty-one grievances documented resolutions that did not adequately address the issues.
- Six grievances appealed to the OJA State Office had not been resolved within the required timeframe and remained unresolved.

The OJSO noted a marked improvement in the timeliness of the facility's response to resident grievances.

### Juvenile File Review

The OJSO reviewed six resident files. All six files were complete for the items reviewed and were in good order. No concerns were noted from the resident files reviewed.

### Staff File Review

The OJSO reviewed three security staff files. All three files were complete for the items reviewed and were in good order. No concerns were noted from the staff files reviewed.

## **Summary**

The facility superintendent reported that a new grievance procedure had been implemented at the facility. According to the facility superintendent, the advocate defender now collected and assigned the grievances to be worked. The advocate defender also now provided a list of all grievances filed to the facility superintendent's secretary, who followed up to ensure the grievances were resolved properly and were completed within the required timeframe.

## **Areas of Concern**

1. Seven of the thirteen residents interviewed reported they did not feel safe or only felt safe part of the time. The residents attributed their feelings to actions of the staff.
2. Thirty-one of the 436 grievances reviewed documented resolutions that did not adequately address the issues.
3. The OJA utilizes a program in which a resident is discharged from a training school and is transferred to a lower-secure facility to complete the amount of time ordered

by the court for the juvenile to remain institutionalized. After completing the lower-secure program, the juvenile is administratively paroled from state custody. If the juvenile does not complete the lower-secure program, the juvenile must return to the training school to complete the amount of time ordered by the court for the juvenile to remain institutionalized.

## Violations

1. Eight of the thirteen residents interviewed reported that facility juvenile justice staff did not involve residents in the development of the residents' treatment plans. OKDHS Licensing Requirements for Residential Child Care Facilities, OAC 340:110-3-154, Social services, (b), Service planning, (1), Comprehensive service plan, (A), states, "The facility involves the resident and parents or custodian in the development of the service plan. If the parents or custodian do not participate in the development of the service plan, the reason for non-participation is documented in the service plan."
2. Nine of the thirteen residents interviewed reported they had been cursed at or had witnessed other residents being cursed at by facility staff. OKDHS Licensing Requirements for Residential Child Care Facilities, OAC 340:110-3-154.2, Behavior management, (b), Prohibitions, (2), states, ". . . facility policy prohibits harsh, humiliating, cruel, abusive, or degrading language."
3. Fifty-one of the 436 grievances reviewed had not been resolved within the required timeframe. OJA policy, OAC 377:3-1-30, Grievance procedures for institutions, group homes, and contract facilities, (b), Institutions, in part, states, "If the grievance is not resolved in three working days, the juvenile may appeal to the supervisor or facility administrator who will have an additional five working days in which to attempt resolution. The grievance shall be resolved within seven working days. The advocate defender shall inform the juvenile of the decision regarding his or her grievance and the right to appeal."
4. Six grievances appealed to the OJA State Office had not been resolved within the required timeframe and remained unresolved. OJA policy, OAC 377:3-1-28, General Grievance Procedure, (c), Grievances received by Advocate General, and (d), Appeal to the Division Director/final decision, states, "Upon receipt of an appeal of an informal grievance or formal grievance the Advocate General's Office shall . . . review the grievance and the accompanying documentation to determine what additional information is necessary for disposition of the grievance within five (5) working days. . . . The Advocate General shall prepare a cover worksheet or memorandum for the appeal or formal grievance and forward a copy to the Division Director/designee for response. The response shall be completed within ten (10) working days (extension may be granted by the Advocate General where a formal, legal opinion or policy decision is necessary). Upon receipt of the proposed resolution, the Advocate General shall forward a copy to the juvenile and/or to other appropriate person named in the grievance and to the appropriate advocate defender or grievance coordinator. . . ."

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