

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

**Juvenile Detention Center
Second Quarter 2005**

Name of Facility: Cleveland County Regional Juvenile Detention Center

Date of Visit: June 16, 2005

Oversight Person: Jon Trzcinski, LCSW

Reviewer: Jon Trzcinski

Subject: Unannounced Visit

Date: August 22, 2005

Introduction

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) conducted an unannounced visit on June 16, 2005, to the Cleveland County Juvenile Regional Detention Center. The purpose of the visit was to assess compliance with established responsibilities. The facility's resident capacity is twenty-six. On the day of the OJSO visit, the census was twenty-four. All of the residents were boys.

Documents Reviewed

- Certification standards issued by the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) for secure detention facilities (OJA policies OAC 377:3-13-35 through OAC 377:3-13-62)
- Sample copy of the OJA master contract for secure detention services
- Facility policy and procedures manual
- Case records on five juveniles currently or formerly held at the facility
- Five personnel files

Interviews Conducted

- Three juveniles
- Three staff persons

Areas Toured

- Entire facility

General Information

The OJSO conducted an entry interview with the Assistant Executive Director. The purpose of the visit was reviewed. The Assistant Executive Director offered his assistance in providing access to the facility, residents, staff, and files.

Observational Tour

The Assistant Executive Director hosted the tour of the facility and was available throughout the day to answer questions, provide information, and arrange needed access to the facility, staff, and residents. The facility appeared clean and in good repair, with the following exception: In resident Room 223, the tile was stripped from the floor. The Assistant Executive Director stated that this was the result of a former resident flooding the toilet and clogging a drain in the room. The exposed concrete floor was marked by the remains of the cement that had been used to glue the tile to the floor. It did not appear that the concrete floor was sealed. The room's floor needed repair, or at the least, to be treated with a sealant.

Most of the residents were in the dayrooms watching television at the time of the OJSO's tour. The facility does not offer summer school. The Assistant Executive Director stated that staff tried to provide structured recreation and other activities for the residents, but that boredom remained a problem during the summer months. This was later confirmed during the resident interviews.

The facility was divided into four pods. On the north unit, there were two pods, each with seven beds. One of these pods was considered the girls' pod for female residents. On the south unit, there were two pods, each with six beds. The north and south units were separated by a hallway and there was virtually no interaction between the two units. All of the sleeping rooms contained single bunks. Reportedly, there was no double bunking and the facility did not exceed its capacity.

Classrooms were available on both the north and south units. Teachers and supporting materials were supplied by the Norman public schools. When school was in session, the residents attended school from 8:15 a.m. until 11:45 a.m. They returned from lunch at 12:30 p.m. and attended school until 2:00 p.m.

Some juveniles who have been committed to OJA custody spend long periods of time at the detention center while waiting for a post-custody placement within the OJA service system. At the time of the OJSO visit, at least eight juveniles were waiting for placement. Most of the youths indicated they believed they were waiting for placement in community placements of one kind or another. This practice is significant because it delays the youths from beginning the treatment process and takes away secure detention beds that might otherwise be utilized by the communities the detention center serves.

The facility has two control rooms, one each for the north and south units. The north control room is manned at all times. The south control room is generally manned, but facility control can be released to the north control room should staff be required to

leave the south control room. The facility had a video surveillance system that allowed control room staff to view most of the facility, the outdoor recreation area, and the surrounding grounds. Sleeping rooms and bathrooms were not equipped with cameras but did have an intercom system that allowed staff and residents to converse when needed.

Two rooms in each pod on the north unit had a toilet and a sink in the room. The other rooms were not plumbed. No rooms on the south unit were plumbed. The rooms that were plumbed were used if a juvenile required secure confinement. At night, all residents are locked in their rooms. If a juvenile needed the restroom, but is confined in a room without a toilet, the resident may use the intercom to call staff in the control room to request release. Since the sleeping room doors were equipped with electric locks, staff in the control room could let the resident out of the room. When residents were asked if there was ever a problem with being released to go to the bathroom, all residents interviewed said, "No." Facility staff are to be commended for their attention to this important detail.

The facility maintains staff-to-resident ratio of one to seven during the waking hours and a one-to-sixteen ratio during sleeping hours. During the OJSO visit, it was observed that staff spent most of their time in the control room while the youths spent their time in the dayrooms.

The review of the five case records revealed that the records were complete and current. There is a tendency for the shift notes entered by the line staff to be repetitive. The same words and phrases were repeated in most case records, except in the event of an unusual occurrence.

The facility's policy and procedures manual had been revised since the last OJSO visit. The facility's Executive Director approved the revisions effective on November 6, 2004. The revisions corrected the discrepancies noted during the OJSO visit in March 2004.

Staff Interviews

The OJSO conducted informal interviews with three staff persons. Staff were aware of the rules and expectations of the facility. They were able to describe their duties and seemed to support the facility and its mission. The staff interviewed said it would be helpful if school could be conducted through the summer months, saying that the extra structure would help relieve the boredom of day-to-day life during the summer. They acknowledged the need for substitute activities during the summer months. Staff said that life at the facility had been quiet for the last several months. They reported little in the way of altercations between the residents or negative behaviors beyond minor disagreements between the youths.

Resident Interviews

The three residents interviewed had been at the facility between one and two months. Overall, the residents spoke positively about the detention center and its staff. None of the residents interviewed indicated they felt unsafe at the facility. One youth

commented, "Everyone seems to get along okay." None reported having seen any fights between residents, although one resident said he had seen a fight about to start but staff intervened to break up the confrontation. One youth said he had seen one restraint since he had been at the facility. He said he thought staff handled the situation appropriately.

The residents interviewed said they were served enough food at meal times. Comments about the quality of the food ranged from "good" to "okay, usually pretty good." One youth complained about the quality of the hot dogs that were served to the residents. The residents said they also received snacks every day.

All of the residents interviewed said it was boring at the facility. The residents interviewed, plus several others who were encountered during the OJJO's tour, expressed a desire to have more books or magazines to read. One youth commented, "I know some kids tear up books, but there's not much else to do here except read. We sure need more books." All of the residents said they were allowed to go outside almost every day for recreation, if the weather permitted.

The residents interviewed were able to explain the level system that was used at the facility. They said that the levels were easy to obtain and maintain if "you follow directions and do what you're supposed to do." The residents interviewed were aware of the facility's grievance system, but all said they had not filed a formal grievance. One youth said that it was easier to tell staff about the problems a resident might be having.

One resident, whose family lived outside the Cleveland County area, complained about having to use the collect telephone to make calls to his mother. He said his mother could not afford to accept the calls because they were expensive. He also said it was difficult for his mother to visit him at the facility because of the distance involved.

Conclusion

The OJJO held an exit conference with the Assistant Executive Director. The OJJO shared the results of the site visit. The OJJO congratulated the Assistant Executive Director on correcting the previously noted deficiencies regarding staff training hours and completing the revision of the policy and procedures manual. The Assistant Executive Director was encouraged to continue to try and find ways to provide structured activities for the residents during the summer months, as well as, to increase the number of books in the facility's library. The problem with the floor in resident Room 223 was brought to the Assistant Executive Director's attention.

Concern

To the Cleveland County Regional Juvenile Detention Center:

1. The facility should continue to work to ensure that structured activities are available to its residents during the summer months to relieve boredom. This should include efforts to increase the number of appropriate books available for the residents' use.

Recommendations

To the Cleveland County Regional Juvenile Detention Center:

1. Repair the floor in resident Room 223.

To the Office of Juvenile Affairs:

1. Take action to reduce or eliminate the practice of youths placed in the custody of the OJA waiting extended periods of time in a secure detention facility before beginning their treatment program.

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