

MEMORANDUM

To: Karen Kizzia, Superintendent
Oklahoma School for the Blind

From: Cliff A. Aldridge, Oversight Specialist
Office of Juvenile System Oversight

Reviewer: Cliff Aldridge

Subject: 2005 Unannounced Visit

Date: August 17, 2005

General Information

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) conducted a routine, unannounced visit of the Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB) on April 14, 2005. The OSB is a special school for the blind operated by the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). There were ninety students at the OSD at the time of the oversight visit. Forty-seven of the students resided at the school during the week.

Persons Interviewed

- An initial entry interview with the Human Resources Management Specialist
- A subsequent entry interview with the Superintendent
- Six residential students
- A direct care staff member
- An independent living instructor
- An informal interview with two nurses in the Student Health Center
- An informal interview with the Dean of Students
- An exit conference with the Superintendent

Documentation Reviewed

- Immunization records and tuberculin testing of six students
- Personnel file and training record of a direct care staff member
- Personnel file and training record of an independent living instructor
- OSB Student Handbook
- A sample individualized development plan (for employee training)

Areas Toured

- Girls' dormitories (A-2 and A-3)
- Boys' dormitories (B-3 and Lowrey Hall)
- Dining room and kitchen
- Corridors and other common areas used by the students

Overview

The OSB is not subject to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Child Care's residential child care licensing standards that are applicable to other children's residential programs in the state; therefore, the OJSO generally reviewed the OSB for minimum standards of established responsibilities, in addition to the school handbooks and the DRS policy.

Interviews

The three male and three female students interviewed were in the sixth through the twelfth grades. Overall, the students reported feeling safe and gave favorable responses to the interview questions about living in the dormitories, the school, and the staff. One student reported being picked on by his friends and provided the names of four other students who picked on him. He consented to the issue being discussed with the Superintendent. The Superintendent was aware of an ongoing squabble among those students. She described the reporting student as both victim and instigator in the situation. As a result, the staff had taken extra measure to supervise the students. No other issues of concern were identified from the student interviews.

The direct care staff member and the independent living instructor interviewed gave appropriate responses to the interview questions regarding the safety and supervision of the residents. Both staff members appeared to be conscientious about their duties. The nurses reported that immunizations were current for the students. The Dean of Students described the individualized development plan for new employee training. The plan included orientation and paraprofessional training.

Documentation Reviews

The immunization records and the tuberculin testing records of each of the students interviewed were current. Two personnel files were reviewed for ongoing documentation and training. Both files were in compliance with standards applicable to licensed facilities. The individualized development plan requires twenty-seven hours of core training and a twenty-five hour track of direct care staff training for new staff. No issues of concern were identified from the documentation reviews.

Facility Inspection

The OJSO toured the four dormitories where the students resided. The dormitories had been redecorated in pleasing themes and colors. The kitchen and the dining room were toured while students were eating lunch. The facility appeared clean and well-maintained. No issues were identified from the tour.

Conclusion

At the time of the OJSO visit, the OSB was in compliance with the standards applicable to children's residential facilities that are required to be licensed. The staff members observed appeared to know and speak to each child. The children were able to recognize the staff, often only by the sound of their voices. The staff appeared to be advocates for the children they served

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