

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

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**Name of Facility:** Oklahoma School for the Deaf

**Date of Visit:** October 18, 2005

**OJSO Reviewer:** Cliff A. Aldridge, Oversight Specialist

**Purposes of Visit:** Second Unannounced Oversight Visit of 2005 and Complaint Investigations

**Date:** April 25, 2006

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**General Information**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) visited the Oklahoma School for the Deaf (OSD) on October 18, 2005, to conduct a routine, unannounced oversight and investigate concerns of inappropriate behaviors involving OSD residents. The OSD is a special school operated by the Department of Rehabilitation Services. There were 134 students at the OSD at the time of the oversight visit. Eighty-one of the students resided at the school during the week. The OSD is not subject to the Department of Human Services' (DHS) residential licensing standards that are applicable to other children's residential programs in the state; therefore, the OJSO generally reviewed the OSD for established responsibilities and facility policies and procedures.

Persons Interviewed

- Entry interview with the Director of Admissions
- Sample of six residents through an independent certified interpreter
- One direct care staff member
- Informal interview with the Student Health Center supervisor
- Exit conference with the Superintendent

Documentation Reviewed

- Immunization records of the six residents interviewed
- Personnel files and training records of three direct care staff members
- Referral logs prepared by the DHS Office of Client Advocacy (OCA)
- OSD reviews of OCA investigation reports and OSD caretaker conduct reviews

## Areas Toured

- Girls' dormitory
- Boys' dormitory

## **Overview**

### Interviews

Overall, the six students interviewed were positive in their responses about the school and the staff. One of the newly hired direct care staff members was interviewed. No issues were identified from the interviews with the students or the staff member.

### Documentation Reviews

The immunization records, including tuberculin testing, were current for the six students whose files were reviewed. The personnel files of three staff members hired during 2005 were complete for established responsibilities and the facility's policy and procedure requirements for new employees. Documentation indicated they had received appropriate training. No issues of concern were identified from the documentation reviews.

### Complaints

Prior to the visit, the OJSO identified a number of incidents the facility had referred to the OCA during the spring and fall semesters of 2005 that involved inappropriate behaviors of residents and staff. The OJSO reviewed several of the incidents involving alleged staff misconduct in the supervision of residents and the appropriateness of the school's responses to the incidents.

In one of the incidents, a report alleged that a former staff member had inappropriate sexual conversation with a resident during her employment and, subsequently, had made contact with the student on-campus several months after her separation. The school responded by reporting the incident to law enforcement and by erecting a fence to discourage unwelcome visitors to the campus. The OJSO complaint regarding this incident was closed with no finding of violations.

The facility reported two incidents to the OCA. In one incident, students allegedly engaged in inappropriate physical contact or sexual contact while supervised at a local movie theater. In an investigation conducted by the school, the students admitted holding hands and touching each other. The OJSO reviewed the school's response to the investigation and determined that appropriate action had been taken. In the other incident, students allegedly engaged in inappropriate behavior when moving between an extracurricular activity and the dormitories. Neglect was not confirmed; however, the school cancelled the extracurricular class and required students to sign in and out when

moving about the campus. The school responded appropriately. The OJSO complaint resulting from these allegations was closed with no finding of violations.

An OJSO complaint pertaining to another series of referrals alleging caretaker misconduct against a teacher was reviewed. In each of three referrals, the school had responded with corrective actions. A fourth incident was under investigation at the time of the oversight visit. The OJSO complaint will remain open pending the completion of the investigation and possible corrective action.

The investigations of other alleged incidents were pending at the time of the preparation of this report and will be reviewed upon completion. Overall, the OSD's responses to the incidents indicated the facility had been attentive to the need to supervise the students, had been responsible to report allegations of inappropriate behaviors by students, and had been responsive to recommendations to improve the safety of the students.

### Facility Tour

The common areas and the student rooms toured were clean, well-maintained, and aesthetically decorated according to age and gender of the students. No concerns were identified from the tour.

### **Conclusion**

On the day of the OJSO visit, the OSD demonstrated compliance with established responsibilities applicable to other children's residential facilities. No significant safety issues or policy violations were identified during the visit.

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