

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

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**Name and Location of Facility:** Southwest Oklahoma Juvenile Center  
Manitou, Oklahoma

**Date of Visit:** November 3, 2008

**Oversight Reviewers:** Ellen Harwell and Sara Vincent-Spain, Oversight Specialists  
Mark James, Post Adjudication Review Board Coordinator

**Focus of Visit:** Second Biannual Visit, 2008

**Date:** April 15, 2009

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### **Introduction**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) began an announced visit on November 3, 2008, at the Southwest Oklahoma Juvenile Center (SWOJC), located in Manitou. The purpose of the visit was to assess compliance with established responsibilities. SWOJC was licensed as a Secure Care Facility by the division of Oklahoma Child Care Services (OCCS) of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). The facility was licensed for a total of seventy-nine male residents, adjudicated Delinquent or Youthful Offenders in the custody of the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA). SWOJC was accredited by the American Correctional Association. This was a focused oversight on quality of life issues, compliance with the grievance process, and juvenile records.

### **Interviews Conducted**

- Four employees
- Fifteen residents
- Entry and exit conference with administrative staff

### **Documents Reviewed**

- Grievance logs for May through October 2008
- Five resident files

### **Findings**

#### Resident Interviews

The OJSO interviewed fifteen residents. All of the residents were fourteen years of age or older. The interview questions pertained to the residents' perceptions regarding safety, program services, resident rights, discipline practices, and other residential

program issues. Only about half of the residents could identify something they liked about staff members. Past oversight visits have typically resulted in very complimentary remarks from residents regarding medical services and access. During the current oversight visit, all residents' comments regarding medical services were either neutral or unfavorable. The OJSO also noted the following:

- Fourteen of the fifteen residents interviewed reported they received a copy of resident rights upon admission.
- Thirteen of the fifteen residents interviewed reported receiving written notification of policies regarding visitation, mail, phone calls, gifts, and discipline.
- Nine residents reported the information received upon admission was explained to them.
- Eight residents reported they received enough food. The same number reported additional helpings of food were allowed if residents desired them.
- Nine residents reported having been physically restrained within the last six months.
- Thirteen residents reported the use of group sanctions within the last six months.
- All residents interviewed reported having an individualized treatment plan.
- Six residents reported they participated in the development of the treatment plan.
- Four residents reported receiving individual counseling.
- Thirteen residents reported receiving substance abuse treatment.
- Seven residents reported receiving family counseling.
- Ten residents reported receiving Independent Living Skills counseling.
- Residents were asked how many times a week group sessions or counseling were held. Thirteen residents reported group was held one to three times per week. One resident reported group was held four to six times per week, and one resident reported group was held seven or more times per week.
- Twelve residents reported everyone was encouraged to talk in group.
- Fourteen residents reported having filed a grievance.
- None of the residents reported the grievance process worked. Eight residents reported the process sometimes worked.
- Eleven residents reported staff members have used curse words when addressing them. The same number reported witnessing staff members curse at other residents.

### Supervision

Residents were asked to respond, using a Likert scale, how often direct care staff members check on them while in the dorm area. The options given were Frequently (every 15 to 20 minutes), Occasionally (every 1 to 2 hours), Rarely (every 3 to 4 hours), Very Rarely (every 5 to 6 hours), and Never. Eleven of fifteen residents reported staff members check on them frequently. One resident reported staff members occasionally check, and one resident reported staff members very rarely check. Two residents reported staff members never check on residents while they are in the dorm area.

Residents were also asked how often security officers check on the living units. A Likert scale again was used. The options given were Frequently (every 1 to 2 hours), Occasionally (every 3 to 4 hours), Rarely (every 5 to 6 hours), and Never. Nine residents reported that security officers check on them frequently. Three residents reported that security officers occasionally check the living units. One resident stated rarely, and one reported never.

### Safety

Residents were asked about physical and sexual assaults and the presence of dangerous contraband at the facility. The OJSO noted:

- Eleven residents reported seeing residents in possession of dangerous contraband. Items juveniles reported to the OJSO were tattoo devices, drugs, tobacco, knives, shanks, pills, razors, and yeast. One resident reported believing there were one or two shanks on every living unit.
- Six residents reported being physically assaulted by other residents. The same number reported being assaulted by staff members. Of the residents that reported physical assaults, the OJSO verified that either a report had been made to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) Office of Client Advocacy (OCA), or the OJSO made a report to the OCA.
- All residents denied sexual assaults by peers.
- One resident reported sexual misconduct by a staff member. The juvenile informed the OJSO that the incident had not been reported. The OSJO made a referral to the OCA.

Residents were asked how often they felt safe at the facility. Using a Likert scale (Very Frequently, Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Very Rarely, and Never), the responses were as follows: four of the fifteen residents interviewed said they felt safe very frequently; five of the fifteen said they felt safe frequently; four of the fifteen said they felt safe occasionally; and two of the fifteen said they felt safe rarely. One resident reported he very rarely felt safe. Residents were asked what contributed to their feeling of safety. The options were staff, facility police officers, peers, or their ability to keep themselves safe (self). Residents could choose more than one. Four residents reported staff members contributed to the sense of safety. Eight residents reported relying on their own abilities to ensure their safety contributed to their sense of safety. One resident reported the facility security officers made him feel safe. One resident stated he could not answer because he never felt safe, and one resident identified the fence around the facility as contributing to his sense of safety.

Residents were also asked what contributed to feeling unsafe. Their options were staff members, facility security officers, and peers. Residents could choose more than one. Five residents said staff caused them to feel unsafe; three residents said facility security officers caused them to feel unsafe; and five residents said peers caused them to feel unsafe. Three residents did not answer this question, or they stated that nothing at the facility made them feel unsafe.

### Staff Interviews

Four staff members were interviewed. The interview questions pertained to the staff members' perceptions regarding resident rights, discipline policies, and other residential program issues. Three of the four staff members interviewed by the OJSO said that administrative staff members were supportive of direct care staff members. The fourth staff member reported that relations between the two were improving. Staff members reported their required trainings were current. Staff members did not express safety or security issues.

### Resident File Review

Five resident files were reviewed. The OJSO noted the following:

#### File 1

No Juvenile Justice Specialist progress notes were located for May 2008.

#### File 2

No drug and alcohol treatment progress notes were located for September 2008.

#### File 3

No violations.

#### File 4

The most current Juvenile Justice Specialist progress notes located in the file were March 2008.

#### File 5

Anger Replacement Therapy (ART) progress notes from April 2008 documented that the resident had disclosed sexual abuse on April 25, 2008. Upon further review, the OJSO noted that the author of the note had placed the same documentation in the files of several juveniles with no clarification of which juvenile had disclosed the information. The note was not individualized to a particular resident. The facility identified the resident to whom the note applied and determined that the allegation had previously been reported. The OJSO noted that ART progress notes were identical for at least three residents in March, April, and May 2008.

### Grievances

The OJSO reviewed grievance logs for February, March, and April 2008. Appealed grievances are assigned to the superintendent as the supervisor. The OJSO noted:

#### August 2008

- A total of 219 grievances had been filed.
- Sixty-three of the 219 grievances did not meet the three-day time frame for resolution.
- At the time of the oversight, three grievances filed in August remained outstanding.
- Thirty-three grievances had been appealed to the superintendent.

- Twenty-one of the thirty-three appealed grievances failed to meet the five-day time frame for resolution.

#### September 2008

- A total of 178 grievances had been filed.
- Fifty-seven of the 178 grievances did not meet the three-day time frame for resolution.
- At the time of the oversight, two grievances filed in September and assigned to the Attorney General at the state office remained outstanding.
- Twenty-six grievances had been appealed to the superintendent.
- Eleven of the twenty-six appealed grievances failed to meet the five-day time frame for resolution.

#### October 2008

- A total of 177 grievances had been filed.
- Fifty-five of the 177 grievances did not meet the three-day time frame for resolution.
- Thirty-two grievances had been appealed to the superintendent.
- Fourteen of the thirty-two appealed grievances failed to meet the five-day time frame for resolution.

#### **Areas of Concern**

1. Eight of the fifteen residents interviewed reported they were served enough food. The same number reported additional helpings of food were available. The OJSO clarified with residents that additional servings may be fruit or vegetables and not necessarily main course items. During the May 2008 visit, twenty of twenty-five residents interviewed reported they received enough to eat, and twenty-three of twenty-five residents interviewed reported that additional servings of food were available.
2. None of the residents interviewed reported believing the grievance process worked. During the May 2008 visit, five of twenty-five residents interviewed reported the grievance process worked.
3. Eleven of fifteen residents interviewed reported being cursed at by staff members. The same number reported witnessing other residents being cursed at by staff members. In May 2008, twelve of twenty-five residents interviewed reported staff members cursed at them, and thirteen of twenty-five residents interviewed reported witnessing other residents being cursed at.
4. Grievances that exceeded the three-day time frame for resolution were noted in each of the three months reviewed. OJA policy, OAC 377:3-1-28, General Grievance Procedure, (a), Informal grievances, (5), states, "If the grievance is not resolved within (3) three working days, the juvenile may appeal to the supervisor."

## Violations

1. Juvenile Justice Specialist and drug and alcohol treatment progress notes were not all current. Anger Replacement Therapy (ART) progress notes were not individualized to the resident in whose file they were placed. One note regarding the disclosure of sexual abuse was placed in the files of residents to whom the note did not apply. SWOJC Procedure, SW10500.01, Records Management, (II), (G), states that each juvenile record contains, "Progress notes from treatment providers documenting group and individual sessions."
2. In each of the months reviewed, grievances that exceeded the five-day time frame for resolution were noted by the OJSO. Appealed grievances are assigned to the superintendent as the supervisor. OJA policy, OAC 377:3-1-28, General Grievance Procedure, (a), Informal grievances, (6), states, "The supervisor shall have (5) five days from receipt of the grievance to resolve the grievance."

