

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

Name and Location of Facility: Thunderbird Youth Academy
Alpha Company
Pryor, Oklahoma

Dates of Visit: May 27, May 28, and October 2, 2008

Oversight Reviewer: Cliff Aldridge, Oversight Specialist

Focus of Visit: First Unannounced Visit, 2008

Date: December 2, 2008

Introduction

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) initiated an unannounced visit on May 27, 2008, to Alpha Company of the Thunderbird Youth Academy (TYA) located in Pryor, Oklahoma. The residents and the direct care staff were unavailable on May 27; therefore, the OJSO returned on the following day to conduct the visit. Alpha Company is operated by the Oklahoma Military Department (OMD). The purpose of the visit was mandatory oversight to assess compliance with established responsibilities. To complete the visit, the OJSO went to the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City on October 2, 2008, to review personnel materials that were not available at Alpha Company.

Alpha Company accepts private placement of youths at least 16 years of age who have dropped out of high school. On the day of the initial visit, the census was 95. The program is exempt from residential child care facility licensing by the Oklahoma Child Care Services of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

Interviews Conducted

- Eight cadets
- Three cadre members
- Initial entry conference on May 27, 2008, with the Division Executive Assistant of the Youth Programs Division
- Subsequent entry conference on May 28, 2008, with the Director of Alpha Company

Documents Reviewed

- Case records of four cadets
- Personnel files of three cadre members
- Medical records of eight cadets
- Tuberculin test records of four platoon sergeants
- Alpha Company Cycle 30 (cadet roster) by platoon
- Oklahoma National Guard Youth Challenge State Plan, (Updated July 2005), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- Shift schedule (for cadre names)

Area Toured

- Dining facility during the noon meal

Findings

Interviews

Eight cadets representing all three of the platoons were interviewed relative to their participation in program services, quality of life, and interactions with the staff. Overall, the responses were favorable about the program, the staff, and their living conditions. Three of the eight cadets interviewed denied being cursed at by the staff or of overhearing curse words. Of the remaining five interviewees, two said they had been cursed to their faces, and the other three reported having heard the cadre use curse words. No other issues of concern were identified during the resident interviews.

Three platoon sergeants were interviewed relative to their familiarity with facility practices and program services for the residents. All three platoon sergeants demonstrated familiarity with Alpha Company policies and practices and reported that the residents benefited from the structure or role modeling they received from the staff. One platoon sergeant thought there were delays in reviewing sick call slips, but no other concerns were identified from the staff interviews.

File Reviews

The tuberculin testing records were current for the three staff members interviewed. The medical records for the eight cadets interviewed were complete for immunizations, tuberculin testing, and pre-participation physical evaluations. No issues were identified from the review of documentation maintained by the health services staff.

Three personnel files maintained at the facility and the additional materials kept at the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City were reviewed for compliance with the SOP. Two personnel files did not document required pre-employment references. The OJSO noted

deficiencies in the personnel files reviewed regarding documentation of training required by the SOP. All three personnel files reviewed did not document:

- orientation training;
- first aid training for the staff members;
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for the staff members; and
- twenty-four clock hours of annual training.

Observational Tour

The dining room and the serving line were toured during the noon meal. In addition to the serving line, the residents had access to milk, soft-serve ice cream, and the salad bar. No issues of concern were identified in the dining room.

Area of Concern

1. The OJSO had concerns about the use of profanity directed to or within the hearing of the cadets. The use of profanity to or around the cadets is prohibited by the facility's SOP. It appears likely that some of the cadre had used profanity in the hearing of some cadets. The issue regarding the use of profanity was previously discussed with the director during an earlier conference in February 2008, and she had agreed to address it with the cadre. The use of abusive language is an ongoing concern with the Alpha Company.

Violations

1. The three personnel files reviewed did not document orientation training, as required by the SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, p. 2-8.
2. The three files reviewed did not document first aid training, as required by the SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, p. 2-8.
3. The three files reviewed did not document CPR for the staff members, as required by the SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, p. 2-8.
4. The three files reviewed did not document 24-clock hours of annual training, as required by the SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, p. 2-9.
5. Two of the three personnel files reviewed did not document required pre-employment references, as required by the SOP in Annex B to Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, p. 2-B-3.

Summary

Traditionally, the Alpha Company has provided staff training during cycle breaks (June/July and December/January) each year. It is likely that the staff members have received training; however, the unavailability of training records is an ongoing issue with the Alpha Company. Without proper documentation, it is impossible to establish whether the facility meets its own training requirements. The use of profanity directed at or within

the hearing of the cadets is also an ongoing issue as noted above. The OJSO appreciated the helpfulness of the administration, support staff, health services staff, and direct care staff with the provision of materials for review, conducting the tour, and arranging the interviews.

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