

**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: November 29, 2007, February 5, 2008, and
February 21, 2008

Oversight Reviewer: Cliff A. Aldridge, Oversight Specialist

Focus of Visit: Second Unannounced Visit, 2007

Date: May 5, 2008

Introduction

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) conducted an unannounced visit on November 29, 2007, to Alpha Company of the Thunderbird Youth Academy (TYA). Alpha Company is operated by the Oklahoma Military Department (OMD). The purpose of the visit was routine oversight and to follow-up on a complaint of asbestos contamination in some of the buildings on the Whitaker Education and Training Center (WETC) where the Alpha Company is located.

The OJSO went to the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City on February 5, 2008, to review personnel materials that were not available at the Alpha Company. Subsequently, the OJSO returned to Alpha Company on February 21, 2008, to locate personnel file materials not found at the OMD headquarters and to conduct an exit conference with the director.

The program accepts private placement of youths at least sixteen years of age who have dropped out of high school. On the day of the initial visit, the census was eighty-two. Alpha Company is exempt from residential child care facility licensing.

Interviews Conducted

- Eight cadets
- Four members of the cadre
- Brief entry and exit conferences with the lead instructor
- Exit conference with the Alpha Company Director

Documents Reviewed

- Case records of six cadets
- Personnel files of four members of the cadre
- Medical records of six residents
- Tuberculin test records of four platoon sergeants
- Cadet roster, by platoon
- Oklahoma National Guard Youth Challenge State Plan (updated July 2005), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- Cadet Handbook (updated July 10, 2007)
- Timesheet checklist (for cadre names)
- Oklahoma Department of Labor (DOL), Asbestos Division, Consultation/Investigation Form of May 31, 2007
- Various email communications with the DOL, Asbestos Division
- Approved training schedule, dated December 1, 2007, for the cycle break period of December 17, 2007, through January 11, 2008

Areas Toured

- Three residential dormitories in use by the Alpha Company
- Dining facility during the noon meal

Findings

Eight residents, representing all four platoons, were interviewed relative to their participation in program services, relationships with the staff, and quality of life. Overall, the responses were favorable about the program, the staff, and their living conditions. The majority of residents interviewed reported having heard the cadre use curse words, although only two of them said that staff cursed at a resident or residents to their faces. The use of degrading treatment of residents is prohibited by the SOP.

Two of the morning shift and two of the afternoon shift platoon sergeants were interviewed. All four staff members interviewed appeared to be familiar with Alpha Company policies and practices. All four thought the program was beneficial to the cadets. All thought the morale was high among staff and residents. One of the staff members interviewed had graduated from the Alpha Company in 1995. No concerns were identified from the staff interviews.

The tuberculin testing records for the four staff members interviewed were current. 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.

Four personnel files maintained at the facility and additional materials kept at the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City were reviewed for compliance with the SOP. Employment

documentation was complete for each of the four files, except well-to-work physicals required by the SOP were not available at either location. In the past, personnel materials were maintained at the WETC, but with policy, organizational, personnel, and administration changes in recent years, no one seemed to know where well-to-work physical examinations were maintained.

Two employees whose files were reviewed were newer employees. The training requirement for one of them had been met or was still within the time frame for compliance as of the day of the visit. The file of one of the newer employees did not have documentation of first aid training within the first thirty days of hire, as required by the SOP.

First aid training was not documented for one of the two tenured staff members whose training files were reviewed. Although some training was documented for both of the established staff members, neither file documented twenty-four clock hours of annual training, as required by the SOP. It is a long-standing tradition that the Alpha Company provides training to the staff during their four-week cycle breaks, which occur during June/July and December/January. When training records could not be located, the OJSO requested and received the projected training schedule, dated December 1, 2007, for the cycle break period of December 17, 2007, through January 11, 2008. The schedule did not document, however, actual participation in the training activities.

All three of the residential units toured were clean but sparsely furnished, in accordance with the military-style format of the program. The dining room and the serving line were toured during a noon meal. No issues of concern were identified during the tour of the residential quarters or the dining room.

Area of Concern

The OJSO had concerns about the use of profanity directed at cadets in one of the platoons and general use of profanity not directed at cadets but used within their earshot in the others. Use of profanity to or around the cadets is prohibited. It is likely that some of the cadre had used profanity in the hearing of some cadets; however, the OJSO was concerned that substantiating a violation might identify the reporting cadets. The issue of the use of profanity was discussed with the director during the February exit conference, and she agreed to address it with the staff.

Violations

1. Documentation of well-to-work physicals was not available at the Alpha Company in Pryor or at the OMD headquarters in Oklahoma City for any of the four files reviewed. Well-to-work physicals are required by the July 2005 SOP in Annex B to Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, 2 - B - 3.

2. The file of one recently employed staff member did not have documentation of first aid training within the first thirty days of employment, as required by the SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, pg. 2-8.
3. Twenty-four hours of annual training was not documented for the two tenured employees, as required by the July 2005 SOP in Chapter 2, designated as TYA - A CO - SOP, pg. 2-9.

Summary

The facility could benefit from a written schema that clearly identifies which personnel materials and which training records are to be maintained on the post and which are to be maintained in the headquarters personnel office. The OJSO appreciated the helpfulness of the administration, the support staff, the health services staff, and the direct care staff with the provision of materials for review, conducting the tour, and arranging the interviews.

The OJSO has learned through the DOL Asbestos Division of asbestos abatement activities carried out in several of the buildings on the WETC campus. A follow-up of ongoing asbestos requirements will be conducted through the OMD headquarters.

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