

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

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

**Date of Visit:** May 9, 2008

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

**Focus of Visit:** First 2008 Unannounced Visit

**Date:** September 10, 2008

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### **Introduction**

The Office of Juvenile System Oversight (OJSO) conducted an unannounced visit at the Thunderbird Youth Academy (TYA), Bravo Company, also known as the Thunderbird Regimented Training Program, on May 9, 2008. The purpose of the visit was routine oversight. The Bravo Company operates through a contract between the Oklahoma Military Department (OMD) and the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) to provide residential placements and treatment for OJA-custody male juveniles.

The Bravo Company is located at the OMD Whitaker Education and Training Center (WETC) in Pryor, Oklahoma. The facility is licensed for 96 residents by the division of Oklahoma Child Care Services (OCCS) of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS). On the day of the visit, the census was 28 residents. The OJSO reviewer was told that the facility was preparing for a three-year reaccreditation audit by the American Correctional Association (ACA) later in the month.

### Interviews Conducted

- Entry conference with the Bravo Company director and the OJA liaison
- Six residents
- Two direct care staff members
- Exit conference with the director and selected staff members

### Documents Reviewed

- Case records on two residents
- Immunization, tuberculin testing, and other required health records of six residents
- List of staff members

- Training records and personnel files of two direct care staff members
- General Purpose Roster (of the cadets)
- OKDHS OCCS report dated March 4, 2008
- OKDHS OCCS Residential Child Care Facility License, K8500129
- Office of the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal reports dated January 16, 2008, and March 6, 2008
- WETC maintenance supervisor corrective action memorandum dated January 17, 2008
- Two completed work orders for repairs identified by the fire marshal's office

### Areas Toured

- Residential quarters
- Dining hall during the noon meal

### **Findings**

#### Interviews

Six residents were interviewed regarding their participation in program services, treatment by the staff, and residential issues. All of the residents interviewed reported participating in an educational program, receiving counseling services, and participating in life skills training. Most of the residents interviewed indicated that recreational opportunities had been limited because of preparations for the (ACA) audit. All six reported feeling safe. Four of the six residents interviewed said they had filed grievances and knew the outcome of the grievances. Two residents interviewed said that some issues were not "grievable", that is, not subject to the grievance process. Apparently, the residents believed that they would be told that some issues could not be grieved. Overall, the resident responses to questions about the program and the staff were favorable; although, most of the residents had complaints about some of the platoon sergeants yelling, verbally putting them down, or staff favoritism.

Two residents interviewed reported that a certain staff member had cursed at a resident and that a grievance had been filed against the staff member. Three residents said the staff did not curse at them and the final resident said that some staff members would occasionally use a curse word in the hearing of residents but did not curse at the residents.

The majority of residents interviewed did not think they were allowed to have second servings of food, but three residents said they received enough to eat. Of the remaining three residents, one said he did not get enough to eat, one said he was sometimes still hungry, and the third one wished he could have second servings of food. Some of the residents and the staff members interviewed indicated that the residents could take as much food from the salad bar as they wanted.

Only one of the residents said that he had thrown up during physical training (PT); however, nearly all reported that other residents threw up frequently during PT. The resident responses indicated that cadets who threw up were usually told to drink water. Additional responses indicated that cadets who threw up were allowed to rest, resume PT, walk instead of run, or see the nurse.

Two newer staff members were interviewed. One had previously worked at the program several years prior. Both appeared to be familiar with facility policies and were conscientious in their responsibilities in supervising the residents. No issues of concern were identified from the staff interviews.

### File Reviews

The case records on two residents were reviewed. Both were complete and current for the items reviewed on the day of the visit. The two personnel files and training records reviewed were current. No concerns were identified from the case record or personnel file reviews.

The OCCS inspection report dated March 4, 2008, noted that the files reviewed were in order. The report also noted several physical plant deficiencies. The facility had prepared work orders to repair those deficiencies, and they were attached to the OCCS report.

The Office of the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal inspection report dated January 16, 2008, noted that the Bravo Company buildings met or exceeded applicable code requirements, except for the fire alarm system in the educational building. The fire marshal report dated March 7, 2008, noted that the fire alarm system in the educational building met or exceeded applicable code requirements as of March 6, 2008.

The residential quarters had been painted and were thoroughly clean. The floors had been waxed in preparation for the ACA audit. No physical plant deficiencies were noted during the tour of the residential building. The dining hall was toured during the noon meal.

### **Areas of Concern**

Some issues were identified during the oversight visit. Findings of violations were not made, but the following issues of concern were discussed with the administration during the exit conference:

1. Determination of issues not subject to the grievance process. The OJSO recommended that the residents be permitted to file grievances regardless of the issues involved instead of denying them the option to grieve. Certainly, not all grievances can be resolved in favor of the residents, but the grievance process should be used to reach that determination rather than prohibiting the grievance from being filed.

2. Staff inconsistency with rules. Staff favoritism or inconsistent application of the rules for the residents is not an uncommon complaint by facility residents to the OJSO; however, on this day, it appeared to be a theme. Because most residents interviewed complained about this issue, it was presented to the administration.
3. Residents throwing up during PT. In the past, this issue was of major concern to the OJSO, but during the visits in recent years, the reports of residents throwing up during PT had significantly subsided. On the day of the oversight visit, it was a consistent theme. The issue was discussed with the administration for consideration.
4. Staff member cursing at a resident. The administration reported having received a grievance alleging that the identified staff member had cursed at a resident, and that the administration was responding to it through an investigation and would address the issue with the staff member, if substantiated.

## **Summary**

The administration, the staff, and the residents appeared to be focused on the upcoming reaccreditation audit by the ACA. The OJSO appreciated the helpfulness of the administration and staff for the providing the materials for review, conducting the tour, and arranging the interviews.

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