

2025 Cook County Temporary Detention Center Inspection Report

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Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted the annual inspection of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) on July 29th and 30th, 2025, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b).

The facility was found to be compliant with all but one of the County Detention Standards. There were several areas of strength noted, many of which are indicative of juvenile justice best practices. In particular, the volume of medical and mental health services available to youth exceeds county detention standards. The physical cleanliness of the facility is excellent and there are several programming resources available for youth.

Areas of Non-Compliance

Section	Requirement
2602.170 Discipline	Room confinement may be used only as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others. Room confinement shall not be used for a fixed period of time, but only until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming without being a risk to the safety of others.

Methodology

Interviews Conducted

- Superintendent
- Deputy Executive Director
- PREA Coordinator
- Hearing Officer
- Youth Detention Specialists (5)
- Team Leaders (2)
- Assistant Team Leaders (2)
- Youth (18)
- Caseworkers (2)
- Mental Health Director
- Psychologist
- Nurse
- Divisional Nursing Director
- Principal – Nancy B. Jefferson
- Teacher – Nancy B. Jefferson
- Resident Grievance Coordinator
- Director of Volunteer/Gender Services

Documents Reviewed

- Annual Training Schedule
- Pre-service Training Schedule
- Recreation Schedules
- Master Confinement Logs
- Behavior Intervention Plans
- Sample Employee Background Checks
- Health Department Inspection Report (9/3/24)
- National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC) Accreditation Report (7/23/25)
- Youth Grievance Log
- Dietary Menus
- Medical Credentials
- Mental Health Credentials
- Educator Credentials
- Resident Handbook
- Education Schedule
- CPR and Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Training Documentation
- Confinement Policies
- PREA Policies
- Youth Search Policies

Overview

The JTDC is a 498-bed facility in Chicago, Illinois. The facility operates a “center-within-a-center” concept, with seven distinct centers that manage 3-5 pods each. Each center contains its own management structure, with a Team Leader and Assistant Team Leaders managing the day-to-day operations of the center. Each center is staffed with Caseworkers, Recreation Specialists, Mental Health Practitioners, and Youth Detention Specialists (YDSs). There were 205 youth in custody on the first day of the inspection.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The JTDC is the largest detention center in the state. All youth receive an initial medical screening upon arrival. Resident clothing is collected and logged in the facility Resident and Management Information System (RMIS). Youth sign off on the receipt. The storage room for resident clothing was clean and orderly.

Youth on intake receive medical screenings, mental health assessments, and orientation delivered by caseworkers. Youth receive required orientation to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) via an informational video during the intake process. PREA information is also available in the Resident Handbook and reviewed at monthly groups facilitated by Caseworkers. All interviewed youth were familiar with PREA and how to make a report. Victimization and Sexual/Aggression Screenings are completed by the facility PREA Coordinator or designee and used in making housing assignment decisions for youth.

The JTDC has made changes to the intake search process since the 2023 inspection. The facility procured two Millimeter Wave Scanners in late 2023 and updated policies in a manner that is compliant with County Detention Standards with regard to their use. Facility policy “Admissions and Re-entry Searches” requires body scan searches to be conducted for youth upon admission/re-entry and promptly after entering and prior to exiting the facility. Since implementation, the use of body scanners has significantly reduced the number of strip searches that have occurred in the facility, with only three occurring since the start of 2025.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

Maintaining adequate security staffing levels has been a struggle for the facility. At the time of the audit the facility had 142 YDS positions filled and a total of 42 vacancies. The facility has maintained a contract with Monterey Security to provide additional staffing coverage since October 1, 2021. Staff from Monterey Security are assigned to individual center teams and effectively work for the center as line staff. The Monterey staff undergo the same pre-service training as a YDS, which consists of six weeks of training.

Individual living units remain capped at 14 youth. There are two Youth Detention Specialist (YDS) staff assigned to each living unit during waking hours. While there have been some occasions in which individual shifts have been short-staffed enough to cause staffing ratio rotation (rotating youth confinement), those occasions have had minimal impact on facility programming, such as education.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The JTDC has several things in place to promote positive youth behavior and outcomes. The facility has a robust programming schedule, consisting of both facility-driven programs and programs provided by an extensive network of community volunteers and partnerships. External partners such as Stomping Grounds and Becoming a Man continue to be active in the facility. There were new programs added over the year as well, including Chicago Run that trains with residents twice per week and puts on a 2k (and eventual 5k race) in the facility outdoor space. Youth also have access to electrician and painting programs offered during breaks in the normal school schedule. There is also a barber college program and mentoring program available to youth.

One internal program of note continues to be the Ambassador Program. This program is available to youth via an application process. Youth who are accepted act as Ambassadors for the JTDC, serve on the Resident Advisory Council and provide guided tours. The facility has a new Director of Food Services who works with youth on the Resident Advisory Council to do “taste tests” of new products and solicit feedback for additions to the facility menus and commissary items. There are a variety of additional incentives related to the Ambassador Program, such as the receipt of a gold jacket to be worn during functions and access to the Ambassador Room, located in the school area of the facility. This room is equipped with items such as a ping pong table, karaoke machine, video games, and a foosball table. Several Ambassadors provided auditors with a tour of the school area and overview of programming.

Staff facilitate groups at the start of each shift (described as expectations or staff-driven content areas). The facility continues to utilize a system called “B-Mod” as the primary method of managing youth behavior. The B-Mod program includes a point system that correlates to different behavior levels and privileges. Youth are graded in time-blocks during the day in categories of behavior, participation, and attitude. As youth earn more points and attain higher levels, they have access to increased privileges.

The B-Mod program also includes methods for addressing youth positive and negative behavior. Staff responses to minor behavior infractions occur in a continuum that include a progressive discipline continuum from verbal redirection and processing to a timeout process in which youth can be assigned a short period of room time. The JTDC has made significant improvements to the use of room confinement since the 2023 Inspection Report. In December 2023, the facility implemented a new policy (6.12.15 “Room Time”) that prohibits the use of room time for a fixed period. The JTDC also made significant changes to the formal hearing process, moving away from issuing room time as a sanction. These changes have made noticeable reductions to the average length of behaviorally driven confinement that has been sustained over the past year for most youth. Hearings are typically conducted within 2.5 hours of being scheduled. In place of confinement, hearing officers issue sanctions such as written apologies, thinking worksheets, counseling, 30-day plans, and RESET/Recovery pod recommendations.

The JTDC has two specialized pods dedicated to housing youth that demonstrate significant behaviors, called the “RESET Pod” and “Recovery Pod”. Youth are assigned to the RESET Pod when they are charged with an Extraordinary Circumstance (EC) violation (an unusual unexpected emergent and often violent action that seriously threatens the safety or security of the residents, property, staff or other individuals within the facility). Once youth complete their confinement time, youth remain on the RESET Pod up to 10 days before returning to a general population pod. Youth can have days added while on the RESET Pod if they commit any additional Major Rule Violations (a violation of facility rules where a resident poses a serious or imminent threat to the safety and security of resident(s), staff, or the security of the juvenile detention center).

Youth on the Reset Pod complete assignments from the Power Source Workbook by Bethany Casarjian. The assignments are similar for each youth assigned to the pod and monitored by mental health staff. Mental health staff also conduct two groups on the weekends. At the time of the inspection, there were no youth assigned to the RESET Pod. Youth do not physically go to school while assigned to the pod; rather teachers come up to the unit to meet with youth, provide assignments, and retrieve assignments upon completion.

The Recovery Pod is utilized for youth that have earned multiple ECs and have shown little improvement on the RESET Pod. Like the RESET Pod, teachers come to the pod to provide educational services. Youth on the Recovery Pod are given a behavior plan that includes a collection of writing assignments and some re-entry stipulations that are contingent upon being placed back into general population. At the time of the inspection, there were seven youth assigned to the living unit, with only one youth out in the dayroom. The remaining youth were confined in their rooms. Staff and youth reported that only one youth was permitted out at a time on a rotating basis due to interpersonal conflicts. This was observed in facility confinement data as well. Data from April and May 2025 indicated multiple youth assigned to

the Recovery Pod were confined for more than 100 hours each during a one-month period, accounting for 30% - 50% of available programming time. While the improvements to youth confinement associated with the hearing process have been maintained, the confinements associated with the Recovery Pod are out of compliance with County Detention standards.

April 2025 Confinements Over 100 Hours – Recovery Pod

Youth	Number of Confinements	Sum of Duration of Confinement (Hours/Minutes)
Youth 1	90	209:46:00
Youth 2	82	178:52:00
Youth 3	49	133:17:00
Youth 4	55	131:17:00
Youth 5	57	128:34:00
Youth 6	52	125:31:00
Youth 7	44	100:45:00

May 2025 Confinements Over 100 Hours – Recovery Pod

Youth	Number of Confinements	Sum of Duration of Confinement (Hours/Minutes)
Youth 1	81	211:27:00
Youth 2	51	122:57:00
Youth 3	51	120:14:00
Youth 4	46	111:12:00

It can be noted that between the time of the inspection and publishing of this report, facility administrators report they have implemented enhanced quality assurance procedures to closely monitor the use of confinement on the Recovery Pod.

Areas of Non-compliance and Recommendations:

- 2602.170 Discipline states: “Room confinement may be used only as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others. . . Room confinement shall not be used for a fixed period of time, but only until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming without being a risk to the safety of others.”
 - Adapt programming on the Recovery Pod to only utilize room confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of youth and others and until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.

Medical and Health Care

The JTDC operates an active medical unit and is well-staffed with medical personnel. The facility provides 24-hour nursing coverage, with an average of 4-5 nurses present for day and evening shifts, and two nurses present for the overnight shift. Two physicians, two physician assistants and a dentist

are on-site Mondays-Fridays during normal business hours and available on-call during off-hours and weekends. At the time of the audit, there were 17 full-time and four part-nurses nurses employed, with two vacancies.

All youth receive a medical screening upon initial intake and later receive a urine test for STIs. Nursing staff administer the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI - 2) to youth and provide a medical-specific orientation in which a Medical Services Guide is provided, and the sick call process is reviewed.

Youth who are detained for more than five days receive HIV and TB tests and a complete physical exam. Youth also receive a dental exam within 30 days. Nurses conduct health education sessions on one living unit each week, covering topics such as STI prevention.

The facility has a consistent sick call process. Sick call request forms were observed and available on all pods. Youth fill out the forms and place them in boxes available on the pod. Nursing staff do rounds each day to collect the forms.

The facility has a reliable procedure for medication distribution. All medication is confirmed and prescribed by a medical doctor upon intake. Nursing staff handles all medication distribution at the facility. Youth identification is confirmed via a scan of a radio-frequency identification (RFID) chip in youth wristbands and there are strong security procedures in place for securing medication.

The JTDC has been found to be compliant through multiple NCCHC surveys since 2022, including an audit from 2025. The medical services available to youth at the JTDC exceed the standards identified in County Detention Standards.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services at the JTDC operate under Cook County Mental Health. The facility is budgeted for 23.5 full-time mental health employees, a ratio of nearly one mental health practitioner for every ten youth. Mental Health Professionals are scheduled from 8am – 10pm seven days per week with a rotating on-call during off hours. The mental health team administers a variety of assessments to determine treatment needs for youth. All youth are screened via the MAYSI - 2 within four hours of admission. All youth receive a face-to-face clinical interview within 72 hours of admission that includes a strengths assessment. Youth receive the Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Friends Trouble Assessment (CRAFT), a substance abuse screening tool for adolescents, the Child and Adolescent Strength Assessment (CASA), and the Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS).

Results from the clinical interview and assessments determine the youth's placement on a three-tiered mental health level. A youth's mental health level determines the frequency and intensity of services provided. All youth on the roster receive an individualized treatment plan.

Youth with acute needs are admitted to a third specialized pod called Stabilization. The Stabilization Pod seeks to provide more focused attention and intensive services in a setting with less stimulation to help

them stabilize and transition back into general population. Youth on the Stabilization Pod are staffed every week with a multi-disciplinary team to monitor treatment.

The mental health team also coordinates quarterly wellness events for staff and participates in a county-wide trauma-informed initiative. In short, the breadth of mental health services available to youth at the JTDC continues to far exceed minimum standards.

Youth Grievances

The facility utilizes a step system to address youth grievances. Most grievances are addressed and resolved at the first step, which is managed by Center leadership. Youth have an option to appeal to higher steps if they choose. Youth reported they were familiar with the grievance process and knew how to obtain them if desired. Youth grievances were observed as available on all pods, and each pod was equipped with a locked, private grievance box. Grievances are picked up daily and tracked in the facility System (RMIS).

Education

Educational services at the JTDC are provided through Nancy B. Jefferson School, a part of Chicago Public Schools, and operates on a 47.6 week/year schedule. Youth attend school from 8:00am – 2:10pm. The school day is broken into four 75-minute periods. All core classes are taught by a two-person team with one general education teacher and one special education teacher. The team utilizes a direct instructional model using the CPS Skyline Universal Curriculum. The school is equipped with a large library and computer lab. Smartboards have been installed in every classroom. Youth visit the library at least once per week.

The school conducted ACT testing in the spring, with 24 students taking the exam. The facility continues to offer dual credit classes through the “I am College Bound” program with Truman College. Seven youth are enrolled in the program, scheduled to begin in the fall.

Educational services are offered to high school graduates. Graduate youth attend school with other youth and receive work tailored to their individual interests and hobbies.

Youth on the Recovery and RESET pods receive educational services on the living unit during the school day, with teachers assigned to provide services on the unit according to the daily schedule.

Additional Observations

There are several new portions of the County Detention Standards that reflect provisions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The JTDC has not pursued a formal PREA audit but does have well-established procedures that meet the PREA-related requirements in the County Detention Standards. The JTDC has had a PREA Coordinator in place for several years. The facility conducts background checks for both new and existing employees within requirements. Several employee files were reviewed, and all contained required screening documentation. The facility PREA Coordinator completes the risk for

sexual victimization for all intakes, with center management staff acting as a back-up in their absence. The risk assessment is currently going through a validation process with the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority. The PREA Coordinator serves on the facility Transfer Committee that makes determinations on youth housing, and results from the risk assessment are included in placement decisions for youth.

PREA information is included in the Resident Orientation Handbook. All youth are shown a PREA information video during their orientation process with intake caseworkers. Youth interviewed were aware of PREA and were able to articulate ways to make an allegation. Youth have access to a neutral third party via the phone system on living units to make an anonymous allegation. The facility also has a resource guide and a Memorandum of Understanding with Resilience, a not-for-profit rape crisis center to provide additional support to youth if needed.

The facility is seeking to have a pre-PREA audit conducted by the Moss Group (which would represent the second pre-audit conducted at the facility over the past several years). While it is good the facility is taking some steps towards PREA compliance, a formal audit should be scheduled and completed.

Recommendations:

- Complete a formal PREA audit.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Admissions Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete a formal PREA audit
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapt programming on the Recovery Pod to only utilize room confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of youth and others and until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.