

2026 LaSalle County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

JOHN ALBRIGHT, CHIEF OF PERFORMANCE AND INNOVATION
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted the annual inspection of the LaSalle County Juvenile Detention Center in Ottawa, IL on March 25, 2026, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). While there were some strengths noted, the center was found to be non-compliant with some requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards ("County Detention Standards"). The areas noted as non-compliant are listed in the table below, with specific observations noted in the following sections of this report. Each section of the report includes policy and practice recommendations offered to gain compliance and move towards best practice. Those recommendations are combined in a second table at the end of the report.

Areas of Non-Compliance

Section	Requirement
2602.30 Personnel	A shift supervisor must be scheduled and available at all times and on duty during all waking hours and immediately available if not on duty during sleeping hours.
2602.230 Education	Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Qualified special education staff are assigned to youth with special education status and special education testing is available for youth in custody.
2602.170 Discipline	Staff must be trained in acceptable methods of physical intervention.
2602.90 Mental Health Services	A service plan shall be developed for each youth that includes: 1) Counseling or psychotherapy to be provided; 2) Behavioral management strategies and goals; 3) Medication; 4) Protocol for monitoring youth's progress; and 5) Needed adjustments to normal detention programs and procedures.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Director
 - Assistant Director
 - Juvenile Detention Officers (2)
 - Educator
 - Wellpath Nurse
 - Wellpath Mental Health Clinician
 - Youth (2)

- Documents Reviewed
 - Policy 7.02 “Juvenile Room Confinement”
 - Policy 7.04 “Administrative Holds”
 - Policy 16.05 “Use of Force by Staff”
 - Policy 16.06 “Use of Restraints”
 - Policy 16.10 “Disciplinary Policy”
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Sample Youth Medical File
 - Sample Employee Background Checks
 - Sample Youth Grievances
 - Dietary Menus
 - Sample Incident Reports
 - Daily Programming Schedule
 - Grievance Procedure
 - Grievance Log
 - Resident Handbook
 - Youth Confinement Records

Overview

The LaSalle County Juvenile Detention Center is a 16-bed facility with three living units. At the time of audit, the facility only had two residents in custody. The facility offers in-person visitation for all youth two days (Thursdays and Sundays) per week, with at least two free phone calls; with a third available if the youth does not receive a visit.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The LaSalle County Juvenile Detention Center offers 24-hour coverage for admissions. Youth property is collected, inventoried, and laundered according to standards.

The updates to County Detention Standards in 2021 included the addition of Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requirements, including the requirement that all youth be assessed for risk of victimization upon intake. The facility started completing these assessments in 2023, using the same screening form utilized at the county jail. Completed forms were observed in resident files. Both youth were familiar with PREA, however the facility still has not undergone a formal PREA audit.

Recommendations:

- Complete a formal PREA audit.

Personnel, Staffing, and Supervision

The facility had two administrators, two supervisory staff, and three open supervisory positions, and fourteen Juvenile Detention Officers (JDOs) employed on the date of the inspection with one opening. Administrators stated they had also been approved for three additional JDO positions by the

Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC). The small number of supervisors currently employed makes it difficult to ensure there is a supervisor present during all resident waking hours. The Assistant Director covers a lot of shifts, however there are still frequent shifts (particularly in the evening) where a supervisor is not present. In these cases, the dayshift supervisor makes assignments for the JDOs on duty before departing.

Staff receive training throughout the year, both in-person and through the AOIC Relias eLearning Platform. Multiple staff reported they had not been trained on the facility physical restraint technique (called Handle with Care) in several years. A review of staff training files confirmed this. The facility had a Handle with Care instructor who recently left for another position. The facility is currently looking for in-house replacements.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.30 Personnel states “A shift supervisor must be scheduled and available at all times and on duty during all waking hours and immediately available if not on duty during sleeping hours.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Hire enough supervisors so one is present for all waking hours.
- Section 2602.170 Discipline states: “Staff must be trained in acceptable methods of physical intervention.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Complete Handle with Care training for all new and existing employees.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility utilizes a traditional point card and level system to manage youth behavior. Levels are calculated daily and determine later bedtimes, additional snacks, and access to things like a video game system. Staff grade youth collaboratively at the end of every shift and share points with youth to give them opportunities to ask questions and promote transparency.

The facility adheres to a well-established daily schedule. Interviewed youth affirmed the consistency of the daily schedule. The facility makes frequent use of the outside area, as youth shared they can go outside for recreation daily, weather permitting. The frequent use of the outdoor area has been a strength of the facility for several years.

Medical, Health Care, and Mental Health Services

Medical and Mental Health Services continue to be offered by Wellpath via a shared contract with the LaSalle County Jail. Nurses are stationed in the adult portion of the facility and present 16 hours per day with a 24-hour on-call nurse available. A physician is available once per week and on call as needed. Medication is administered by nursing staff and is monitored and prescribed by a physician.

The contract covers 8 hours of mental health services for youth. The Wellpath mental health practitioners (MHPs) are based in the adult portion of the facility and report to the juvenile side a few times per week. The MHPs do mental health assessments for new youths in compliance with standards, however treatment plans are not developed for any youth to guide clinical services. The MHP

characterized most youth contacts as “check-ins.” In order to be compliant with standards, intentional service plans will need to be developed for youth in need of them.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- Section 2602.90 Mental Health Services states: “A service plan shall be developed for each youth that includes: 1) Counseling or psychotherapy to be provided; 2) Behavioral management strategies and goals; 3) Medication; 4) Protocol for monitoring youth's progress; and 5) Needed adjustments to normal detention programs and procedures.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Develop and implement individualized service plans for those youth assessed as needing services.

Education

Educational services at the facility have been out of compliance for several years and remain so in 2026. The facility employs only one full-time educator, who is a former volunteer at the facility that was hired in her educational capacity in August 2021. Youth speak highly of the educator; however, she is only licensed to teach K-9. She does not have the proper licensure to teach high school.

Youth in the facility are enrolled in Ottawa High School and either complete work delivered by their home schools or complete classes through the Edgenuity online learning platform. Special education services continue to be insufficient as noted in previous inspections. There is no special education teacher available to provide services at the facility. A position for a special education teacher has been posted for more than a year to provide 30 hours of services each week; however, no one has been hired.

The facility remains non-compliant with the education portion of County Detention Standards for the fifth consecutive year.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.230 Education states: “Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Qualified special education staff are assigned to youth with special education status and special education testing is available for youth in custody.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Hire a special education teacher to ensure services can be provided for youth with IEPs.
 - Identify a process to have a substitute teacher in the event of a teacher absence.
 - Hire an additional teacher with an endorsement fitting the youth population of the facility.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Education	• Hire a special education teacher to ensure services can be provided for youth with IEPs. • Identify a process to have a substitute teacher in the event of a teacher absence. • Hire an additional teacher with an endorsement fitting the youth population of the facility.
Admissions Procedures	• Complete a formal PREA Audit.
Personnel	• Hire enough supervisors so one is present for all waking hours.
Discipline	• Complete Handle with Care training for all new and existing employees.
Mental Health Services	• Develop and implement individualized service plans for youth assessed as needing services.