

2026 Will County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted its annual inspection of the River Valley Detention Center in Will County on March 17, 2026, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b).

There were several areas of strength noted, particularly related to the volume of medical and mental health services available for youth. The physical quality and cleanliness of the facility is very good.

While there were some significant strengths noted during the review, there was one area of non-compliance found; a repeat finding from the last five years. The sections and specific requirements of the County Juvenile Detention Standards, 20 Ill. Admin. Code 2602, ("County Detention Standards") noted as non-compliant, are listed in the table below, while specific observations are noted in the following sections of this report. Sections of the report also include policy and practice recommendations when applicable. Those recommendations are combined in a second table at the end of the report.

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. Supervisory staff shall be notified immediately when room confinement is used . . . At no time should room confinement exceed 4 hours without administrators and/or mental health staff developing an individualized plan to address the behavior.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Compliance Officer
 - Nurse (1)
 - Juvenile Detention Officers -JDOs (2)
 - Detention Supervisor (1)
 - Educators (1)
 - Youth (4)
 - Mental Health Professionals (3)
- Documents Reviewed
 - Policy 9.14 "Use of Force -
 - Policy 10.09 "Room Confinement"
 - Policy 11.05 "Grievances"

- Programming Schedules
- Dietary Menus
- Sample Employee Training Records
- Fire Department Inspection Report (2/6/25)
- Food Inspection Report (11/12/25)
- Current Staff Roster
- Educator Credentials
- Mental Health Staff Credentials
- Resident Handbook
- Sample Youth Files
- Individualized Programming Log
- Collective Bargaining Agreement – Article XI
- Mental Health Group Therapy Schedule
- 2025 Physical Intervention and Use of Chemical Restraint Documentation
- 2025 Youth Grievance Log and sample grievances
- New Hire Background Check Log
- Youth Confinement Records

Overview

The River Valley Detention Center in Will County is a 102-bed facility in Joliet, IL. The facility has two housing pods with five living units in each pod. At the time of inspection, the facility had a population of 14 youth, all of which were housed amongst the living units of one of the pods. The physical condition and cleanliness of the facility continues to be strong.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

While the facility does have some Juvenile Detention Officer (JDO) openings, there is adequate staffing to cover the needs of youth. At the time of the inspection, the facility was staffed with a total of nine supervisory positions (six shift supervisors with three specialized coordinators) and 30 JDOs. The facility was approved for five additional JDO positions by AOIC.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

Detention programming has remained consistent from previous inspections. The facility has multiple programming opportunities available to youth throughout the week. An art therapist holds a weekly art group with a rotation of youth. Facility staff also facilitate cognitive behavior training (CBT) programming each afternoon, based on a set of lesson plans available as resources to staff. A church group meets with youth once per week.

The point and level system remains consistent, utilizing three behavior levels. Higher levels reward youth with later bedtimes and other privileges. Youth can also make purchases from a commissary with points they earn.

The facility began to offer contact family visits in 2025, available at least twice per week for one hour and additionally throughout the week by appointment. The facility also provides two free phone calls to youth in accordance with County Detention Standards and permits youth to make additional phone calls in the living unit dayrooms utilizing a collect call system.

While there are many positive programming options for youth, the facility is found to be out of compliance with County Detention Standards that govern youth confinement for the fifth consecutive year. The 2025 inspection report detailed two youth at the facility who had been segregated from other youth since an extraordinary incident in the Spring of 2024. One youth was released in late 2025, but the other is still at the facility on segregated status. This youth essentially follows his own schedule without any interaction with other youth. He was attending school in 2025, in a classroom by himself during the day, graduating in December. The youth has access to family visits, phone calls, the gym, and recreation spaces, but can only visit them with a staff member. He has not been permitted any interaction with any peers (with the exception of the youth released in late 2025) in two years.

Each inspection report since 2022 has cited concerns over the standard use of youth confinement for non-behavioral reasons. While the facility is well-staffed from a staff/youth ratio standpoint, youth are confined in their rooms for four hours per day while JDOs take breaks. Article XI of the current collective bargaining agreement states:

“Within each eight (8) hour shift, and ten (10) hour shift, each juvenile detention officer and CRT member, respectively, shall receive a sixty (60) minute break at approximately the middle of the shift. Should the employee choose, such breaks may be taken in “staff only” areas of the facility.”

Youth are confined in their rooms for two hours in the middle of the morning shift and again for two hours in the evening while these breaks occur. There are some marginal practices implemented to attempt to mitigate this, specifically art therapy and other mental health groups are conducted for two of the three living units Monday – Friday during the dayshift lockdown period, however the evening and weekend confinements for both shifts remain. The current practice is still well out of compliance with County Detention Standards which stipulate that “[r]oom confinement may only be used as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others.” This is the fifth consecutive year this area of non-compliance has been observed. Administrators report the union contract is currently in negotiations.

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. Supervisory staff shall be notified immediately when room confinement is used . . . At no time should room confinement exceed 4 hours without administrators and/or mental health staff developing an individualized plan to address the behavior.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Structure staff breaks in a way that does not cause youth confinement.

- Only utilize confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.

Medical and Health Care

The amount of medical and mental health resources available to youth remains a significant strength for the facility. The facility contracts with Wellpath for medical services. Nursing staff are scheduled from 7:00am – 11:30pm each day and are on-call overnight. The facility is staffed by three full-time nurses and seven on PRN status. A physician is available two days per week, and a nurse practitioner is available one additional day per week. All youth receive a medical assessment upon intake. Medication is only administered by nursing staff and there is a process for verifying youth medication on intake and obtaining required prescriptions through a physician. The storage process for medication is strong, and the medical documentation reviewed was clear and organized. The sick call process is well-established. Boxes are present on each living unit for youth to submit sick call slips. The boxes are checked twice per day.

Mental Health Services

The department has a total of two licensed psychologists, one art therapist, and a mental health professional who provides services to youth. There are also two mental health interns working at the facility. All youth receive a mental health assessment within 72 hours of intake that includes a PREA assessment. The facility utilizes both a long-form and short-form assessment. Any youth that has previous mental health contacts or concerns receives the long-form mental health assessment, the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test), Beck Youth Inventory, Jesness Inventory-Revised, and Personality Assessment Inventory – Adolescent version.

Clinicians meet with youth on the mental health caseload weekly and provide 24-hour on-call coverage. An art therapist conducts daily groups with youth on a rotating basis, covering topics such as creating a safety plan, conflict and decision-making, and building a support system. The facility also has a process for youth to request mental health services, similar to a sick call process.

Youth Grievances

Interviewed youth were fluent in the grievance process and knew where to obtain a grievance form if needed. The facility has a policy specific to the youth grievance process and tracks youth grievances and responses via a grievance log.

Education

Educational services are provided by Joliet Township School District 204. The facility has three full-time teachers, one of which is a special education teacher. Youth are administered reading and math assessments upon arrival to the facility. Teachers reach out to youth home schools in order to obtain

work for the youth to complete while in detention. Educators utilize both work provided by youth homeschools and the Apex Credit Recovery System to provide services for youth.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

The facility has not undergone a formal PREA audit, however they did have a readiness audit conducted by the Moss Group in December 2024. The updated County Detention Standards include requirements in several sections related to Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. The facility has implemented some of the requirements from the County Detention Standards. All new employees receive the required background check. Youth are administered a Risk for Victimization Screening upon intake in a manner consistent with standards and there is ample documentation showing employees have received training on PREA. The Resident Handbook contains a page with information on PREA that contains different ways youth can report sexual abuse or harassment, inclusive of third-party phone numbers accessible from the youth collect call system. Interviewed youth were familiar with PREA.

Recommendations

- Complete a formal PREA audit.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	• Structure staff breaks in a way that does not cause youth confinement. • Only utilize confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming. • Implement an internal review process to mitigate the use of chemical restraints.
PREA	• Complete a formal PREA audit.