

2023 Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted an annual inspection of the Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center on July 24, 2023, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). The facility was found to be in compliance with the sections and specific requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“County Detention Standards”).

Areas of Non-Compliance

None.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent
 - Compliance Administrator
 - Youth Detention Specialists (3)
 - Social Worker
 - Nurse
 - Youth (6)

- Documents Reviewed
 - Sample Youth Files (via Odyssey System)
 - Youth Special Group Status Documentation
 - Commissary Sheet
 - Contractual Employee Licenses
 - Sample Employee Training Records
 - Daily Schedules
 - Visitation Records
 - Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Audit Report (8/17/23)
 - PREA Training Records
 - Security Check Policy
 - Use of Force Policy
 - Handle with Care Training Materials
 - Youth Grievance Policy
 - Youth Grievance Log
 - New Resident Handbook
 - Commissary Sheets
 - Behavior Management Training Manual
 - Behavior Management Policy

Overview

The Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center is a 63-bed facility located in Peoria, Illinois. The facility has three living pods (Pods A, B, and C). Each pod has three separate living spaces surrounding a dayroom. Each pod has a separate outdoor recreation space, accessible from the pod dayroom.

The facility has two gyms, one of which contains weight-training equipment and a school area with multiple classrooms. Overall, the facility is in good physical condition. Many walls in the facility are decorated with murals, most of which reflect different portions of the facility cognitive-behavior program.

The facility was found to be in full compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in its most recent formal audit conducted in in 2023.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center offers 24-hour coverage for admissions. Youth property is collected, inventoried, and laundered in accordance with county detention standards.

The facility ended the practice of conducting strip searches as routine practice during admission several years ago, only conducting them when there is an individualized need identified. The facility has an established tracking mechanism for all strip searches that are conducted, including the name of the supervisory staff that approved the search.

The facility has a Youth Orientation Manual that includes a broad overview of programming and rules. Youth receive an orientation, including a Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) orientation by facility staff.

Nursing staff complete physicals for all youth within seven days of admission. Youth medication is approved by the on-call physician. Medication distribution is managed by nursing staff and storage is compliant with County Detention Standards. A dentist is on-site at the facility once per month and conducts dental exams for youth.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

The 2022 Inspection Report cited struggles the facility had with maintaining staffing levels, and strategies implemented by leadership to improve them; seeking a waiver from the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts to allow hiring employees without a four-year degree. While staffing has continued to be limited at times, overall numbers have improved since the 2022 inspection, with 33 Youth Development Specialists employed at the time of the 2023 inspection, compared to 18 in 2022

The facility continues to maintain an active training program for employees, consisting of both online training through Relias and in person education.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility manages a token economy system. Youth earn points in different behavioral categories throughout time blocks during the day, which in turn are converted into behavior levels once per week. Privileges associated with higher levels include increased items permitted in room, later bedtimes, and access to video games. Youth also earn “coupons” for exhibiting positive behaviors. Coupons can be redeemed through a commissary that contains a variety of items including snacks and treats. Youth at the facility report feeling motivated by the incentive system and this system is compliant with County Detention Standards. However, there are some areas where improvements can be made. The facility requires youth to pass a knowledge-based test on facility policies and procedures in order to advance through the level system. This knowledge-based requirement disadvantages those youth who may be struggling academically or who may have intellectual challenges. Furthermore, there are items included as incentives that should be provided to youth without the need to purchase them. For example, youth are charged points for condiments to accompany their food, such as a single small serving of hot sauce or ranch dressing. Items such as these are best provided for free. It is recommended they be removed from the incentive structure.

The facility uses a timeout system to address negative behavior. Timeouts generally last 5-30 minutes; with more egregious behaviors requiring completion of a CBT tool called a “Resident Self Analysis,” which prompts residents to identify irrational thoughts that contribute to inappropriate behavior and focus on more rational beliefs when handling similar situations in the future. The facility has an active, intentional process for reviewing the behavior management program through a Behavior Management Committee that meets once per month. The committee includes both facility staff and youth. All youth confinements are tracked in the facility case management system.

Youth who engage in egregious behaviors can be assigned to a “Special Group Status (SGS).” Youth on this status are separated from other youth and receive an individualized plan, including a specialized schedule that is signed by the youth. There is a strong internal communication process in place for youth on SGS. Supervisory staff send daily emails to facility administrators and counselors to summarize the youth’s day and list any youth who were confined for more than 30 minutes. Staff document the youth’s daily activities in an “Independent Plan Activity Log” that includes all youth activities, the day and time, and a staff initial. Youth on SGS continue to receive recreation and educational services. Mental health staff are in regular communication with the youth and work with the youth to complete a Targeted Thinking Report, a CBT tool that helps youth look at patterns of thinking that drive targeted behaviors. Youth receive educational services on their living unit or in the school depending on the plan that is developed. The facility holds daily meetings consisting of administrators, mental health staff, and medical staff to review youth on Special Group Status or on a high-risk status. Communication regarding youth on SGS is strong at the facility.

In addition to the behavior management program, the facility continues to provide several other sources of daily programming for youth. Detention staff facilitate two focus groups per day. Group topics are assigned via 21-days of lesson plans to match the average length of stay. Groups are facilitated through the school and by YDSs. The facility also has volunteers who provide regular programming.

Despite the robust programming options at the facility, there is still some idle time for youth. It was observed that the facility makes great effort to keep separate youth who do not get along with each other. Given the physical layout of the three pods consisting of separate living spaces surrounding a larger, common dayroom, it is observed that small groups of youth sit in chairs in the surrounding dayrooms, while other groups engage in programming in the primary dayroom. The surrounding dayrooms do not have items such as televisions, books, or other items typically observed in a dayroom, which contributes to a large amount of downtime as youth are rotated through programming.

There are no limits to family visits at the facility. Visits are permitted both in-person and via zoom. Families can schedule visits online via Microsoft Bookings, where they can choose from available times and select if they prefer a contact or virtual visit. The facility commitment to unlimited family visits and the easy way families can schedule these visits is commendable.

Recommendations

- Eliminate any requirements that youth pass a content-based test to advance through the level system.
- End the practice of requiring youth to “purchase” everyday items such as condiments.

Medical and Health Care

Medical services are provided through a contract with Advanced Correctional Healthcare (ACH). The contract includes on-site nursing coverage for 63 hours per week. Nursing staff are present at the facility nine hours per day/seven days per week. All youth receive a physical within seven days of admission. A physician is on-site twice per week and on-call 24-hours a day. A physician reviews and approves medication prescriptions. Dentistry services are provided once per month through the Peoria Health Department.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided through a contract with ACA. A Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP) is required to be on-site 48-hours per week and provide on-call services. All youth receive a mental health assessment within seven days of admission, which is logged in the electronic medical records system. Individual therapy is available to youth. Family therapy has just been instituted at the facility. Youth in crisis and on SGS status are seen every day. A psychiatric provider is available for two hours per week via telehealth.

Education

There are four educators working at the facility who are all employees of the Limestone School District 310. The facility uses a blend of direct instruction and online education through the Edgenuity Credit Recovery System. Direct instruction takes place Mondays-Thursdays and online work takes place on Fridays. School was in session at the time of the inspection. The school schedule consists of 45-minute periods that rotate between Math, Science, History, and English classes. Teachers also facilitate focus groups during the school day. On the day of the inspection the topic was Moral Decision-Making. The

Math teacher is a certified special education teacher and does pullouts with youth at the end of the school day. On the day of the inspection there were two youth at the facility with active IEPs.

Additional Observations

The youth grievance process is compliant with County Detention Standards. The facility maintains an active tracking mechanism that includes the youth’s name, date written, date received, indication if the grievance is considered an emergency grievance, outcome, and name of both the supervisor and administrative reviewer. Grievances were observed as available during the on-site review and youth indicated they were knowledgeable and trusting of the grievance process.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate any requirements that youth pass a content-based test to advance through the level system.• End the practice of requiring youth to “purchase” everyday items such as condiments.