

# 2023 Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

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## **Executive Summary**

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted an annual inspection of the Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center on October 17, 2023, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). The center was found to be fully compliant with the requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“County Detention Standards”).

## **Areas of Non-Compliance**

None.

## **Methodology**

- Interviews Conducted
  - Director
  - Assistant Director
  - Detention Officers (3)
  - Youth (4)
  - Nurses (2)
  - Mental Health Practitioner
  
- Documents Reviewed
  - Sample youth files
  - Sample medical file
  - Sample incident reports
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) Programming Materials
  - Programming Schedules
  - Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center Handbook
  - Sample Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Orientation Acknowledgement Forms
  - Contract with Kleppin & Associates
  - Youth Grievance Procedure
  - Grievance Logs
  - Sample Youth Grievances and Responses

## **Overview**

The Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center is a 26-bed facility located in Danville, IL. The facility has four primary living units surrounding a control center. There is a gym on-site, outdoor recreation space, and a large classroom where much of the primary programming takes place. The facility had 13 youth in custody on the date of the inspection. As noted in previous inspection reports, the physical condition and cleanliness of the facility is excellent. On the day of the inspection, most youth were engaged in educational programming or professional visits.

### **Admission Policy and Procedures**

The Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center conducts youth intakes 24 hours a day. The facility no longer utilizes strip searches as standard practice for youth upon intake; instead conducting pat-down and wand searches unless there is an individualized reason to conduct a strip search. All youth are screened using the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) upon intake to assess for any risk of self-harm.

The facility has an active youth orientation process for youth that includes an informational video of Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. A summary of PREA standards and youth rights are in the facility Youth Orientation Manual. Youth sign an acknowledgement form after receiving the PREA orientation. The facility was able to provide substantial documentation indicating PREA orientation is taking place for all youth. Youth interviewed during the audit were familiar with PREA standards. The facility completes the Victimization and Sexually Aggressive Behavior Assessment (VSAB) for all youth upon admission.

### **Personnel, Staffing and Supervision**

Vermilion County has taken aggressive steps to address staffing shortages. Last year, the county raised starting salaries for line staff to \$56,000 annually, with an additional 3% increase that took effect on December 1, 2022. At the time of the audit, the facility employed 20 Detention Officers, 6 Supervisors, a Director, and an Assistant Director; a decrease of only one detention officer from the time of the 2022 inspection. The staffing levels at the facility continue to be adequate to maintain the staffing ratios dictated by County Detention Standards. The county has clearly invested financial resources to maintain staffing levels in a challenging recruitment environment.

### **Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement**

The facility has an active programming schedule throughout the day. Youth attend school in the morning and early afternoon. After school, staff-directed programming and recreation is held in the school classroom. Youth eat meals together in the school classroom and have daily access to the gymnasium.

The improvements to the behavior management program cited in the 2022 Inspection Report have been maintained. The facility has implemented a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program. PBIS is a nationally recognized, evidence-based program that supports youth social, educational, and behavioral competencies. Facility administrators participate in PBIS calls every month with other facilities throughout the country as part of a shared learning and collaboration environment. Over the past year, modifications have been made to permit youth an easier path to ascend through the level system.

The facility has a robust incentive system based upon behavior levels. There is an orientation level called Zinc and four behavior levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Youth earn points throughout the day based on their behavior. Points are converted into levels. Youth on the highest level (Platinum) earn Amazon Fire Tablets that they can use both in and outside of their rooms. Other privileges include a

handheld gaming system, stress balls, a flight simulator, and 15 minutes of 1:1 time with a Detention Officer of their choosing each week. Youth can also earn a chicken dinner from a local restaurant if they maintain the highest level for three consecutive weeks. The steps the facility has taken to increase the number of positive incentives available to youth is commendable and evidences a clear economic investment in the program. It is also commendable that the list of incentives includes experiential incentives, which have been shown to be more effective at rewarding positive behavior than tokens alone. Youth who were interviewed shared they felt motivated by the incentives built into the program. Youth get updates on the status of their points multiple times throughout the week. Administrators share a progress document with the youth indicating the points they have achieved along with words of praise and citations of areas to work on. Status reports are positively worded and constructive, indicative of best practice.

Youth who engage in negative behaviors can lose points or earn timeouts. Youth placed on timeouts are checked every 15-minutes to assess if the youth is ready to return to programming. Youth and staff interviews confirmed that timeouts are temporary and do not last longer than is needed for a youth to calm down. All timeouts are documented on incident reports and tracked on a log that shows the youth's name, start and end time of the confinement, and reason for the confinement. A review of documentation indicated most youth confinements are short-term, with the largest driver of confinement being due to youth request for either wishing to sleep in or not attend school. The level of detail in the facility documentation and tracking gives administrators the ability to conduct reviews to target primary drivers for confinement and reduce them.

The facility also employs a "Special Program" status for youth who engage in more egregious behaviors. Youth on this status are housed in general living units but program separately from other youth. They still participate in regular educational and programming services without a reliance on confinement but do so individually. There were two youth on this status at the time of the audit. One youth was out at court and was released while auditors were onsite. The other youth was in his living unit dayroom. Youth on Special Program status are still eligible to advance through the PBIS level system, a further indication that facility leadership have embraced an incentive-based approach rather than one that focuses on confinement.

### **Medical and Health Care**

Medical staff are provided by the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department. A nurse is on-site every weekday in the morning. The nurse will assess any youth intakes that have arrived, as well as package medications for distribution and respond to any sick call requests from youth. A medical doctor and nurse practitioner are available through the sheriff's department when needed. There is a process in place for verifying youth medication.

### **Mental Health Services**

Mental health services are provided by multiple entities. The facility has a contract with a local mental health agency (Kleppin & Associates) to provide counseling services for 8-10 youth per week. Services are also provided by a counselor through Aunt Martha's Health and Wellness, funded by a

Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services Program through the Department of Human Services (DHS). Aunt Martha's is contracted through DHS to work with youth in Vermilion County involved in the juvenile justice system. The Aunt Martha's counselor is a master's level student working under the oversight of a therapist and on-site twice per week. The practitioners from Aunt Martha's and Kleppin & Associates coordinate caseloads at the facility. Youth receive an initial assessment and individual counseling services. Youth on the Aunt Martha's caseload have a Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) case plan developed as part of a three-month program that can extend post-release from the facility. There is also a substance abuse counselor through Rosecrance that provides services to youth at the facility.

### **Education**

The facility has two full-time educators and two substitute teachers employed by School District 118. All youth are enrolled into School District 118 or work on classes from their home school. One of the full-time educators and a substitute are licensed special education teachers. The school uses a blended model, using both direct instruction and the Edmentum Credit Recovery System for online educational services. Youth are assigned Chromebooks to use in the classroom to access Edmentum. Educators track attendance, indicating if youths were present or absent from class, the reason for absences, and specific work that was completed.