

2023 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 April 13, 2023, 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 were some areas of non-compliance found. 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 . . . The use of chemical agents, including pepper spray, tear gas, and mace is generally prohibited. Chemical agents may be utilized when the youth's current behavior indicates that a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be impossible or insufficient to effectively diminish the imminent risk of serious harm.
2602.210 Visiting	Visits shall be contact visits unless specific concerns preclude contact visits for identified individuals.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent McCormick
 - 1 Psychologist
 - 1 Nursing Staff
 - Art Therapist
 - 3 Juvenile Detention Officers (JDOs)
 - Program Manager
 - 1 Dietary Staff
 - 6 youth

- Documents Reviewed
 - Policy 9.14 “Use of Force (Non-Deadly)”
 - Policy 9.25 “Chemical Agents”
 - Policy 9.44 “Pod Procedures”
 - Policy 10.06 “Classification Committee”
 - Policy 10.07 “Disciplinary Segregation”
 - Policy 11.05 “Juvenile Grievance Procedures”
 - Programming Schedules
 - Dietary Menus
 - Behavior Management Training Manual
 - Employee Training Records
 - Fire Department Inspection Report (2/22/23)
 - Current Staff Roster
 - Educator Credentials
 - Mental Health Staff Credentials
 - PREA Training Curriculum and Records
 - Use of Force Training Materials
 - Resident Handbook
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Individualized Programming Documentation
 - Collective Bargaining Agreement – Article XI
 - Mental Health Therapy Schedule
 - Physical Intervention Documentation

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 that time of the inspection the facility had a population of 12 youth. Their physical condition and cleanliness of the facility was strong during the walkthrough.

The facility continues to utilize a 10-day quarantine period for new intakes. Youth who leave the facility to go to court off-grounds are also placed on a 10-day quarantine status when they return from court. At this point in time, this approach to quarantine, particularly related to the off-grounds court, is unique to Will County, as many other facilities have loosened these standards to be reflective of current CDC guidance.

The facility does not yet permit contact visits. County Detention Standards now require visits to be contact unless there is a specific concern precluding the contact visit.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.210 Visiting states: “Visits shall be contact visits unless specific concerns preclude contact visits for identified individuals.”
 - Recommendations:

- Permit youth and families to have contact visits.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

While the facility does have some Juvenile Detention Officer openings, there is adequate staffing to cover the needs of youth. At the time of the inspection, the facility was staffed with 21 JDOs and eight supervisory positions, with six JDOs and a supervisor on-site. Facility administrators report staffing resources have never fallen to a point that impacted youth programming over the past year. There are ample training records indicating facility staff are regularly participating in an on-boarding and annual training process.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

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, which met during the time of the inspection. Youth create art, passing it along to peers to each add a portion. 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 facility hosts weekly movie nights.

The point and level system is the same from the 2022 Inspection Report, utilizing four behavior levels that are classified by colors (blue, orange, green, and purple). Privileges for higher levels include later bedtimes and access to a PS4 once per week. Youth can also make purchases from a commissary with points they earn. Items available via commissary include:

- 15 minutes added to a visit
- Writing journal
- Additional 10-minute phone call
- Bottled Water
- Sports drink
- Playing card rental
- Extra free time
- Extra shower

Youth interviewed were very fluent in the behavior program and reported being motivated by some of the rewards on the highest behavior level, particularly access to the PS4. Multiple youth did express a desire to have more items available for purchase from commissary.

The 2022 Inspection Report cited several issues concerning the overuse of confinement at the facility, both related to disciplinary sanctions and scheduling of employee breaks. While some changes have been made, many of these issues remain. Since last year, the facility has edited several policies to remove references to use of segregation for up to 36 hours. In August of 2022, the facility implemented the use of "Individualized Programming" to work with youth who exhibit egregious behaviors. The intent

is to incorporate the use of individualized assignments and the use of confinement associated with these behaviors. Youth are assigned assignment packets to complete, which are then reviewed and processed by a team before a youth is removed from the status. The incorporation of assignments in this way is certainly a positive step for the facility. In practice, however, the overuse of confinement in these circumstances remains. From 8/13/22 – 3/31/23, there were 41 occasions in which youth were placed on such a plan. Most of the plans lasted for three days and consisted of large stretches of confinement. One youth who was interviewed reported he had been placed on a plan after a fight with another youth. He was able to exit his room for approximately 90 minutes each day to work on his individual plan assignment packet. The rest of the day was spent in confinement. In order to come into compliance with County Detention Standards, there needs to be a significant reduction in the amount of confinement associated with youth on individualized plans. It should be noted that between the time of the inspection and the publishing of this report, the facility has implemented a policy that prohibits the use of confinement for more than four hours without development of an individualized plan.

The 2022 Inspection Report cited some additional 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 are accommodated. This was observed in person on the day of the inspection. In total, youth are confined in their rooms for a total of four hours each day for reasons that have nothing to do with their behavior. This practice is also significantly 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.”

The facility continues to permit the use of chemical restraints. There were 11 uses of chemical restraints in 2022. The 2022 Inspection Report recommended changes to facility policy to affirm that the use of chemical restraints only be used as a last resort in the use of force continuum. At the time of the 2023 audit, these changes had not been made.

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:
 - End the practice of using youth confinement to accommodate staff breaks.
- 2602.170 Discipline states: “The use of chemical agents, including pepper spray, tear gas, and mace is generally prohibited. Chemical agents may be utilized when the youth's current behavior indicates that a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be impossible or insufficient to effectively diminish the imminent risk of serious harm.”
 - Revise Policies 9.14 “Use of Force (Non-Deadly)” and 9.25 “Chemical Agents” and training materials to affirm the use of chemical agents as a last resort in the use of force continuum.

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 fulltime nurses and seven on a 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. They are checked twice per day.

Mental Health Services

The department has six psychologists on staff with two assigned to juveniles. 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 assessment. The facility utilizes the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test), Beck Youth Inventory, Jesness Inventory-Revised, and Personality Assessment Inventory – Adolescent version.

The facility takes a psychoeducational approach to treatment given the short average length of stay. Clinicians meet with youth on the mental health caseload weekly and provide 24-hour on-call coverage. Mental health staff also act as the primary PREA contact and coordinate responses to PREA-related issues. There are multiple mental health groups on the programming calendar.

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.

The facility is compliant with the County Detention Standards regarding youth grievances, however there are a few recommendations related to the process that remain from the 2022 Inspection Report. The facility policy is short and fairly general. The policy could be revised to be more specific and affirm the timeframe requirements for the different types of youth grievances that are outlined in the County Detention Standards. To date, the policy has not been revised.

Recommendations:

- Revise Policy 11.05 “Juvenile Grievance Procedures” to include more specificity on the grievance process and outline the requirements related to the different types of grievances in the County Detention Standards, such as emergency grievances and/or grievances related to reporting of sexual abuse.

Education

Educational services are provided by School District 204. The facility has three teachers, which is a sufficient number given the population size of the facility. 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. As noted in the 2022 Inspection Report, multiple youth reported positive relationships with teachers at the facility.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

The updated County Detention Standards include requirements in several sections related to federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. The River Valley Detention Center has not sought out a formal PREA audit, but 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. Since the time of the 2022 audit, the facility has completed background checks on existing employees employed for more than five years. The Resident Handbook has been updated since the 2022 Inspection Report and 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.

The facility has developed a draft PREA policy that has been reviewed by the PREA Resource Center and is currently being reviewed by the Moss Group. They have also entered into a contract with a local hospital to conduct forensic examinations should one be necessary.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End the practice of using youth confinement to accommodate staff breaks.• Revise Policies 9.14 “Use of Force (Non-Deadly)” and 9.25 “Chemical Agents” and training materials to affirm the use of chemical agents as a last resort in the use of force continuum.
Youth Grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise Policy 11.05 “Juvenile Grievance Procedures” to include more specificity on the grievance process and outline the requirements related to the different types of grievances in the County Detention Standards, such as emergency grievances and/or grievances related to reporting of sexual abuse.

