

2024 Cook County Temporary Detention Center Inspection Report

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted the annual inspection of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) on July 23 and 24, 2024, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b).

The facility was found to be compliant with County Detention Standards. There were several areas of strength noted, many of which are indicative of juvenile justice best practices. In particular, the volume of medical and mental health services available to youth exceeds county detention standards. The facility has 24-hour nursing coverage and excellent mental health resources. The physical cleanliness of the facility is excellent.

Areas of Non-Compliance

None.

Methodology

Interviews Conducted

- Superintendent
- Deputy Executive Directors
- PREA Coordinator
- Hearing Officer
- Youth Development Specialists (5)
- Team Leader
- Assistant Team Leader
- Youth (19)
- Caseworkers (2)
- Mental Health Director
- Psychologist
- Medical Program Director
- Nurse
- Divisional Nursing Director
- Principal – Nancy B. Jefferson
- Teacher – Nancy B. Jefferson
- Resident Grievance Coordinator
- Director of Programming

Documents Reviewed

- Recreation Schedules
- Master Confinement Logs
- Behavior Intervention Plans
- Youth Search Logs
- Employee Background Checks

- Youth Grievance Log
- Dietary Menus
- Medical Credentials
- Mental Health Credentials
- Educator Credentials
- Resident Handbook
- Education Schedule
- Training Schedule
- CPR and Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Training Documentation
- Confinement Policies
- PREA Policies
- Youth Search Policies

Overview

The JTDC is a 498-bed facility in Chicago, Illinois. The facility operates a “center-within-a-center” concept, with seven distinct centers that manage 3-5 pods each. Each center contains its own management structure, with a Team Leader and Assistant Team Leaders managing the day-to-day operations of the center. Each center is staffed with Caseworkers, Recreation Specialists, Mental Health Practitioners, and Youth Development Specialists (YDSs). There were 214 youth in custody at the time of inspection.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The JTDC is the largest detention center in the state. All youth receive an initial medical screening upon arrival. Resident clothing is collected and logged in the facility Resident and Management Information System (RMIS). Youth sign off on the receipt. The storage room for resident clothing was clean and orderly.

Youth on intake receive medical screenings, mental health assessments, and orientation delivered by caseworkers. Youth receive required orientation to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). All interviewed youth were familiar with PREA and how to make a report. Victimization and Sexual/Aggression Screeners are completed by the facility PREA Coordinator or designee and used in making housing assignment decisions for youth.

The JTDC has made changes to the intake search process since the 2023 inspection. The facility procured two Millimeter Wave Scanners in late 2023 and updated policies in a manner that is compliant with County Detention Standards. Facility policy “Admissions and Re-entry Searches” requires body scan searches to be conducted for youth upon admission/re-entry and promptly after entering and prior to exiting the facility. Since implementation, the use of body scanners has significantly reduced the number of strip searches that have occurred in the facility.

Month	2023 Admission Strip Searches	2024 Admission Strip Searches
Jan	135	19
Feb	131	0
Mar	131	1
Apr	125	11
May	160	1
Jun	131	2
Jul	121	3
Grand Total	934	37

The facility is now compliant with the standards related to youth searches.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

The facility has maintained a contract with Monterey Security to provide additional staffing coverage since October 1, 2021. Staff from Monterey Security are assigned to individual center teams and effectively work for the center as a line staff. The Monterey staff undergo the same pre-service training as a YDS, which consists of six weeks of training.

Individual living units are capped at 14 youth. There are two Youth Development Specialist (YDS) staff assigned to each living unit during waking hours. While there have been some occasions in which individual shifts have been short-staffed enough to cause staffing ratio rotation (rotating youth confinement), those occasions have been infrequent and the staff/youth ratio at the facility is well within the ratios required by the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The JTDC has several things in place to promote positive youth behavior and outcomes. The facility has a robust programming schedule, consisting of both facility-driven programs and programs provided by an extensive network of community volunteers and partnerships. External partners such as Stomping Grounds, Becoming a Man (BAM), and Storycatchers offer programming on mindfulness, writing, and restorative justice programming. One internal program of note is the Ambassador Program. This program is available to youth via an application process. Youth who are accepted act as Ambassadors for the JTDC, representing the facility at certain times, serve on the Resident Advisory Council and guiding tours. There are a variety of incentives related to this program, such as the receipt of a gold jacket to be worn during functions and access to the Ambassador Room, located in the school area of the facility. This room is equipped with items such as a ping pong table, karaoke machine, video games, and a foosball table. Youth reported a desire to apply for and become Ambassadors during interviews.

The facility continues to utilize a system called “B-Mod” as the primary method of managing youth behavior. The B-Mod program includes a point system that correlates to different behavior levels and privileges. Youth are graded in time-blocks during the day in categories of behavior, participation, and attitude. As youth earn more points and attain higher levels, they have access to increased privileges.

The B-Mod program also includes methods for addressing youth positive and negative behavior. Staff responses to minor behavior infractions occur in a continuum that include a progressive discipline continuum from verbal redirection and processing to a timeout process in which youth can be assigned a short period of room time. The JTDC has made significant improvements to the use of room confinement since the 2023 Inspection Report. In December 2023, the facility implemented a new policy (6.12.15 “Room Time”) that prohibits the use of room time for a fixed period. The JTDC also made significant changes to the formal hearing process, moving away from issuing room time as a sanction. These changes have made noticeable reductions to the average length of behaviorally driven confinement lengths.

JTDC Behavior Confinement – Average Length in Hours

Month	2023	2024
January	8:05	2:40
February	8:05	1:51

The facility is now in compliance with County Detention Standards in this area. There are likely opportunities for the average confinement time to continue to fall, and it is recommended that a quality assurance process be put in place to monitor active confinement events to ensure youth are released once they have de-escalated.

The JTDC has two specialized pods dedicated to housing youth that demonstrate significant behaviors, called the “Reset Pod” and “Recovery Pod”. Youth are assigned to the Reset Pod when they are charged with an Extraordinary Circumstance (EC) violation (an unusual unexpected emergent and often violent action that seriously threatens the safety or security of the residents, property, staff or other individuals within the facility). Once youth complete their confinement time, youth remain on the Reset Pod up to 10 days before returning to a general population pod. Youth can have days added while on the Reset Pod if they commit any addition Major Rule Violations (a violation of facility rules where a resident poses a serious or imminent threat to the safety and security of resident(s), staff, or the security of the juvenile detention center. Behaviors that result in immediate room time until center management has determined the behavior has been extinguished) or EC violations.

Youth on the Reset Pod complete assignments from the Power Source Workbook by Bethany Casarjian. The assignments are similar for each youth assigned to the pod and monitored by mental health staff. Mental health staff also conduct two groups on the weekends. At the time of the inspection, there were seven youth assigned on the Reset Pod; most of whom were sitting individually in the dayroom working on school assignments. Youth do not physically go to the school while assigned to the pod; rather teachers come up to the unit to meet with youth, provide assignments, and retrieve the assignments upon completion.

The Recovery Pod is a pod utilized for youth that have earned multiple ECs and have shown little improvement on the Reset Pod. Like the Reset Pod, teachers come to the pod to provide educational services. Youth on the Recovery Pod are given a behavior plan that includes a collection of writing assignments and some re-entry stipulations that are contingent upon being placed back into general population.

Recommendations:

- Implement a quality assurance process to ensure youth are released from confinement when they demonstrate they have de-escalated.

Medical and Health Care

The JTDC operates an active medical unit and is well-staffed with medical personnel. The facility provides 24-hour nursing coverage, with an average of 4-5 nurses present for day and evening shifts, and two nurses present for the overnight shift. Two physicians and dentist are on-site Mondays-Fridays during normal business hours and available on-call during off-hours and weekends. At the time of the audit, there were 17 nurses and a medical assistant employed. A cardiologist is slated to start providing services to youth twice a month in the fall.

All youth receive a medical screening upon initial intake and later receive a urine test for STIs. Nursing staff administer the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI - 2) to youth and provide a medical-specific orientation in which a Medical Services Guide is provided, and the sick call process is reviewed.

Youth who are detained for more than five days receive HIV and TB tests and a complete physical exam. Youth also receive a dental exam within 30 days.

The facility has a consistent sick call process. Sick call request forms were observed and available on all pods. Youth fill out the forms and place them in boxes available on the pod. Nursing staff do rounds each day to collect the forms.

The facility has a reliable procedure for medication distribution. All medication is confirmed and prescribed by a medical doctor upon intake. Nursing staff handle all medication distribution at the facility. Youth identification is confirmed via a scan of a radio-frequency identification (RFID) chip in youth wristbands and there are strong security procedures in place for securing medication.

The JTDC has been found compliant through multiple NCCHC surveys since 2022. The medical services available to youth at the JTDC exceed the standards identified in County Detention Standards.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services at the JTDC operate under Cook County Mental Health. The facility is budgeted for 23.3 full-time mental health employees, a ratio of nearly one mental health practitioner for every ten youth. There is a certified Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist split between two in-person positions,

equivalent to 1.3 FTEs. Mental Health Professionals are scheduled from 8am – 10pm seven days per week with a rotating on-call during off hours.

The mental health team administers a variety of assessments to determine treatment needs for youth. All youth are screened via the MAYSI - 2 within four hours of admission. All youth receive a face-to-face clinical interview within 72 hours of admission that includes a strengths assessment. Youth receive the Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Friends Trouble Assessment (CRAFFT), a substance abuse screening tool for adolescents, the Child and Adolescent Strength Assessment (CASA), and the Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS).

Results from the clinical interview and assessments determine the youth's placement on a three-tiered mental health level. A youth's mental health level determines the frequency and intensity of services provided. All youth on the roster receive an individualized treatment plan, which constitutes approximately 60% of the total youth population.

Youth with acute needs are admitted to a third specialized pod called Stabilization. The Stabilization Pod seeks to provide more focused attention and intensive services in a setting with less stimulation to help them stabilize and transition back into general population. Youth on the Stabilization Pod are staffed every week with a multi-disciplinary team to monitor treatment.

In short, the breadth of mental health services available to youth at the JTDC far exceed minimum standards.

Youth Grievances

The facility utilizes a step system to address youth grievances. Most grievances are addressed and resolved at the first step, which is managed by Center leadership. Youth have an option to appeal to higher steps if they choose. Youth reported they were familiar with the grievance process and knew how to obtain them if desired. Youth grievances were observed as available on all pods and each pod was equipped with a locked, private grievance box. Grievances are picked up daily and tracked in the facility System (RMIS).

Education

Educational services at the JTDC are provided through Nancy B. Jefferson School, a part of Chicago Public Schools, and operates on a 47.6 week/year schedule. Youth attend school from 8:00am – 2:10pm. The school day is broken into four 75-minute periods. All core classes are taught by a two-person team with one general education teacher and one special education teacher. The team utilizes a direct instructional model using the CPS Skyline Universal Curriculum. The school is equipped with a large library and computer lab. Smartboards have been installed in every classroom. Youth visit the library at least once per week.

The school conducted SAT testing in April of 2024 and will be offering the ACT next year. Approximately 23 residents completed the SAT. The facility offers dual credit classes through the "I am College Bound"

program with Kennedy-King College and a College and Career Readiness Program. Ten youth will be getting placement tests for the fall semester.

Educational services are offered to high school graduates. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 graduates in the facility. Those youth attend school with other youth and receive work tailored to their individual interests and hobbies.

Youth on the Recovery and Reset pods receive educational services on the living unit during the school day, with teachers assigned to provide services on the unit according to the daily schedule. During the inspection, youth were observed working on educational assignments individually during the school day. A teacher was present on the unit, however, there did not seem to be much interaction between the teacher and students, as the teacher was seated at a table away from the youth.

Additional Observations

There are several new portions of the County Detention Standards that reflect provisions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). The JTDC has not pursued a formal PREA audit but does have well-established procedures that meet the PREA-related requirements in the County Detention Standards. The JTDC has had a PREA Coordinator in place for several years. The facility conducts background checks for both new and existing employees within requirements. Several employee files were reviewed, and all contained required screening documentation. The facility PREA Coordinator completes the risk for sexual victimization for all intakes, with center management staff acting as a back-up in their absence. The risk assessment is currently going through a validation process with the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority. The PREA Coordinator serves on the facility Transfer Committee that makes determinations on youth housing, and results from the risk assessment are included in placement decisions for youth.

PREA information is included in the Resident Orientation Handbook. All youth are shown a PREA information video during their orientation process with intake caseworkers. Youth interviewed were aware of PREA and were able to articulate ways to make an allegation. Youth have access to a neutral third party via the phone system on living units to make an anonymous allegation. The facility also has a resource guide and a Memorandum of Understanding with Resilience, a not-for-profit rape crisis center to provide additional support to youth if needed.

Over the past year the facility has started some facility upgrades intended to provide more privacy for youth in the pod bathroom and shower areas and updates to the flooring.

Recommendations:

- Complete a formal PREA audit.

Recommendations

The facility is in compliance with County Detention Standards, however there are some recommendations for further improvement listed below.

Section	Recommendations
Admissions Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="537 233 943 268">• Complete a formal PREA audit
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="537 306 1398 373">• Implement a quality assurance process to ensure youth are released from confinement when they demonstrate they have de-escalated.