

2024 Knox County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

JOHN ALBRIGHT, CHIEF OF PERFORMANCE AND INNOVATION
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted an annual inspection of Mary Davis Home in Knox County on February 27, 2024, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). While there were some improvements noted from the 2023 Inspection Report, there remain areas of non-compliance. The sections and specific requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“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. Each section of the report also includes policy and practice recommendations to either gain compliance or move towards best practice. 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.
2602.230 Education	Each facility must designate a qualified educational authority responsible for the development and implementation of the educational program. . .Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Qualified special education staff are assigned to youth with special education status and special education testing is available for youth in custody. There shall be a minimum of five hours of instruction per day.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent Steck
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Director Pletz
 - Educator
 - 4 youth
 - Shift Supervisor
 - 4 Counselors
 - Mental Health Professional

- Documents Reviewed
 - Use of Force Continuum Policy
 - Detention Tier Program Policy
 - Timeouts and Behavior Hold Policy
 - Client Grievance Policy
 - Detention Tier Program (DTP) Handbook

- Youth Orientation Materials
- Sample Incident Reports
- Youth Grievance Samples
- Daily Programming Schedules
- Dietary Menus
- Nursing License
- Educator License
- Mental Health Screening Interview Template
- Sample Youth File
- Daily Programming Log
- Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Policies

Overview

Mary Davis Home is a 39-bed facility in Galesburg, Illinois. The primary programming space is a large common area that is centrally located between the four primary living units (referred to as Upper East, Lower East, Upper West, and Lower West). There is an additional living unit called the “Harvest Wing” in a corridor off the main programming area that has three additional rooms, one of which has a camera. Since the 2023 inspection, the facility has stopped using the Harvest Wing to house residents; utilizing the area for commissary purchases, virtual court, and a meeting space for youth and mental health staff. The facility has a gym space just off the primary programming space with a large window separating the two areas. A single classroom is off the main area as well. The classroom is quite large and decorated in a manner consistent with a community school. The facility has an extensive library with many books available for youth. The library space has been moved over the past year to make it more accessible for residents.

The facility offers in-person visitation two nights a week. The visitation area is sizable and has some artwork, including a mural that was recently completed by a local community college. It is commendable that the facility has continued offering in-person visitation and has a welcoming space to host youth visits. The facility has video conferencing capability that it utilizes for court and professional visits. Video conferencing is now offered for family visitation, especially for youth with families that live out of the area.

The on-site portion of the review took place on Tuesday, February 27, 2024. At the time of the audit, the facility had 12 residents. The facility typically averages more than 20 youth in facility. As the facility has been short-staffed, the superintendent has tried to keep resident numbers at lower levels.

Administrators are pursuing some infrastructure improvements, including entering into a contract to have new cameras and a new security system installed. There is also a project to have new floor tiles installed.

Admission Policy and Procedures

Mary Davis Home offers 24-hour coverage for admissions. Youth property is collected, inventoried, and laundered according to standards. During the facility walkthrough, auditors observed the property room in which youth personal clothing was organized into bins by youth. Inventory receipts were present in the bins with clothing, as well as youth files. The facility has made changes to their admission policies to come into compliance with County Detention Standards by eliminating the use of strip searches as standard practice during the intake process; instead, only utilizing strip searches when there is an individualized suspicion of contraband. Youth intakes are searched via a wand and pat-down.

Mary Davis Home has implemented several policies related to the Prison Rape Elimination Act over the past year. Within a day of admission, all youth intakes receive a risk assessment for sexual victimization administered by the superintendent or supervisor. These assessments were present in youth files. An initial orientation is conducted by a counselor during the intake process, inclusive of youth rights related to the Prison Rape Elimination Act. Youth sign-off on receipt of the orientation was also observed in youth files. All interviewed youth were familiar with PREA. The facility Youth Orientation Manual includes a broad overview of programming and rules. While the facility has implemented many of the PREA requirements incorporated into the County Detention Standards, a formal PREA audit has yet to be completed.

Medical screenings are conducted by the facility nurse, who consults with parents about medical history and medications. The nurse also inspects medications that youth bring into the facility and coordinates with a physician to approve prescriptions.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

Maintaining sufficient staffing levels at the facility has been a challenge over the past few years. In order to attract applicants, Mary Davis Home requested and was approved for a waiver to the bachelor's degree hiring requirement by the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC). The facility now only requires 60 college credit hours or an associate's degree to qualify for employment. Knox County also increased the starting salary for Counselors to \$46,155/year. At the time of the audit, the facility employed 24 Counselors and five Supervisors (one of whom is a "floating" supervisor that conducts Risk for Victimization Assessments for new intakes). A typical shift includes five or six staff members (including a supervisor) which is sufficient given the average size of the youth population within the facility.

New employees receive 20-24 hours of training remotely through the AOIC Relias System and the AOIC Detention Basic Training. The facility has two certified Handle with Care trainers on staff who provide de-escalation and use of physical intervention trainings. The facility is also seeking to convert one Counselor position to a full-time trainer and PREA Coordinator.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility has increased the amount of programming available to youth over the past year. A Youth in Christ community program comes on Friday afternoons for religious and sports programming. Counselors continue to facilitate groups four nights per week. The content of the groups is largely determined by the staff facilitating the group, although some of the groups are designated as Social Skills Groups and use the Boys Town Social Skills Training Curriculum.

Since the 2023 Inspection, the facility has implemented a new behavior program, adapted from programs run at other county detention centers. The new behavior program consists of a “Tier System” with three behavior levels. Residents move to different levels based on a daily behavior point card. The facility has also instituted a commissary system. Youth earn “Mary Money” for exhibiting positive behaviors and can redeem Mary Money through the “Mary Mart” which consists of snacks and hygiene products. The new behavior management system is a marked improvement to the previous one, and philosophically more consistent with County Detention Standards.

The facility has made improvements towards the use behavioral confinement since the 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports; however, the use of confinement remains out of compliance with County Detention Standards. The closure of the Harvest Wing is an important step for the facility as it eliminates use of the space that was commonly used as a segregation wing at the facility. The facility continues to employ use of a “Special Group Status (SGS)” for youth who engage in significant behaviors in the facility. SGS utilizes two youth levels. Level 1 consists of an initial behavior hold (a timeout longer than 15 minutes). The facility utilizes a new form to track frequent checks on the youth, the name of the person conducting the checks, and a description youth behavior justifying continued use of the behavior hold. The implementation of this method of tracking is another important step in reducing the use of youth confinement in the facility as, with proper monitoring and quality assurance, can help ensure youth are only confined until their behavior is deemed to no longer be a risk to themselves or others. The second SGS level is intended to consist of youth being off confinement working on special behavior plans approved by the superintendent or assistant superintendent. These plans include assignments from Carey Guides or other cognitive-behavioral assignments. In practice, youth are frequently kept on SGS for multiple days, and both youth and staff report a significant amount of confinement associated with youth on these statuses, particularly on the second shift when youth are not working on assignments.

The 2023 inspection noted frequent times throughout the day that youth were confined unnecessarily. This was again observed as youth are frequently moved in and out of their rooms during transition times such as after breakfast, before lunch, at shift change, and before lunch and dinner. These frequent confinements are unnecessary to maintain normal operations and add up to unnecessary youth confinement. On the day of the audit, there were only 12 youth in the facility with plenty of staff available to manage transitions without the use of these confinements.

Youth and staff reports indicate that the practice of rotating youth in and out of confinement continues to be common at the facility, particularly on the second shift. Youth and staff use the terms “split” or “switch” to indicate if youth are rotated amongst programming areas or take turns being confined .

Several youth reported only coming out of their rooms for dinner recreation time. . This practice is non-compliant with County Detention Standards.

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.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Allow youth to spend the entire programming day outside of their rooms during normal waking hours.
 - Adjust the SGS process to limit room confinement to being used as a temporary response to behavior until a youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.

Medical and Health Care

There is one nurse that works at the facility five days per week for four hours each day. The facility has a sick call process by which a youth can request to be added to the sick call list, which is maintained in the control room to be given to the nurse upon her arrival. All youth receive a physical within seven days of admission. A physician is on-site a few times each month as needed and available for consultations.

Mental Health Services

Upon intake, all youth are administered a Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) by administrative staff. Scores on the MAYSI play a role in determining if youth are checked at a frequency of 10 or 15 minutes.

In 2022 the facility entered a contract with Advanced Healthcare Solutions (ACH) to provide youth 20 hours of mental health services per week. ACH initially had difficulty hiring a Mental Health Professional (MHP) specific for the detention center but were able to do so in the middle of 2023. That MHP is on-site 3-4 days per week for an average of 15 hours per week. A second MHP is scheduled to start in June, 2024 hours to provide five additional hours of mental health services. The current MHP does an intake assessment for new youth and reports any youth who are on SGS when the MHP is on-site. Per the MHP report, youth on SGS are almost always confined when the MHP meets with them and has little to do with the implementation of the SGS plan itself.

Food Services

Mary Davis Home has a kitchen on-site and employs one full-time cook, however the cook was out on leave at the time of the audit, causing all meals to be made by security staff. The lack of specialized dietary staff directly impacts the volume of security staff available to monitor youth, and does, at times, contribute to increased use of confinement at the facility. Per facility administrators, one new cook is scheduled to start in June, 2024. The facility offers three meals per day and a snack to youth seven days per week. The facility maintains a record of menus and any alterations to the dietary offerings.

Recommendations:

- Hire or contract with a vendor to provide sufficient coverage for dietary services to prevent the need to utilize security staff for food preparation.

Education

The facility has one full-time teacher on-site from the Galesburg school district. Upon a youth's admission, the facility Assistant Superintendent reaches out to a youth's home school to obtain educational records and communicate to ensure youth get credit for educational services provided at the facility. The classroom itself is welcoming and is well-equipped. Youth at the facility were very complimentary of the teacher, stating he is engaging and enjoyable to learn from. The daily education schedule provides five hours of educational services each day.

The County Detention Standards stipulate that the teacher-student ratio for general education needs to be 1:12 and 1:8 for special education students. Given the youth population size (an average of more than 20 youth), the facility does not meet the required ratios. The facility reports that the number of youth in the classroom is capped at 12. Youth over and above this amount are provided educational packets. This is not a strategy that meets the standard. The facility also reports they have implemented and "O.W.L." system which allows youth physically present in a living unit day room to participate in the lesson remotely, however this was not functional on the day of the audit. To meet the standard, a sufficient number of general education and special education teachers need to be available at the facility to provide quality education to the entire population of youth. Furthermore, while the youth at the facility are very complimentary of the one teacher that does work at the facility, that teacher is not properly licensed to teach high school. The teacher is only licensed to teach K-9. There is no special education teacher at the facility, however administrators report that a new, full-time special education teacher from the Galesburg School District will be starting at the facility in August, 2024.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.230 Education states: "Each facility must designate a qualified educational authority responsible for the development and implementation of the educational program. . .Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Qualified special education staff are assigned to youth with special education status and special education testing is available for youth in custody. There shall be a minimum of five hours of instruction per day."
 - Recommendations:
 - Hire a sufficient number of teachers, including special education teachers, to ensure the required ratios for general and special education are met.
 - Identify a process to have a substitute teacher in the event of a teacher absence.
 - Ensure all teachers are properly licensed.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow youth to spend the entire programming day outside of their rooms during normal waking hours.• Adjust the SGS process to limit room confinement to a temporary response to behavior until a youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire a sufficient number of teachers, including special education teachers, to ensure the required ratios for general and special education are met.• Identify a process to have a substitute teacher in the event of a teacher absence.• Ensure all teachers are properly licensed.
Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire or contract with a vendor to provide sufficient coverage for dietary services to prevent the need to utilize security staff for food preparation.