

2024 McLean 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 the McLean County Juvenile Detention Center on September 12, 2014, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). While there were several areas of strength observed, there were some areas of non-compliance noted with respect to the requirements of 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“County Detention Standards”).

Areas of Non-Compliance

Section	Requirement
2602.230 Education	Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education.
2602.170 Discipline	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.
2602.90 Mental Health Services	A service plan shall be developed for each youth that includes: 1) Counseling or psychotherapy to be provided; 2) Behavioral management strategies and goals; 3) Medication; 4) Protocol for monitoring youth's progress; and 5) Needed adjustments to normal detention programs and procedures.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Program Coordinator
 - Mental Health Practitioner
 - Detention Officer (1)
 - Nurse
 - Youth (4)

- Documents Reviewed
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Sample Medical Files
 - New Employee Background Check Documentation
 - Nursing Credentials
 - Mental Health Credentials
 - CPR Training Documentation
 - Fire Drill Documentation
 - Grievance Log and Sample Grievances
 - Health Department Inspection Report (7/17/24)

- Normal Fire Department Inspection Report
- Menu with Caloric Counts
- Program Calendar and Attendance Documentation

Overview

The McLean County Juvenile Detention Center is a 26-bed facility located in Normal, Illinois. The facility has a main common area with three primary living units. An outdoor recreation space, gymnasium and large classroom are easily accessible from the main common area. The physical plant was in good condition, clean, and had a lot of natural lighting. There were 10 youth detained at the time of the inspection, and three youth scheduled for intake.

Admission Policy and Procedures, Prison Rape Elimination Act

The facility conducts youth intakes 24-hours a day. Youth personal items are collected and stored according to standards. All youth receive a Resident Handbook that includes an overview of resident rights, behavior program information, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). An orientation to PREA is conducted by the program manager, with documentation of the same placed in youth files to verify completion. Interviewed youth were familiar with PREA. The facility has implemented the use of an assessment of risk of victimization and the program manager maintains the results and a log of youth responses. The assessment is administered by the program manager or other administrators. There are plans to incorporate shift supervisors into the process as well.

The facility has entered into a contract with a local organization, (Stepping Stones) to serve as a third party to provide access for youth reports of sexual abuse and harassment. Contact information for the organization is provided in the Detention Handbook. Stepping Stones is on-site once per month to provide youth with sexual abuse educational groups.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

At the time of the audit, the facility was fully staffed with 15 Detention Counselors and four supervisors. The facility reports their average daily population is 14 residents. Given the population size, the number of employees working at the facility has been sufficient in prior years and is well within the ratios required by PREA. However, administrators now report that there is not enough staff to safely manage daily operations. A standard shift includes four staff for the day shift and five staff for the evening shift. Because of daily fluctuations in staffing, such as when staff ask for time off or must conduct transportation, administrative staff are pulled to cover line staff duties. Administrators shared they do not feel sufficiently staffed on the weekends to maintain safety, particularly on the first shift. It was communicated that there are plans to request additional positions through the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC). The impacts are outlined in the section below. Despite being fully staffed based on budgeted positions, the facility still utilizes rotating youth confinements due to the administrative belief that staffing is not sufficient to safely manage the youth population.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility has a robust programming schedule, with programming delivered both internally and via external partnerships. The facility employs a Program Coordinator who maintains a programming calendar that includes substance abuse groups, leisure groups, life skills groups, art groups and external volunteer programming. The program coordinator tracks youth attendance at all programming activities and documents any youth absences with the reason for such absence. In August of 2024, youth attended 47 programming sessions. The volume and consistency of daily programming continue to be a strength of the facility.

The facility offers in-person family visitation four days per week. Youth families can visit on all four days. It is commendable that the facility offers family visitation this frequently, however youth who do not receive visits are usually confined during visitation time, which administrators attribute to staffing being stretched too thin. Youth are also able to visit with family virtually.

The facility continues to utilize a “no fail” behavioral management system, where each day, youth start at the highest behavioral level, “A”, and during the day they may be placed on a lower level based on their behavior. If they remain on “A” level until the end of the day, the youth can earn privileges in the facility if they earn consecutive “A” s. For example, a youth can choose not to participate in group programming once a week after accruing 30 consecutive “A’s.” Levels also impact when a youth goes to bed in the evening, with lower behavioral levels equating to earlier bedtimes.

If a youth engages in disruptive behavior during the day, their level is lowered to a “B” level. If the youth retain their “B” for the rest of the day, they start the next day with an “A.” Youth on “B” level who engage in further disruptive behavior can be moved to “C” grade. Youth who engage in continued, prolonged extreme behavior may be lowered to Group 3, which can also entail placement on a special security status. The facility has made changes to Group 3 status since the 2023 inspection. Youth are no longer confined for 12-24 hours when placed on this status. The facility now only utilizes confinement for youth as a short-term response to behavior, releasing youth when they are de-escalated. One youth who had been on the status recently reported he was not confined in his room while on the status; rather he programmed in the day room while going through a re-integration process to general population. This process lasted for a full two months. While the facility has reduced the amount of in-room confinement, this youth states that he was isolated from his peers for nearly two months. This process is still in need of improvement, as youth need to be re-integrated into normal programming in a more expedient fashion.

While the facility has made improvements in coming into compliance with standards related to confinement for behavioral reasons, there are still operational factors contributing to youth confinement that remain. At the time of the inspection, the 10 youth in the facility were divided into two groups, participating in daily programming only within their assigned group. This separation is driven by youth interpersonal dynamics. Youth and staff report that while the groups typically engage in regular programming throughout the day in separate spaces, on weekends, particularly during first shift, the groups rotate in and out of confinement due to staffing levels. For this reason, the facility remains out of compliance with this portion of County Detention Standards.

Areas of Noncompliance and Recommendations:

- 2602.170 Discipline states: “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:
 - Re-integrate youth on Group 3 status into normal programming more expeditiously.
 - Staff all shifts sufficiently enough to avoid youth confinement for operational reasons.

Youth Grievances

The facility has a youth grievance process in place and maintains copies of youth grievances that are submitted. Interviewed youth were familiar with how to submit a grievance but expressed concerns with having to turn them into staff members. This is a repeat complaint from 2023. Some youth shared they do not trust facility supervisory staff to address their grievances. One youth shared he had submitted grievances that were not listed on the facility grievance log. The current facility process is for supervisors to collect grievances and turn them into administrators. It is recommended that grievances only be collected and addressed by the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, or Program Manager to avoid any inconsistencies.

The facility does not have locked grievance boxes where youth can confidentially place grievances. It is recommended these be installed in all living units and programming areas to prevent youth having to submit them directly to a staff member. It will also provide an opportunity for any youth that has been separated from the main group to submit a grievance if they do not have access to the grievance box in the common area.

Recommendations:

- Install locked grievance boxes in all living units and programming areas to prevent youth having to submit them directly to a staff member.
- Change practice so grievances are only collected by the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Program Manager.

Medical and Health Care

There is a full-time nurse that works at the facility with an office just off the main dayroom of the facility. All youth receive a physical within seven days of admission. A physician, who is contracted through Advanced Correctional Healthcare, is on-call 24-hours per day and on-site approximately once per week. There is an active process to ensure youth medication continues when youth are admitted, with the nurse verifying prescriptions with parents and prescribing doctors. The facility nurse manages medication distribution when on-site. It is managed by supervisory staff at all other times. Medications were stored appropriately. The nurse is an active contributor to programming at the facility,

participating in regular groups with youth. Recently the nurse facilitated educational programming on proper nutrition and budgeting for grocery purchases.

Mental Health Services

A Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) has been on contract since 1999. The contract calls for 10 hours of services to be offered each week, however the LCSW estimates she spends approximately 15 hours per week at the facility. The LCSW runs groups every Wednesday afternoon, focused on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and relaxation. Much of her work with youth is 1:1, primarily seeing youth upon their request or referral from a staff member. The LCSW does assessments for all youth identified as a suicide risk and reviews the mental health screenings that are completed by nursing staff during the intake process. The LCSW does not do assessments on all youths., County Detention Standards require that mental health service plans be developed for all youth. The LCSW is not creating individualized treatment plans. While it is good groups are being facilitated and youth have access to 1:1 support, implementation of therapeutic interventions guided by an individualized treatment plan would enhance the quality of services available to youth.

Areas of Noncompliance and Recommendations:

- Section 2602.90 Mental Health Services states: “A service plan shall be developed for each youth that includes: 1) Counseling or psychotherapy to be provided; 2) Behavioral management strategies and goals; 3) Medication; 4) Protocol for monitoring youth's progress; and 5) Needed adjustments to normal detention programs and procedures.”
 - Recommendations
 - Develop formal treatment plans when the need is indicated through the assessment process.

Education

The facility has one teacher, an employee of the Regional Office of Education (ROE) to provide educational services. Youth at the facility are enrolled through the Normal Illinois School District (Unit 5). The 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports found deficiencies in the educational services offered at the facility; with youth only attending school for approximately 1.75 hours per day, largely due to only having one teacher at the facility who is only permitted 30 hours of work per week by the ROE. Since the 2023 Inspection, the educator is now on full-time status and has obtained her special education endorsement. The facility has made some structural changes by adding a wall in the middle of the classroom. There are now two separate classroom spaces, which give the facility the ability to have youth who need to be separated full access to school. Youth largely take classes via the Edmentum Online Learning System, with the educator floating between classrooms to provide assistance. The facility offered summer school in 2024.

While educational services in 2024 are the best that have been observed in the last three inspections, the facility remains out of compliance with a portion of the County Detention Standards. While there were only 10 youth detained at the time of the audit, the facility regularly has a youth population that

exceeds 12 youth. Given the frequent size of the population, the facility will need at least one additional full-time educator in order to be fully compliant in this area.

Areas of Noncompliance and Recommendations

- 2602.230 Education states: “Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education”
 - Recommendations:
 - Hire an additional full-time educator.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-integrate youth on Group 3 status into normal programming more expeditiously. • Staff all shifts sufficiently enough to avoid youth confinement for operational reasons.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire an additional full-time educator.
Youth Grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install locked grievance boxes in all living units and programming areas to prevent youth having to submit them directly to a staff member. • Change practice so grievances are only collected by the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and program manager
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formal treatment plans when the need is indicated through the assessment process.