

2024 Peoria 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 Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center on October 9, 2024 pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). The facility was found to be compliant with the sections and specific requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“County Detention Standards”).

Areas of Non-Compliance

None.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Compliance Administrator
 - Youth Detention Specialists (3)
 - Training Manager
 - Mental Health Practitioner
 - Nurse
 - Youth (5)
 - Educator

- Documents Reviewed
 - Commissary Sheet
 - Contractual Employee Licenses
 - Changes to Behavior Management Program Log
 - Condiments Memo
 - Durag and Bonnet Memo
 - Level Test Process Memo
 - Pens and Pencils Memo
 - Pillow and Pillowcases Memo
 - Respiratory Illness Memo
 - Sample Confinement Records and Confinement Log
 - Sample Use of Physical Intervention Records
 - Youth Grievance Log
 - Reentry Diversion Program Documents
 - Sample Employee Training Records
 - Daily Schedules
 - Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Audit Report (8/17/23)

Overview

The Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center is a 63-bed facility located in Peoria, Illinois. The facility has three living pods (A, B, and C). Each pod has three separate living spaces surrounding a dayroom. Each pod has a separate outdoor recreation space accessible from the pod dayroom. The facility had 37 youth at the time of inspection, with 30 Youth Development Specialists (YDSs) employed. Staffing levels have been better in 2024 compared to 2023, and the facility is able to run most shifts with 7-8 YDSs and supervisory staff.

The facility has two gyms. One of which contains weight-training equipment and a school area with multiple classrooms. Overall, the facility is in good physical condition. Many walls in the facility are decorated with murals, most of which reflect different portions of the facility cognitive-behavior program.

The facility was found to be in full compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in its most recent formal audit conducted in in 2023.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center offers 24-hour coverage for admissions. Youth property is collected, inventoried, and laundered in accordance with county detention standards.

The facility ended the practice of conducting strip searches as routine practice during admission in 2014; only conducting them when there is an individualized need identified. The facility has an established tracking mechanism for all strip searches that are conducted, including the name of the supervisory staff that approved the search.

The facility has a Youth Orientation Manual that includes a broad overview of programming and rules. Youth receive an orientation by facility staff that includes information on PREA.

Nursing staff complete physicals for all youth within seven days of admission. Youth medication is approved by the on-call physician. Medication distribution is managed by nursing staff and storage of medication is compliant with County Detention Standards. A dentist is on-site at the facility once per month and conducts dental exams for youth.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility manages a token economy system. Youth earn points in different behavioral categories throughout time blocks during the day, which in turn are converted into behavior levels once per week. Privileges associated with higher levels include increased items permitted in rooms, later bedtimes, and access to video games. Youth also earn “coupons” for exhibiting positive behaviors. Coupons can be redeemed through a commissary that contains a variety of items, including snacks, treats, durags, and bonnets. Youth are also permitted to have pencils in their rooms and are provided with grievance and sick call forms.

The facility uses a timeout system to address negative behavior. Timeouts generally last 15 minutes or less; with more egregious behaviors requiring completion of a CBT tool called “Rational Self Analysis.” This tool prompts residents to identify irrational thoughts that contribute to inappropriate behavior and focus on more rational beliefs when handling similar situations in the future. The facility has an active, intentional process for reviewing the behavior management program through a Behavior Management Committee that meets once per month. The committee includes both facility staff and youth. All youth confinements are tracked in the facility case management system.

The facility no longer utilizes a “Special Group Status (SGS).” Instead, the facility has moved to classifying egregious behaviors as Tier 1 or Tier 2. Significant incidents no longer require implementation of an individualized plan, and youth are reintegrated back into programming much more expeditiously. Youth confinement is well-managed at the facility and well within County Detention Standards. Based upon staff and youth reports as well as confinement documentation, most confinements are short term (15 minutes) and do not exceed three hours in duration.

In addition to the behavior management program, the facility continues to provide several other sources of daily programming for youth. Detention staff facilitate four focus groups per day (two on each shift). Group topics are assigned via 21-days of lesson plans to match the average length of stay. Groups are facilitated through the school and YDSs. The facility also has volunteers who provide regular programming. Facility administrators have focused on developing a coordinated re-entry process. At the start of the school year, the newly created Reentry Diversion Specialist screens all new intakes to see if they are a good fit for the community Safe School Program. If they are, the Reentry Diversion Specialist attends the youth’s court hearing and communicates the same to a judge who can place the youth in the program. If youth are placed into the program, they are released to attend the program in the community. At the time of the inspection, there were six youth enrolled.

There are no limits to family visits at the facility. Visits are permitted both in-person and via zoom. Families can schedule visits online via Microsoft Bookings, where they can choose from available times and select if they prefer a contact or virtual visit. The facility has procured several tablets for the youth to use for family phone calls starting in the fall. The facility’s commitment to unlimited family visits and ease by which families can schedule these visits is commendable.

Youth Grievances

The youth grievance process is compliant with County Detention Standards. The facility maintains an active tracking mechanism that includes the youth’s name, date written, date received, indication if the grievance is considered an emergency grievance, outcome, and name of both the supervisor and administrative reviewer. Grievances were observed as available during the on-site review and youth indicated they were knowledgeable and trusting of the grievance process.

Medical and Health Care

Medical services are provided through a contract with Advanced Correctional Healthcare (ACH). The contract includes on-site nursing coverage for 63 hours per week. Nursing staff are present at the facility nine hours per day/seven days per week. All youth receive a physical within seven days of admission. A physician is on-site twice per week and on-call 24-hours a day. A physician reviews and approves medication prescriptions. Dentistry services are provided once per month through the Peoria Health Department. The facility's medical and mental health services have been accredited through the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC).

Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided through a contract with ACH. A full-time Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) is on-site full-time. All youth receive a mental health assessment within seven days of admission, which is logged in the electronic medical records system and determines if the youth is placed on the mental health caseload. Treatment plans are developed for youth on the caseload to guide treatment. Youth who are not on the caseload are able to request services at any time via the facility sick call process.

Education

There are four educators working at the facility who are all employees of the Limestone School District 310. The facility uses a blend of direct instruction and online education through the Edgenuity Credit Recovery System. Direct instruction takes place Mondays through Thursdays. Online work takes place on Fridays. School was in session at the time of the inspection. The school schedule consists of 45-minute periods that rotate between Math, Science, History, and English classes. Youth start attending classes immediately upon admission. The school district has a process in place to obtain youth transcripts from home schools; a process that usually takes no more than one day. Teachers take attendance and submit grades which are shared with home schools upon release. One of the educators directs special education service to youth who require it. On the day of the inspection there were seven youth at the facility with active IEPs.

The facility is taking steps to expand educational services by offering Career and Technical Programming. Some youth at the facility are receiving CPR and Food Handler certificates by completing required training courses. The facility is also pursuing a grant to procure a Caterpillar simulator to help youth learn bridge skills to local employment. The facility is seeking to become certified by the Correctional Education Association (CEA).