

2024 St. Clair County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

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Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted an annual inspection of the St. Clair County Juvenile Detention Center on October 6, 2024, pursuant to [730 ILCS 5/3-15-2\(b\)](#). There were several areas of non-compliance observed that require immediate attention. The sections and specific requirements of [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 practices. Those recommendations are combined in a second table at the end of the report.

Areas of Non-Compliance

Section	Requirement
2602.130 Supervision	Staff members shall maintain a record of visual contact with each youth no less than once every 30 minutes. . . Supervision of youth shall be constant.
2602.170 Discipline	All facilities shall have a developmentally appropriate, research- informed behavioral management program that supports the development of pro-social skills and provides positive reinforcement for good behavior. The program shall provide opportunities for immediate recognition of pro-social behavior as well as meaningful incentives and rewards for improvement and maintenance of desired behavior. The program shall also include potential sanctions for negative behavior that are developmentally appropriate, research informed, proportionate and fair. . . Room confinement may be used only as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth and others. Room confinement shall not be used for a fixed period, 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.
2602.40 Records	A log of all grievances shall be maintained. The log shall include the name of the youth, date the grievance was filed, nature of the grievance, the date of any appeal and the date the grievance was resolved.
2602.50 Admissions Procedures	Within 72 hours after the youth’s arrival at the facility and periodically throughout a youth’s confinement, the agency shall obtain and use information about each youth’s personal history and behavior to reduce the risk of sexual abuse by or upon a resident. Assessments shall be conducted using an objective screening instrument. . . Clothing and other garments shall be of an appropriate size and in a state of good, usable condition.
2602.80 Medical and Health Care	A medical doctor shall be available to attend the medical needs of youth. . . General medical physician services shall be provided in accordance with one or more of the following procedures: on salary, in accordance with

	locally established personnel pay plan; a contract with a local physician or clinic for full-time coverage at specific hours and for emergencies; a contract with a local physician to conduct sick call, to be on call for emergencies and to examine newly admitted youth; arrangements with a nearby hospital to provide all needed medical services; and services rendered, without cost, by another agency or department or with costs prorated. All youth confined for more than seven days shall be given a medical screening by a medical doctor, registered nurse or physician assistant.
2602.230 Education	Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). . . All youth are enrolled immediately upon admission. . . There shall be a minimum of five hours of instruction per day. . . Classes shall be coeducational.”

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Mental Health Professional
 - Youth (6)
 - Corrections Officer (1)
 - Supervisor

- Documents Reviewed
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Resident Orientation Handbook
 - Programming Schedules
 - Educator Licenses
 - Advanced Correctional Healthcare (ACH) contract
 - Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Pamphlet
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Sample Medical Files

Overview

The St. Clair County Juvenile Detention Center is a 38-bed facility located in Belleville, IL. The on-site portion of the inspection took place on October 1, 2024. The facility has eight living units surrounding a control room, gym, outdoor space, classrooms, and multi-purpose rooms. There were 26 youth detained on the date of the inspection.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

At the time of the audit, the facility employed 19 direct care staff with four vacancies noted. Administrators report that maintaining adequate staffing numbers has been a challenge in 2024 (averaging 18 staff for much of the year) and they have experienced a lot of turnover. The impacts of staffing problems on programming and youth confinement are significant and detailed in sections below. Administrators cite several issues that contribute to staffing challenges at the facility, including a low starting salary (\$44,900) compared to other commensurate county jobs, hiring only individuals who reside in St. Clair County, and a county policy that does not permit paying staff for overtime worked, instead relying on earned comp time exclusively. The facility employs one part-time dietary worker, but when she is unavailable, line staff must take time away from supervising youth to coordinate food prep and delivery. The overtime policy contributes to staff turnover and exacerbates the negative impacts on youth programming and confinement when comp time is used. The lack of full-time dietary staff also contributes to youth confinement.

Limited staffing numbers caused disruptions to the facility training process. Employees do participate in online training guided by the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC), however there have been significant limitations to on-site, in-person training.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The St. Clair County Juvenile Detention Center conducts intakes 24-hours per day. Youth complete a Mental Status Information Form upon intake that captures information on mental health and substance abuse backgrounds. The information is forwarded to the Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) if needed. County Detention Standards require completion of a Risk for Victimization Assessment during the intake process. This process is not in place within the facility. The facility Assistant Superintendent is identified as the PREA Coordinator, however youth at the facility were not familiar with PREA standards. The facility has not pursued a formal PREA audit.

Physical spaces and conditions in the facility are poor and not up to par with County Detention Standards. The living unit dayrooms are very stark, containing only a cafeteria-style table and lone bench bolted to the floor against one of the walls. This is a repeat finding from previous inspections. Youth also complained about the quality of the showers. Inspection of the shower area in one living units showed the showers to be dirty and in need of repair. The shower had six shower heads, only two of which produced water. The showers were controlled by a button, but on one of the shower heads the button needed to remain depressed for the shower to work. On the other, the water only dispersed for a few seconds before needing to be pressed again. The water never became warm. The quality of youth clothing also needs improvement. All youth were dressed in correctional-style orange jumpsuits. It is recommended the facility purchase new clothing and move to dressing youth in pants and shirts instead of jumpsuits.

It should be noted that since the time of the inspection and the completion of this report, facility administrators report that since the time of the inspection, they have begun to complete the Risk for Victimization Assessment for youth intakes. They also report they also submitted a petition for

additional funds for furniture, have completed repairs and painting to shower floors and walls. The facility is owed by the Public Building Commission, and they have requested hardware replacements for shower heads. The facility has also requested approval for a second Assistant Superintendent position from AOIC.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.50 Admissions Procedures states: “Within 72 hours after the youth’s arrival at the facility and periodically throughout a youth’s confinement, the agency shall obtain and use information about each youth’s personal history and behavior to reduce the risk of sexual abuse by or upon a resident. Assessments shall be conducted using an objective screening instrument. . . Clothing and other garments shall be of an appropriate size and in a state of good, usable condition.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Implement the PREA Risk for Victimization Assessment for youth within 72 hours of admission and periodically throughout a youth’s confinement.
 - Purchase new clothing and ensure youth have daily access to clean clothing in good condition.
 - Complete a formal PREA audit.
 - Complete repairs to facility showers.
 - Improve the quality of furniture available to youth in the living unit dayrooms.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

In prior years, youth had access to several programs provided through community-based agencies, most of which are run through the East St. Louis Wraparound Program. Many of those programs have paused, however, due to staffing changes at the program.

Much of the youth experience at the facility can be characterized as isolated. Youth are confined for much of every day due to low staffing ratios. Youth and staff report nearly daily confinements due to either entire facility or rotating confinements. Facility confinement data supports this, as there were a total of 1003 confinements noted in the month of June for staffing limitations. Nearly every day of the month had these types of confinements noted, typically lasting between three and eight hours for each confinement. Youth are frequently subjected to multiple stretches of these confinements each day. This was directly observed on the day of the inspection, as only 10 of the 26 youth in the facility were present in school at the start of the inspection, with 11 youth confined in their rooms. Youth and staff reported these confinements interfered with regular access to the gym. Several youth estimated they only go to the gym once every other day.

Youth isolation extends beyond room confinements. It is a facility norm for youth to remain in their dayrooms when they are not in class or other programming, with their only interaction being with the other youth on their living unit. Facility staff do not typically spend time directing programming with youth in the dayrooms, only briefly interacting during security checks or tasks requiring them to enter the living unit. There is an observable lack of connection and interaction between youth and staff at the facility. Multiple interviewed youth only knew the name of one detention employee (the dayshift supervisor). Youth also shared they had difficulty getting the attention of staff when they are in their

rooms; resorting to banging on the windows, sometimes, for extended periods, to get staff attention. There are facility requirements that checks be done regularly by facility staff, however auditors were not able to verify they were done according to expectations as facility administrators reported the electronic system that captures the checks was not functional and could not download the record of the checks. Facility administrators reported that between the time of the inspection and completion of the report, they have implemented a “Cadmus System” to capture a method to track security checks. This will be reviewed during the next audit.

Confinement and isolation are worse for girls in the facility. On the date of the inspection, there was only one girl detained. Despite being admitted the week prior, she had yet to attend school and was alone in her dayroom. Since her arrival, she had been alone on the living unit, had not been able to interact with any other youth and had limited interactions with staff members. Her living unit dayroom did not have a television. When she was out of her room, she did not have anything to occupy her time other than a book and some art materials. This youth’s time at the facility had thus far nearly been completely isolated.

Administrators reported they have made some changes to the facility behavior program by implementing a new incentive system in which youth earn points during the week which are converted into “Boogie Bucks” that can be redeemed from a facility store twice a week for books, puzzles, hygiene items, or extra phone calls. They also report they have adjusted the system of consequences cited as non-compliant in the 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports, changing from a lengthy confinement-based process to short-term confinements in which staff check on youth every 15 minutes and release them as soon as they are de-escalated. While these changes would be positive improvements, given the volume of operationally driven confinement at the facility it is difficult to render a compliance assessment of these improvements.

The facility is transitioning towards the use of Handle with Care as an intervention technique to manage youth who become aggressive. The facility trainer recently completed a train-the-trainer course. The rest of the staff have not been trained on this technique, nor have they been trained on any other physical intervention technique. This is significant area of risk for the facility, both from a youth and staff safety perspective, as well as from a liability standpoint. Facility staff need to be trained on de-escalation and physical intervention strategies.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- Section 2602.130 Supervision states: “Staff members shall maintain a record of visual contact with each youth no less than once every 30 minutes. . . Supervision of youth shall be constant.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Implement a method to track security checks in a way that is measurable and retrievable.
 - Assign employees to directly supervise and engage with youth when they are in programming, including within living unity dayrooms.
- 2602.170 Discipline states: “All facilities shall have a developmentally appropriate, research informed behavioral management program that supports the development of pro-social skills and provides positive reinforcement for good behavior. The program shall provide opportunities for

immediate recognition of pro-social behavior as well as meaningful incentives and rewards for improvement and maintenance of desired behavior. The program shall also include potential sanctions for negative behavior that are developmentally appropriate, research informed, proportionate and fair. . . Room confinement may be used only as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth and others. Room confinement shall not be used for a fixed period, 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:
 - Ensure youth are only confined as a temporary response to behavior and only lasts until the youth has de-escalated.
 - Ensure all staff are trained on youth de-escalation and use of physical intervention.

Youth Grievances

Youth at the facility do not have access to a meaningful grievance process. At the time of the inspection, the facility did have forms available and a grievance box to collect them, however, multiple youth reported they have submitted grievances without getting any type of response. Administrators were not maintaining a grievance log, and acknowledged they do not give responses to youth if the grievance is not determined to be “legitimate.” Grievances were only collected once per week. They report that between the time of the inspection and date of the report that grievances have started to be collected daily and a log will be kept.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- Section 2602.40 Records states: “A log of all grievances shall be maintained. The log shall include the name of the youth, date the grievance was filed, nature of the grievance, the date of any appeal and the date the grievance was resolved.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Ensure grievance forms and grievances boxes are available in all youth living units and programming areas.
 - Document all youth grievances on a log, inclusive of the resident name, date of the grievance, response date, and outcome.
 - Collect grievances every day.
 - Provide a response to youth for all grievances submitted.

Medical and Health Care

The facility entered into contract with Advanced Correctional Healthcare (ACH) which went into effect in March of this year. A nurse is onsite eight hours per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Administrators report the nurse packages medications and does medical assessments for youth intakes when she is on-

site and to see youth on sick call. They report when she is present, she verifies youth medications, but facility staff do so when she is not available. This process was difficult to verify in the inspection process as the nurse was not onsite at the time of the inspection and was unable to be reached for an interview at the completion of the inspection.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.50 Admission Procedures states: “Any medication in the possession of a youth at admission shall be labeled for identification and withheld until a medical doctor determines the disposition.”
- Section 2602.80 Medical and Health Care states: “A medical doctor shall be available to attend the medical needs of youth. . . General medical physician services shall be provided in accordance with one or more of the following procedures: on salary, in accordance with locally established personnel pay plan; a contract with a local physician or clinic for full-time coverage at specific hours and for emergencies; a contract with a local physician to conduct sick call, to be on call for emergencies and to examine newly admitted youth; arrangements with a nearby hospital to provide all needed medical services; and services rendered, without cost, by another agency or department or with costs prorated. All youth confined for more than seven days shall be given a medical screening by a medical doctor, registered nurse or physician assistant.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Ensure all youth medication is verified by a qualified medical professional.
 - Ensure all youth receive a physical within seven days of intake.
 - Implement an inventory and control process for youth medication.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided through Chestnut Behavioral Health. Youth are screened using a Mental Status Form upon intake. If any areas of concern are flagged, the facility superintendent is contacted to determine if a youth will receive an Illinois Medicaid Comprehensive Assessment of Needs and Strengths (IM+CANS) Assessment. Youth are referred to the Chestnut caseload based on the results of the assessment. The MHP is on-site twice per week and reported that she provides most of her services in a group format in living unit dayrooms due to the operational problems at the facility. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 12 youth on her caseload. An additional service provider is available twice per week through the “Embrace of Change” program through the East St. Louis Police Department. That provider conducts CBT groups with youth.

Education

Educational services are offered through the East St. Louis School District and operates based upon the School District 189 schedule. Summer school is offered to youth. There are two primary educators posted at the facility, one of which is a special education teacher who operates a self-contained classroom. They have access to the Edgenuity Online Credit Recovery Program, but only use it to supplement direct instruction. Teachers maintain a thorough attendance record that indicates when youth are present in class as well as reasons for absences. Given the number of youth at the facility (26 on the date of the audit), the number of educators is insufficient to meet County Detention Standards.

For the third consecutive year, interviews with youth, staff, and educators revealed two primary reasons for youth absences. One is directly related to staffing shortages at the facility, driven by the need for facility Corrections Officers to provide transportation for youth court. It is a frequent occurrence that the facility cancels school due to staffing shortages during these times

The second reason driving school absences is the facility approach to handling youth conflicts. The facility regularly splits youth into different groups due to interpersonal youth conflicts. On average, youth attend less than half of the average school day. Attendance is worse for girls, as the facility has a practice of frequently not permitting girls to attend classes with male youth. This practice is out of compliance with County Detention Standards.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- 2602.230 Education states: “Teacher student ratios are at least 1:12 for general education and 1:8 for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). . . All youth are enrolled immediately upon admission. . . There shall be a minimum of five hours of instruction per day. . . Classes shall be coeducational.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Implement balanced and restorative interventions to address youth conflict without solely relying on separation to prevent school absences.
 - Ensure all youth receive five hours of educational services each day.
 - Ensure classes are co-educational.
 - Hire at least one additional educator.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Admissions Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the PREA Risk for Victimization Assessment for youth within 72 hours of admission and periodically throughout a youth’s confinement. • Hire a PREA Officer to supervise facility compliance with PREA standards. • Purchase new clothing and ensure youth have daily access to clean clothing in good condition. • Complete a formal PREA audit. • Complete repairs to facility showers. • Improve the quality of furniture available to youth in the living unit dayrooms.
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure youth are only confined as a temporary response to behavior and only lasts until the youth has de-escalated. • Ensure all staff are trained on youth de-escalation and use of physical intervention.
Youth Grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure grievance forms and grievances boxes are available in all youth living units and programming areas. • Document all youth grievances on a log, inclusive of the resident name, date of the grievance, response date, and outcome.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect grievances every day. • Provide a response to youth for all grievances submitted.
Medical and Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all youth medication is verified by a qualified medical professional. • Ensure all youth receive a physical within seven days of intake. • Implement an inventory and control process for youth medication.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement balanced and restorative interventions to address youth conflict without solely relying on separation to prevent school absences. • Ensure all youth receive five hours of educational services each day. • Ensure classes are co-educational. • Hire at least one additional educator.