

2024 Will County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

JOHN ALBRIGHT, CHIEF OF PERFORMANCE AND INNOVATION
TYRIE FLUKER, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted its annual inspection of the River Valley Detention Center in Will County on April 9, 2024, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b).

There were several areas of strength noted, particularly related to the volume of medical and mental health services available to youth. The physical quality and cleanliness of the facility is very good.

While there were some significant strengths noted during the review, some areas of non-compliance were found, all of which are repeat findings from the last three years. The sections and specific requirements of the County Juvenile Detention Standards, 20 Ill. Admin. Code 2602, (“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. Sections of the report also include policy and practice recommendations when applicable. Those recommendations are combined in a second table at the end of the report.

Areas of Non-Compliance

Section	Requirement
2602.140 Security	Detention rooms and storage rooms shall be kept locked at all times when not in use.
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. 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. . . The use of chemical agents, including pepper spray, tear gas, and mace is generally prohibited. Chemical agents may be utilized when the youth's current behavior indicates that a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be impossible or insufficient to effectively diminish the imminent risk of serious harm.
2602.210 Visiting	Visits shall be contact visits unless specific concerns preclude contact visits for identified individuals.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Superintendent McCormick
 - 1 Psychologist
 - 1 Nursing Staff
 - Art Therapist
 - 2 Juvenile Detention Officers (JDOs)
 - 1 Detention Supervisor
 - 3 Educators
 - Program Manager
 - 1 Dietary Staff
 - 5 youth

- Documents Reviewed
 - Policy 9.14 “Use of Force (Non-Deadly)”
 - Policy 9.25 “Chemical Agents”
 - Policy 9.44 “Pod Procedures”
 - Policy 10.06 “Classification Committee”
 - Policy 10.07 “Disciplinary Segregation”
 - Policy 11.05 “Juvenile Grievance Procedures”
 - Programming Schedules
 - Dietary Menus
 - Behavior Management Training Manual
 - Employee Training Records
 - Fire Department Inspection Report (12/7/23)
 - Food Service Inspection
 - Current Staff Roster
 - Educator Credentials
 - Mental Health Staff Credentials
 - PREA Training Records
 - Use of Force Training Materials
 - Resident Handbook
 - Sample Youth Files
 - Individualized Programming Log
 - Collective Bargaining Agreement – Article XI
 - Mental Health Group Therapy Schedule
 - Mental Health Assessment Template
 - 2023 Physical Intervention and Use of Chemical Restraint Documentation
 - 2023 Youth Grievance Log
 - New Hire Background Check Log

Overview

The River Valley Detention Center in Will County is a 102-bed facility in Joliet, IL. The facility has two housing pods with five living units in each pod. At the time of inspection, the facility had a population of 19 youth, all of which were housed amongst the living units of one of the pods. The physical condition and cleanliness of the facility is strong.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

While the facility does have some Juvenile Detention Officer openings, there is adequate staffing to cover the needs of youth. At the time of inspection, the facility was staffed with a total of eight supervisory positions and 28 JDOs (an increase of seven JDOs from the 2023 inspection). Over the past year, facility administrators and youth report that staffing resources have never fallen to a level that impacted youth programming.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility has multiple programming opportunities available to youth throughout the week. An art therapist holds a weekly art group with a rotation of youth. Youth create art, passing it along to peers to each add a portion. Facility staff also facilitate cognitive behavior training (CBT) programming each afternoon, based on a set of lesson plans available as resources to staff. A church group meets with youth once per week. The facility hosts weekly movie nights.

The point and level system is the same from the 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports; utilizing four behavior levels that are classified by colors (blue, orange, green, and purple). Privileges for higher levels include later bedtimes and other privileges. Youth can also make purchases from a commissary with points they earn.

The facility offers non-contact family visitation four days per week but does not yet permit contact visits for youth and families. Since 2021, County Detention Standards have required visits to be contact unless there is a specific concern precluding the contact visit. This is the third consecutive year this area of non-compliance has been noted. There is ample space for contact visitation to be offered and administrators reported they have prepared rooms to offer these visits by installing cameras in the locations, however the visits are still not being offered. The facility does provide two free phone calls to youth in accordance with County Detention Standards and permits youth to make additional phone calls in the living unit dayrooms utilizing a collect call phone system. While it is a strength of the facility that youth are able to make additional phone calls to family, the collect calls cost youth and their families \$.50/minute, a cost that was identified by several youth as a barrier to maintaining consistent contact with their loved ones.

Both the 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports cited several issues concerning the overuse of confinement at the facility related to disciplinary sanctions and scheduling of employee breaks. While some changes have been made, many of these issues remain. In August of 2022, the facility implemented the use of "Individualized Programming" to work with youth who exhibit egregious behaviors. The intent

is to incorporate the use of individualized assignments and the use of confinement to address these behaviors. Youth are provided assignment packets to complete, which are then reviewed and processed by a team before a youth is removed from the status. The use of assignments in this way continues to be a positive step for the facility. In practice, however, the overuse of confinement in these circumstances remains. In 2023, there were 77 occasions in which youth were placed on such a plan. Most of the plans lasted for three days and consisted of long periods of confinement. The end of the individual programming process typically includes 2-3 days in which a youth is placed on “behavior orientation” status. While on this status, youth engage in normal programming during the first shift by attending school and other programming. On the evening shift, however, youth are only permitted out of their rooms for a shower and phone call. These youth occasionally participate in scheduled programming on second shift (such as religious programming) but are otherwise confined to their rooms. In order to come into compliance with County Detention Standards, there needs to be a significant reduction in the amount of confinement associated with youth on individualized plans.

The 2022 and 2023 Inspection Reports cited some additional concerns over the standard use of youth confinement for non-behavioral reasons. While the facility is well-staffed from a staff/youth ratio standpoint, youth are confined in their rooms for four hours per day while JDOs take breaks. Article XI of the current collective bargaining agreement states:

“Within each eight (8) hour shift, and ten (10) hour shift, each juvenile detention officer and CRT member, respectively, shall receive a sixty (60) minute break at approximately the middle of the shift. Should the employee choose, such breaks may be taken in “staff only” areas of the facility.”

Youth are confined in their rooms for two hours in the middle of the morning shift and again for two hours in the evening while these breaks occur. This was observed in person on the day of the inspection. In total, youth are confined in their rooms for a total of four hours each day for reasons that have nothing to do with their behavior. This practice is significantly out of compliance with County Detention Standards which stipulate that “[r]oom confinement may only be used as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others.” This is the third consecutive year this area of non-compliance has been observed.

The facility continues to permit the use of chemical restraints. Per facility documentation, there were 13 uses of chemical restraints in 2023. On at least two occasions, documentation reviewed did not justify the use of chemical restraints based upon the standards for its use. In one case, a youth was being administered medication while in his room. During the administration, a pill dropped onto the floor and the youth refused to return it to staff. Staff report the youth became verbally aggressive while in the room and a chemical restraint (Mk9 defogger) was sprayed into the room. Afterwards, the youth was administered an intermuscular injection of Haldol at direction of an on-call psychiatrist when the youth did not de-escalate after administration of the chemical restraint. In another situation, an incident report indicated a youth refused to enter their room, slammed their room door, and walked to the phone area. Chemical restraints were utilized in this situation as well. In both cases, documentation did not sufficiently support the use of chemical restraints by indicating that the deployment of a physical or mechanical restraint would be impossible or insufficient. The 2022 Inspection Report recommended

changes to facility policy to affirm that the use of chemical restraints only be used as a last resort in the use of force continuum. That change has yet to be made. The facility policy that governs the use of chemical agents has been reviewed annually but has not been revised since 2005.

It was also observed during the inspection that the doors to youth rooms were left ajar when youth were not in them. County Detention Standards require that doors be secured when not in use.

Facility administrators report they are taking steps to revise the facility incentive program and reduce the amount of confinement associated with Individualized Programming.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Recommendations

- Section 2602.140 Security states: “Detention rooms and storage rooms shall be kept locked at all times when not in use.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Lock resident room doors when not in use.
- 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. 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:
 - Structure staff breaks in a way that does not cause youth confinement.
 - Only utilize confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others until the youth is calm enough to rejoin programming.
- 2602.170 Discipline states: “The use of chemical agents, including pepper spray, tear gas, and mace is generally prohibited. Chemical agents may be utilized when the youth’s current behavior indicates that a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be impossible or insufficient to effectively diminish the imminent risk of serious harm.”
 - Revise Policy 9.25 “Chemical Agents” to affirm the use of chemical agents as a last resort in the use of force continuum, only to be used when a youth’s current behavior indicates that a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be insufficient to diminish the risk of serious harm.
- 2602.210 Visiting states: “Visits shall be contact visits unless specific concerns preclude contact visits for identified individuals.”
 - Recommendations:
 - Permit youth and families to have contact visits.
 - Identify a way to reduce the cost of collect calls for youth and families.
 - Offer virtual visits.

Medical and Health Care

The amount of medical and mental health resources available to youth remains a significant strength for the facility. The facility contracts with Wellpath for medical services. Nursing staff are scheduled from 7:00am – 11:30pm each day and are on-call overnight. The facility is staffed by three full time nurses and seven on a PRN status. A physician is available two days per week and a nurse practitioner is available one additional day per week. All youth receive a medical assessment upon intake. Medication is only administered by nursing staff and there is a process for verifying youth medication on intake and obtaining required prescriptions through a physician. The storage process for medication is strong and the medical documentation reviewed was clear and organized. The sick call process is well-established. Boxes are present on each living unit for youth to submit sick call slips that are checked twice per day.

Mental Health Services

The department has six psychologists on staff. All youth receive a mental health assessment within 72 hours of intake that includes a PREA assessment. The facility utilizes both a long-form and short-form assessment. Any youth that has previous mental health contacts or concerns receives the long-form mental health assessment, the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test), Beck Youth Inventory, Jesness Inventory-Revised, and Personality Assessment Inventory – Adolescent version.

Clinicians meet with youth on the mental health caseload weekly and provide 24-hour on-call coverage. An art therapist conducts daily groups with youth on a rotating basis covering topics such as creating a safety plan, conflict and decision-making, and building a support system. The facility also has a process for youth to request mental health services, similar to a sick call process.

Youth Grievances

Interviewed youth were fluent in the grievance process and knew where to obtain a grievance form if needed. The facility has a policy specific to the youth grievance process and tracks youth grievances and responses via a grievance log.

Education

Educational services are provided by Joliet Township School District 204. The facility has two full time teachers and a long-term sub. The third teaching position is open. The three full-time teaching positions are sufficient given the population size of the facility. Youth are administered reading and math assessments upon arrival to the facility. Teachers reach out to youth home schools in order to obtain work for the youth to complete while in detention. Educators utilize both work provided by youth home schools and the Apex Credit Recovery System to provide services for youth.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

The updated County Detention Standards include requirements in several sections related to federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. The River Valley Detention Center has not sought out a formal PREA audit, but the facility has implemented some of the requirements from the County Detention Standards. All new employees receive the required background check. Youth are

administered a Risk for Victimization Screening upon intake in a manner consistent with standards and there is ample documentation showing employees have received training on PREA. Since the time of the 2022 audit, the facility has completed background checks on existing employees employed for more than five years. The Resident Handbook has been updated and contains a page with information on PREA that contains different ways youth can report sexual abuse or harassment, inclusive of third-party phone numbers accessible from the youth collect call system. Interviewed youth were familiar with PREA. The facility is scheduled to have a preliminary “PREA Readiness” audit conducted by the Moss Group in July of 2024.

Recommendations

Section	Recommendations
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lock resident room doors when not in use.
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure staff breaks in a way that does not cause youth confinement. • Only utilize confinement as a temporary response to behavior that threatens the safety of the youth or others until the is calm enough to rejoin programming. • Revise Policy 9.25 “Chemical Agents” to affirm the use of chemical agents as a last resort in the use of force continuum, only to be used when a youth’s current behavior indicates a physical hold or mechanical restraint would be insufficient to diminish the risk of serious harm.
Visiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit youth and families to have contact visits. • Identify a way to reduce the cost of collect calls for youth and families. • Offer virtual visits.