

2022 Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center Inspection Report

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Executive Summary

The Department of Juvenile Justice conducted an annual inspection of the Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center on October 27, 2022, pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-15-2(b). The center was found to be fully compliant with the requirements of the 20 Ill. Adm. Code 2602 County Juvenile Detention Standards (“County Detention Standards”).

Areas of Non-Compliance

None.

Methodology

- Interviews Conducted
 - Director
 - Assistant Director
 - Two Detention Officers
 - Three youth
 - Two Nurses
 - Mental Health Practitioner

- Documents Reviewed
 - Sample youth files
 - Sample medical file
 - 15-minute check records
 - Sample incident reports
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) Programming Materials
 - Programming Schedules
 - Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center Handbook
 - Sample Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Orientation Acknowledgement Forms
 - Contract with Kleppin & Associates
 - Youth Grievance Procedure
 - Grievance Logs
 - Sample Youth Grievances and Responses

Overview

The Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center is a 26-bed facility located in Danville, IL. The facility has four primary living units surrounding a control center. There is a gym on-site, outdoor recreation space, and a large classroom where much of the primary programming takes place. The facility had 10 youth in custody on the date of the inspection. The physical condition and cleanliness of the facility is excellent. On the day of the inspection, most youth were engaged in educational programming or professional visits.

Admission Policy and Procedures

The Vermilion County Juvenile Detention Center conducts youth intakes 24 hours a day. The facility no longer utilizes strip searches as standard practice for youth upon intake. All youth are screened using the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) upon intake to assess for any risk of self-harm. Youth are only quarantined for COVID-19 mitigation purposes until assessed by a nurse, which typically occurs on the following business day.

The facility has an active youth orientation process for youth that includes an informational video of Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. A summary of PREA standards and youth rights are in the facility Youth Orientation Manual. Youth sign an acknowledgement form after receiving the PREA orientation and the facility was able to provide substantial documentation indicating PREA orientation is taking place for all youth. Youth interviewed during the audit were familiar with PREA standards.

Personnel, Staffing and Supervision

Vermilion County has taken aggressive steps to address staffing shortages that exist for the field in general. Over the past year, the county raised starting salaries for line staff to \$56,000 annually, with an additional 3% increase expected in December. Every existing employee also received a \$5,000 bonus. At the time of the audit, the facility employed 21 Detention Officers, six Supervisors, a Director, and an Assistant Director. The staffing levels at the facility are adequate to maintain the staffing ratios dictated by County Detention Standards and the county has clearly invested financial resources to maintain staffing levels in a challenging recruitment environment.

Detention Programs, Youth Discipline, and Confinement

The facility has an active programming schedule throughout the day. Youth attend school in the morning and early afternoon. After school, staff-directed programming and recreation is held in the school classroom. Youth eat meals together in the school classroom and have daily access to the gymnasium. Youth go the gym individually rather than as a group. Administrators shared this is a facility-directed COVID-19 mitigation protocol. It should be noted that the Vermilion County JDC is the only facility that employs this strategy as general practice. While not out of compliance with any standard, there are likely opportunities for youth to engage in large muscle recreation activities with other youth rather than alone.

The facility has made substantial improvements to the behavior management programming offered to youth since the last inspection. In recent months, the facility has implemented a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program. PBIS is a nationally recognized, evidence-based program to support youth social, educational, and behavioral competencies. Facility administrators participate in PBIS calls every other week with other facilities throughout the country as part of a shared learning and collaboration environment.

The facility has a robust incentive system associated with behavior levels (an orientation level called “Zinc” and four behavior levels, referred to as “Bronze,” “Silver,” “Gold,” and “Platinum”). Youth earn points throughout the day based on their behavior. Points are converted into levels. Youth on the highest level (Platinum) earn Amazon Fire Tablets that they can use both in and outside of their rooms. Other privileges include a handheld gaming system, stress balls, a flight simulator, and 15 minutes of 1:1 time with a Detention Officer of their choosing each week. The steps the facility has taken over the past year to increase the number of positive incentives available to youth is commendable and there has been a clear economic investment in the program. It is also commendable that the list of incentives includes experiential incentives, which have been shown to be more effective at rewarding positive behavior than tokens alone. Youth who were interviewed shared they felt motivated by the incentives built into the program.

Youth who engage in negative behaviors can lose points or earn timeouts. The facility has made improvements to the timeout process over the past year. Now, youth placed on timeouts are checked every 15-minutes to assess if the youth is ready to return to programming. Youth and staff interviews confirmed that timeouts are temporary and do not last longer than is needed for a youth to calm down. All timeouts are documented on incident reports; however, the start and end times are not noted in those reports. Documentation could be enhanced to better track the amount of time youth spend on timeouts. Auditors did review the facility electronic security check logs, as security checks are only completed when youth are in their room. While logs from recent weeks showed youth were out of their rooms for much of the day, there were some randomly selected weekend dates from several months prior that indicated multiple youth were in their rooms until late morning on some weekend dates. The facility was able to share some documented reasons for some of the youth, but there was not clear documentation for others. Youth interviews indicated that youth were out of their rooms and engaged in programming as common practice and there were no reports from youth indicating extended lockdowns for any reason. The facility is assessed as compliant in this area but could enhance the quality of documentation for any behavioral or operational reasons for confinement.

The facility also employs a “Special Program” status for youth who engage in more egregious behaviors. Youth on this status are housed in general living units but program separately from other youth. They still participate in regular educational and programming services without a reliance on confinement but do so individually. There were two youth on this status at the time of the audit and both youth were out of their rooms participating in educational activities. Youth on special program status can participate in school from their pod dayrooms (this is noted in greater detail in the Education section of this report). One youth was out in his dayroom working on schoolwork. He affirmed he has been able to participate in school and other recreational activities while he’s been on the status. Furthermore, youth on Special Program status are still eligible to advance through the PBIS level system. One of the youth on Special Program status had earned his way back to the highest (platinum) level and had access to the Amazon Fire Tablet associated with it.

Recommendations*

- Permit youth to utilize the gym in groups.
- Enhance confinement tracking to include:
 - Documentation of any operational reasons for youth confinement.

- Start and end times for behavioral timeouts.

**From the time of the on-site inspection to the final publishing of this report, the facility has implemented a process for tracking youth confinement and reports youth are now accessing the gym in groups.*

Medical and Health Care

Medical staff are provided by the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department. A nurse is on-site every weekday in the morning. The nurse will assess any youth intakes that have arrived, as well as package medications for distribution and respond to any sick call requests from youth. A medical doctor and nurse practitioner is available through the sheriff's department when needed. There is process in place for verifying youth medication.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided by multiple entities. The facility has a contract with a local mental health agency (Kleppin & Associates) to provide counseling services for 8-10 youth per week. Services are also provided by a counselor through Aunt Martha's Health and Wellness, funded by a Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services Program through the Department of Human Services (DHS). Aunt Martha's is contracted through DHS to work with youth in Vermilion County involved in the juvenile justice system. The Aunt Martha's counselor is a master's level student working under the oversight of a therapist and on-site twice per week. The practitioners from Aunt Martha's and Kleppin & Associates coordinate caseloads at the facility. Youth receive an initial assessment and individual counseling services. Youth on the Aunt Martha's caseload have a Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) case plan developed as part of a three-month program that can extend post-release from the facility. Groups are conducted in the school classroom on Monday and Wednesday afternoons utilizing the Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS) curriculum. There is also a substance abuse counselor through Rosecrance that provides services to youth at the facility.

Education

The facility has two full-time educators and substitute teachers employed by School District 118. All youth are enrolled into School District 118 or work on classes from their home school. One of the full-time educators and a substitute are licensed special education teachers. The school uses a blended model, using both direct instruction and the Edmentum Credit Recovery System for online educational services. Youth are assigned Chromebooks to use in the classroom to access Edmentum. The facility has also installed systems to allow youth on living units to participate in school remotely. Each living unit has a camera with microphone and speakers attached to a television so youth on quarantine or Special Program statuses can attend school remotely and participate in lessons.

The facility has partnered with a local community college to provide youth access to a marketing class. Youth can dually enroll and obtain college credit while finishing high school classes at the facility. One

youth who was interviewed (and on a Special Program) was working on his college classwork in his pod dayroom. The facility provides youth with Chromebooks to complete classwork and correspond with the class instructor. The youth was able to navigate the community college learning platform and receive weekly assignments. He expects to fully graduate from high school at the end of the year.

Recommendations*

Section	Recommendations
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permit youth to utilize the gym in groups.• Enhance confinement tracking to include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Documentation of any operational reasons for youth confinement.○ Start and end times for behavioral timeouts.

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