



**HOW ARE THE  
CHILDREN?**

Teens are different.

**OIJO 2019**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

# OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT JUVENILE OMBUDSPERSON

## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

This is the annual report submitted by the Office of the Independent Juvenile Ombudsperson (OIJO) to the Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois and the Illinois General Assembly summarizing the activities done in furtherance of the purpose of the OIJO pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-2.7-35. This report covers state fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019) the period hereafter known as FY2019.<sup>1</sup>

## TEENS ARE DIFFERENT

All teens go through similar phases regardless of race, economics and geography - the need for independence, a separate identity, authority testing and sometimes even testing the physics of the natural world. It's part of growing up; it's also linked to developmental changes in the brain that will eventually help them become analytical adults. During the teen years, the frontal cortex is developing, but not fully developed.<sup>2</sup>

It is the time of life when human beings are more likely to exhibit the most rebellious and risk-taking behaviors. We know that not just from our personal experience, but from the benefit of many years of psychological and medical research.

As both science and any thoughtful parent can attest, our societal values of power and punishment can often add gasoline to the fire of teenage angst. These demonstrated carceral values have very little chance of changing negative behavior or guiding teens into law abiding successful citizenship. Power is not support and punishment is not discipline.

Regrettably, our juvenile and criminal legal systems mirror our economic and educational systems, leaving poor and minority youth to bear the brunt of our sluggish acceptance of the scientific research. To further exacerbate the failings of our systems, as a society we have determined (largely based upon race/ethnicity and income) that some teens' development and opportunity for future successes don't matter.

We prove that determination in the school systems, economic opportunities, recreational/ environmental landscapes and care we provide to those youth in our communities. Significantly, we have a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) populated by many traumatized teenagers that come from poor and/or minority neighborhoods of lack - lack of good schools, lack of good jobs for their parents and themselves, lack of recreational outlets, lack of environmentally clean and safe resources and spaces and a lack of privileged adults that care.

Most of the teens committed to DJJ custody in FY2019 came from nine counties with vastly smaller populations than Cook County.<sup>3</sup> Just five of those counties<sup>4</sup> were responsible for 32.5 percent of the 667 teens committed to DJJ in FY2019. Cook County committed 27.6 percent of the total number of commitments.

Illinois citizens spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to incarcerate youth from our communities - to separate them from their parents, friends, neighborhoods, schools and normal adolescent development. However, we loathe the notion of spending *that kind of money* to provide resources and opportunities that experience and research tell us reduce the likelihood of incarceration, increase academic and economic viability and increase public safety.

The good news is that there are continuously fewer and fewer youth committed to DJJ and under DJJ supervision. In FY2019 DJJ reported that between FY1999 and FY2019 there was an 87% drop in DJJ population. With a smaller population DJJ is poised to provide the robust resources, services and opportunities desperately needed by our young people and essential to its mission.

### Top Ten Committing Counties<sup>5</sup>

Committing County	Committed Youth		Total County Population <sup>6</sup>
	by #	by %	
Kane	13	1.9%	532,403
Lake	20	3%	696,535
Macon	21	3.1%	104,009
Vermillion	22	3.3%	75,758
Rock Island	37	5.5%	141,879
Sangamon	37	5.5%	94,672
Peoria	39	5.8%	179,179
Champaign	44	6.6%	209,689
Winnebago	60	9.0%	282,572
Cook	184	27.6%	5,150,233

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## VISITS WITH YOUTH<sup>7</sup>

The Ombudsperson and Deputy Ombudsperson met confidentially and regularly with youth.<sup>8</sup> Visits took place primarily at Illinois Youth Centers, including during peace circles and StoryCatcher performances. Youth in custody and on aftercare were also visited at residential placement and treatment centers, community organizations and courthouses where youth had pending cases or motions.<sup>9</sup> Some visits included meeting with youth released from Illinois Department of Corrections pursuant to commutation.<sup>10</sup>

CENTER LOCATION	TOTAL VISITS	TOTAL YOUTH VISITS
IYC CHICAGO	16	114
IYC HARRISBURG	25	464
IYC PERE MARQUETTE	11	102
IYC ST. CHARLES	19	388
IYC WARRENVILLE	12	112
OTHER SITE VISITS	18	24
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1204</b>

## PHONE CALLS<sup>11</sup>

Youth in DJJ custody and on aftercare, their family members and others calling on their behalf were able to contact the OIJO by telephone seven days a week. The calls from the Illinois Youth Centers (IYC) were free and unmonitored.<sup>12</sup> The concerns of youth expressed in calls were identical to those expressed during in person visits. The primary concerns of youth on aftercare were delayed initial visits from their Aftercare Specialists and electronic monitoring restrictions.

IYC Chicago Calls Total = 145	IYC Harrisburg Calls Total = 466	IYC Pere Marquette Calls Total = 7
IYC St. Charles Calls Total = 269	IYC Warrenville Calls Total = 92	Aftercare Calls <sup>13</sup> Total = 11
Residential Facility Calls Total = 11		



## ISSUES AND COMPLAINTS<sup>15</sup>

Issues and inquiries that youth brought to the OIJO for resolution were handled informally through conversations with leadership at Illinois Youth Centers (IYC) or the Director and executive staff members. Overall, issues and inquiries were resolved quickly. Issues that presented a serious or systemic issue and those not resolved timely often resulted in formal complaints to DJJ Director and executive leadership. Complaints often took longer than 30 days to resolve. Youth and/or family members were advised of the responses in person, by email or telephone call.

Most of the IYC related issues and complaints were related to youth-staff relationships. The degree to which the relationships appeared to be positive and the staff were directly responsive to youth was strongly correlated to the number of youth in the IYC.

IYC Pere Marquette, the minimum-security facility with the lowest number of youth, also had by far the fewest number of calls and expressed concerns to the OIJO. IYC Warrenville which previously housed only young ladies had a culture of supportive and responsive staff. It was no different with a small coed population. The complaints by youth rarely involved complaints that involved staff behavior. Because of the supportive environment, the OIJO requested that DJJ place all 13 and 14-year-old children committed to DJJ at IYC Warrenville.<sup>14</sup> Youth and staff at IYC Chicago generally had a respectful relationship and staff were relatively responsive. Youth with the best behavior rather than those with the greatest need were more likely to receive the most attention. IYC St. Charles and IYC Harrisburg housed the most youth and those youth had the most contact with the OIJO, respectively. A strong indicator of the fraught relationship between youth and staff was that, instead of unit staff reaching out to supervisors or administrators when requested by youth. Youth often contacted the OIJO to request that a Supervisor or Administrator speak with them.

Many of the systemic issues initially discussed in previous annual reports continue. This report will highlight a few of the continuing systemic concerns, formal complaints, and most common issues from each IYC.

## SYSTEMIC ISSUES

### DELAYED RELEASE

Youth under DCFS guardianship continued to experience long delays in release from DJJ custody because DCFS had not secured a place for them to live. As a result of repeated delayed releases and increasing delays, DJJ requested monthly meetings with DCFS to address the issue. The meetings increased to twice monthly in October 2018. The Ombudsperson's office also began participating in the meetings. DJJ pressed to place youth that were suffering the longest delays. The numbers of youth awaiting placement began to dwindle. In January 2019, there was only one youth awaiting placement. The numbers rose again shortly thereafter, but not to the level experienced in the fall of 2018. At the end of the fiscal year there was an issue burgeoning with extended delays for youth for whom DCFS was seeking out of state secure placement. DJJ began doing concurrent placement planning for some of those youth and were able to find appropriate in-state non-secure placements for a few in order to eliminate the delay or shorten it. The OIJO is paying close attention to this issue.

A 15 YEAR OLD ADOLESCENT UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF DCFS WAS COMMITTED TO DJJ IN LATE 2017 FOR A 2015 CLASS 4 DRUG OFFENSE. HE WAS RELEASED TO AFTERCARE FIVE MONTHS LATER IN 2018. HE RETURNED TO DJJ CUSTODY IN EARLY 2019 FOR NOT REPORTING TO HIS AFTERCARE SPECIALIST AND OTHER TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS. (HE WAS NOT ARRESTED FOR A NEW OFFENSE.) HE WAS APPROVED FOR RELEASE BUT REMAINED IN CUSTODY FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS AWAITING DCFS PLACEMENT. HE WAS ONE MONTH SHORT OF HIS 17TH BIRTHDAY WHEN HE WAS RELEASED TO AFTERCARE.<sup>16</sup>

DELAYED RELEASE

### DISPROPORTIONALITY

African American youth are overrepresented in DJJ.<sup>17</sup> Even as DJJ's youth population declined, the disproportionate percentage of African American youth and youth with African heritage increased. This is a longstanding issue in DJJ and the juvenile legal system. "In fact, research suggests that youth of color are often perceived to be more deserving of blame for their actions than white youth. As a result, these youth may be less likely to be diverted from the justice system, and more likely to receive a harsher sanction, even when they have been accused of a delinquent act with a severity similar to those committed by other youth of a different race or ethnicity."<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the percentage of youth with Black/African American heritage rose from 64.6% in FY2016 to 75% in FY2019, down .9% from FY2018.

In Illinois, Black/African American youth are singularly the group overrepresented in DJJ. In 2017, DJJ added a demographic category of mixed/bi-racial/multiracial. The anecdotal indications were that the category included exclusively, or nearly exclusively youth with a Black/African American parent. Therefore, this report includes that category in accessing the increase in the percentages of Black/African American youth in DJJ custody.

#### In FY2016

DJJ reported a population that was 64.6% Black/African American and did not have a category for mixed or bi-racial youth.<sup>19</sup>

#### In FY2017

DJJ reported 68.6% of their youth population was Black/African American and added the category of bi-racial youth (later categorized as Multiracial/Mixed) as 1.3%.<sup>20</sup>

#### In FY2018

DJJ reported 65.2% Black/African American youth and 5.7% Multiracial youth.<sup>21</sup>

#### In FY2019

DJJ reported 71% Black/African American youth and 4% Mixed youth.<sup>22</sup>

## SYSTEMIC ISSUES CONTINUED

### CONSECUTIVE SENTENCING

In some counties outside of Cook County, local prosecutors continue to engage in a practice tantamount to consecutive sentencing contrary to the criminal statutes, the Juvenile Court Act, well established research and public safety. In most documented cases, the State's Attorney's Office sought commitment to DJJ for only one of a teenager's known offenses, while holding all others in abeyance. Then, shortly before the scheduled release to aftercare, a warrant was issued for the youth on the unprosecuted offense, leading to recommitment to DJJ and continuous custody.

Although incarceration of youthful offenders is often viewed as a necessary means of public protection, research indicates that it is not an effective option in terms of either cost or outcome. Recent research demonstrates that in order to achieve the best outcomes for youthful offenders and the general public, community-based, empirically supported intervention practices must be adopted as an

alternative to incarceration wherever possible. The research consistently points to one salient fact about locking up young teenagers: juvenile incarceration is estimated to decrease high school graduation and increase adult incarceration,<sup>23</sup> and cumulative incarceration during adolescence and early adulthood is independently associated with the worst physical and mental health later in adulthood.<sup>24</sup>

### HUNGER

Youth complained at four of the five IYCs that they did not get enough to eat and were hungry. There were no complaints from youth at IYC Chicago. They protested that portion sizes were too small, and they were denied second helpings. Additionally, youth at IYC Harrisburg, IYC St. Charles, IYC Chicago and IYC Warrenville only received two meals and a snack on the weekends and school holidays.

A 14-YEAR-OLD BOY IN CUSTODY FOR TECHNICAL AFTERCARE VIOLATIONS RECEIVED SIX MONTHS EXTENDED ADMINISTRATIVE PUNISHMENT FOR AN IN-CUSTODY STAFF ASSAULT. WHILE STILL IN CUSTODY, EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE STAFF ASSAULT, HE WAS CHARGED WITH AGGRAVATED BATTERY OF A PEACE OFFICER ARISING OUT OF THE SAME FACTS AND BASED UPON THE JUVENILE PETITION PERSONALLY SOUGHT BY THE STAFF MEMBER. THE YOUTH WAS COMMITTED TO DJJ FIVE MONTHS LATER - ALMOST 13 MONTHS AFTER THE STAFF ASSAULT. DJJ CALCULATED THAT HE SHOULD SERVE AN ADDITIONAL 12 MONTHS IN CUSTODY FOR THE NEW COMMITMENT FOR THE SAME BEHAVIOR FOR WHICH THEY PREVIOUSLY DETERMINED THAT A SIX-MONTH EXTENSION OF CUSTODY WAS APPROPRIATE. THE YOUTH RECEIVED ZERO PRESENTENCE CREDIT FROM THE COURT, AND NONE WAS CALCULATED BY DJJ EVEN THOUGH DJJ KNEW THE EXACT AMOUNT OF TIME HE WAS IN PRETRIAL CUSTODY. AT THE TIME OF THE OMBUDSPERSON'S COMPLAINT, THE YOUTH HAD BEEN IN CUSTODY 19 MONTHS. HIS ORIGINAL COMMITTING OFFENSE WAS ONE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A CLASS 4 FELONY IF COMMITTED BY AN ADULT. THE OIJO RECOMMENDATION FOR RELEASE TO AFTERCARE WITH WRAPAROUND SERVICES WAS REJECTED.<sup>25</sup>

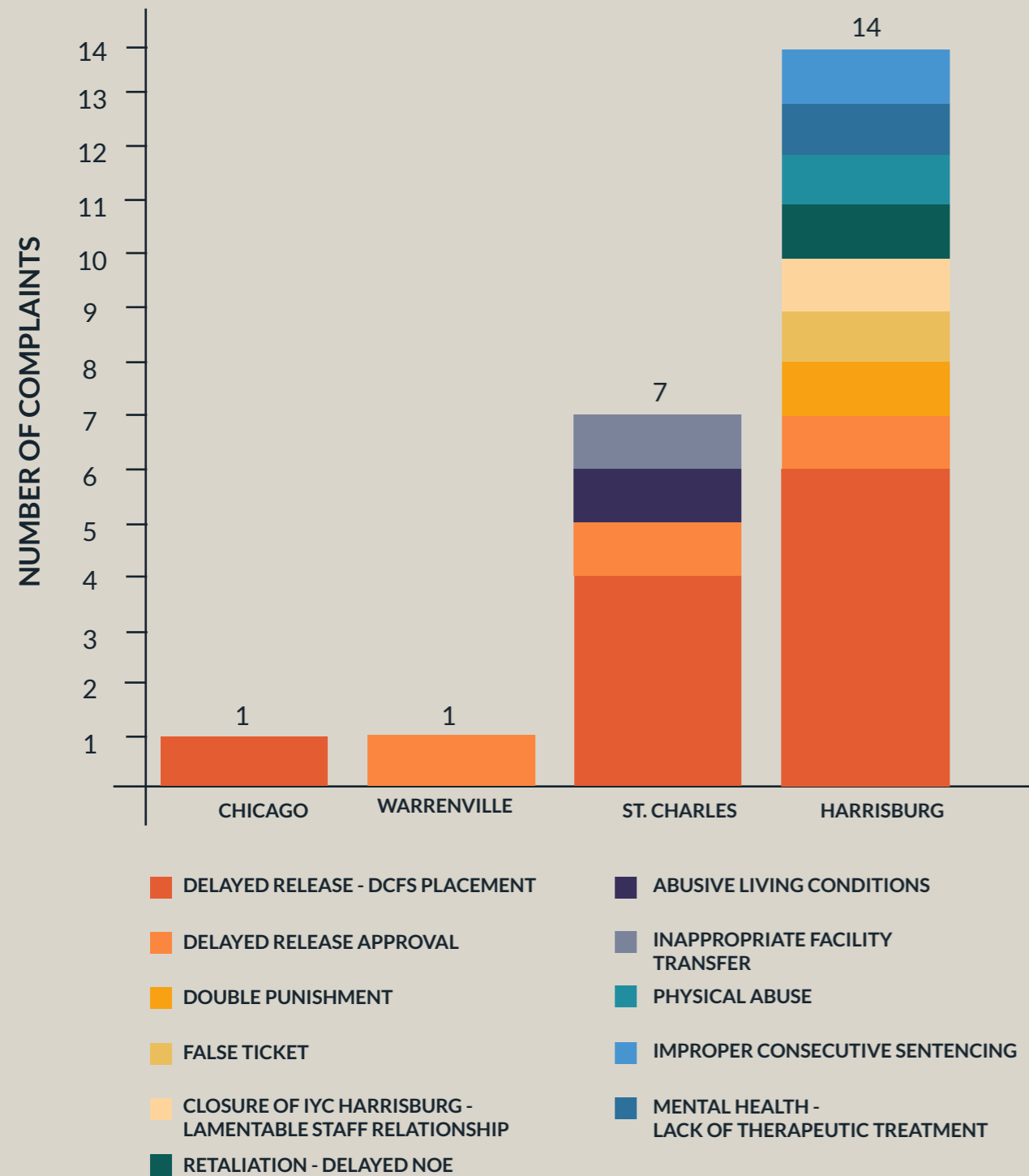
DOUBLE PUNISHMENT

THE YOUTH WAS COMMITTED TO DJJ FOR AN OFFENSE WHEN HE WAS 13 YEARS OLD. AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR IN CUSTODY (EXTENDED BECAUSE OF BEHAVIOR) AND A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO HIS RELEASE TO AFTERCARE A WARRANT WAS LODGED FOR HIS ARREST. HE WAS CHARGED WITH A 15-MONTHS-OLD PROPERTY OFFENSE THAT THE STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE LEARNED OF SHORTLY AFTER HIS INITIAL COMMITMENT TO DJJ. HE WAS AGAIN COMMITTED TO DJJ. IN CALCULATING HIS LENGTH OF STAY, DJJ DID NOT GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE FACT THAT THE OFFENSE WAS NOT NEW, BUT ONE HE PARTICIPATED IN PRIOR TO HIS INITIAL COMMITMENT. HAD THE OFFENSE BEEN CHARGED AND RESOLVED WHEN DISCOVERED, HE WOULD HAVE AND SHOULD HAVE SERVED THE COMMITMENTS CONCURRENTLY. DJJ CALCULATED HIS LENGTH OF STAY AS THOUGH IT WAS A RECENTLY COMMITTED OFFENSE, EFFECTIVELY ACQUIESCING TO THE IMPROPER CONSECUTIVE SENTENCE. THE OIJO'S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE YOUTH'S IMMEDIATE RELEASE TO AFTERCARE WAS REJECTED.

CONSECUTIVE SENTENCING

## COMPLAINTS BY FACILITY

There were 23 complaints filed. The complaints came from four of the five IYCs. Almost half of the complaints filed were for delayed release based on lack of DCFS placement.



### Phone Usage



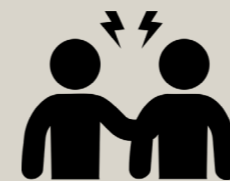
There are not enough phones for the number of youth on the unit. On one unit there was only one phone. After DJJ changed the phone policy ostensibly to reduce conflicts between youth over phone usage, youth complained more often and vociferously about the restrictive requirements for phone usage. They protested that the restrictions reduced their ability to stay in contact with family and friends.

### Unprofessional Staff Behavior



There were also some concerns about unprofessional behavior by staff members toward youth. The overwhelming assertion was verbal abuse based on disrespectful and inflammatory language hurled at youth.

### Grievance Process



Youth often expressed that the grievance process was flawed including: lack of available forms, failure to acknowledge the grievance and lack of receptivity to the grievance. In response to youth concerns, when youth were directed to file a grievance, the OIJO contacted the administrative staff to alert them that a grievance was filed and confirm with the youth that they received a timely response.



## REPORTED ISSUES BY LOCATION

# IYC HARRISBURG

### Lamentable Relationship

The number one source of complaints by youth at IYC Harrisburg are related to the lamentable relationship between staff members and youth. While complaints continue to decline, the difficult relationships appear to be rooted in cultural differences. Most of the youth living at IYC Harrisburg in the southern part of the state are from more urban neighborhoods at least two and a half hours to almost six hours north. There is a longstanding myriad of both substantiated and unproven complaints that give rise to the continuing concern that IYC Harrisburg is an abusive and traumatic environment for teenagers designed primarily to punish. There is a small but influential number of staff members that are often named in complaints by youth and relentlessly resist DJJ research-based reform efforts. While there has been noticeable improvement under the leadership of the administrative team at IYC Harrisburg, allegations by youth, especially those no longer living at IYC Harrisburg continue. The concerns and complaints include youth being beaten in their rooms by staff, verbally abused, handcuffed too tightly, left in their rooms for days without recreation and sometimes without showers, issued false tickets, detained in a cage-like

### Unit Transfer

The primary reason for requests to transfer to different living units were because of conflicts with peers or staff members. Youth frequently requested transfers to different living units. The primary reason for the requests was to avoid conflicts with peers and safety concerns. A secondary reason for cottage transfers was conflicts with staff members.

holding cell for misbehavior in school, sexually inappropriate liaisons between female staff and youth, staff members instigating and provoking staff assaults and racially discriminatory language and treatment. The majority of requests for transfers to a different facility are from youth at IYC Harrisburg. The challenges persist and are resistant to meaningful change. The Ombudsperson continues to recommend closing IYC Harrisburg to DJJ youth.

### Facility Transfer

There were more requests for transfers to a different facility at IYC Harrisburg than any other IYC. Youth expressed various reasons for seeking a transfer; the most common reason was related to staff behavior, often described as antagonistic. Youth also requested transfers to IYCs closer to their homes. DJJ's response to transfer requests was often lethargic and most often guided by youth behavior rather than individual youth needs. Frequently, the inaction resulted in subsequent allegations of staff assaulting youth or vice versa. To accommodate youth requests for family visits or transfers to IYCs closer to home, IYC Harrisburg arranged and transported youth for family visits at northern IYC.



## REPORTED ISSUES BY LOCATION

# IYC WARRENVILLE

### HVAC Problems - Cold Cottages

Youth incarcerated at IYC Warrenville complained that in both the winter and the summer, regardless of the outside weather, the living cottages were too cold. The physical plant at IYC Warrenville needs substantial rehabilitation. In this case, the HVAC system was repaired and replaced in the fall, eliminating all complaints. In the spring, the thermostat temperatures were adjusted again to maintain a comfortable room temperature.

### Intensive Education Program

A couple of complaints were lodged against IYC Warrenville's educational programming, where youth believed they were not receiving adequate education or program credits when assigned to the Intensive Education Program (IEP). The IEP was utilized for poor behavior during school or extreme lack of attentiveness. Typically, only one or two youth worked with a single teacher for 2.5 hours in the morning or afternoon. It was unclear whether the smaller class size, limited number of hours and extra attention was helpful.

### Lack of Post-High School Options

In a similar fashion, youth who graduated high school also complained about limited educational opportunities at IYC Warrenville. There were no post high school programs or other more intellectually stimulating activities. This left former students bored and prone to behavioral issues. The lack of robust skill building opportunities triggered potential difficulty accessing post high school opportunities upon release.

A 16-YEAR-OLD STUDENT WORKING TO COMPLETE 8TH GRADE WAS OFTEN DISTRACTED AND DISRUPTIVE IN THE CLASSROOM. SHE WAS ASSIGNED TO THE INTENSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM (PROGRAM) FOR AN INDETERMINATE DURATION. SHE WAS TOLD THAT RETURNING TO THE REGULAR CLASSROOM WOULD DEPEND ON HER ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ATTENTIVENESS AND APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR FOR AN UNDEFINED LENGTH OF TIME IN THE PROGRAM. SHE COMPLAINED THAT THE CLASS TIME WAS TOO SHORT; THERE WERE DAYS THAT SHE WAS NOT TAKEN TO CLASS BECAUSE OF HER BEHAVIOR, LACK OF SECURITY STAFF TO ESCORT HER OR TEACHER ABSENCE. SHE CYCLED BETWEEN REGULAR CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE AND THE PROGRAM.

INTENSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM



## REPORTED ISSUES BY LOCATION

# IYC ST. CHARLES

### Lack of Safety

The most serious issue at IYC St. Charles was lack of youth safety. There were more fights and assaults at IYC St. Charles than any other youth center. An assault occurred when one or more youth began to strike another youth with hands/feet. If a youth was assaulted, he was expected to “ball up” to minimize injury, but not fight back. If a youth was attacked and defended himself by fighting back, he would receive a ticket and consequences that could and typically did include an extension of time in custody. Youth complained when they were assigned to living units where they had enemies from the community and typically requested reconsideration of the anticipated placement or a unit transfer. They were concerned both about being assaulted and participating in assaults and fights. Often a youth would comment, ‘I am trying not to jag my time,’ meaning that he was trying to stay out of trouble and avoid custody extensions.

Far too often youth concerns were ignored, assaults and fights would occur, custody extensions would be levied just as the youth predicted. Typically, *after* such an occurrence youth were moved to a different cottage. Then sometimes, inexplicably, returned to the cottage where they were assaulted. Some youth would confine themselves to their rooms for days to stay safe. Youth started refusing to go to certain cottages and would confine

themselves in the confinement cottage, Taylor, in order to remain safe or out of trouble. In some situations, the administration simply would not move a youth even after he was assaulted. One youth claimed that he was denied the right to go to school until he agreed to move back to a cottage on which he was assaulted by other youth. IYC St. Charles leadership often appeared tone deaf when young men expressed very clearly their concerns and needs. There was no effective plan for keeping certain youth safe when they asked for safety measures. Although, when white youth requested unit transfers for safety reason, those requests were most often quickly granted. Additionally, often during fights and assaults the JJS staff would deploy oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray to break up the scrum. Because of youth complaints alleging aggressive use of OC spray, in August 2018, DJJ instituted a policy of notifying the OIJO whenever OC spray was dispersed.

### Facility Transfer Requests

Due to the lack of safety and the reportedly toxic environment of the facility, some youth are unable to find refuge from those with whom they have negative relationships or past incidents. As a result, youth request facility transfers in order to avoid peer-to-peer violence.

### Phone Issues

Securus Technologies operates the phone system for DJJ. Youth must pay for calls to those on their approved phone list and cannot call numbers that are not approved. Youth and Family Specialists also provide monitored calls to youth when they visit the unit. For these teens, the phone is of critical importance to maintaining relationships with their parents, other family members, friends, romantic partners and children. Regrettably, the phone usage issue was a continuous frustration for them. Youth complained there weren’t enough phones on the living units, that it took too long for approval of phone numbers on their call lists, or approved numbers would suddenly be restricted. Their PINS didn’t work. The phones were malfunctioning. Calls were cut short, but accounts were debited in full. In response, DJJ modified its phone usage policy. Prior to the change, according to DJJ phone calls were designed to be limited by behavior level. Youth on Level C were eligible for one 30-minute phone call per month, Level B youth received one 30-minute call per week, and Level A youth could make two 30-minute phone calls per week. Additional phone calls with their YFS were also based upon behavior levels. However, the enforcement of these rules was inconsistent and most youth were able to use the phone as available. New Securus procedures allowed DJJ to provide all youth with two 15-minute phone calls per day with additional calls from their YFS based upon B, A, or Honors behavior levels. It was unclear whether youth on level C without money to pay got any phone calls. Youth on every cottage complained about the new phone policy. There continued to be phone malfunctions related to Securus hardware, software and maintenance.

### Substance Abuse Treatment

The substance abuse treatment program at IYC St. Charles is described by youth as more of a punishment than any sort of medical, therapeutic, or beneficial service. Participants complained that they were suspended from the substance abuse treatment program for unrelated behavior without any clear plan to reenter the program.

### Overall Environment

Youth complaints related to numerous peer fights, drab and dirty living quarters, buildings badly in need of repair, racial discrimination against black youth, commissary spending limit restrictions despite rising commissary prices, broken grievance system, too few programs available to too few youth, disregarded job requests, not enough recreation, arbitrary ticketing and administrative process and cold cottages.



*DURING A RANDOM VISIT ON THE NEW ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOR UNIT, TWO YOUTH WERE DISCOVERED LOCKED IN THEIR ROOMS IN A HALLWAY REEKING WITH SMEARED LIQUIFIED FECES ON THE FLOOR AND WALLS FROM ONE END OF THE HALLWAY TO THE OTHER. THE YOUTH CLAIMED THEY ENDURED THE SIGHT AND STENCH OF LIQUIFIED FECES FOR HOURS DESPITE ONE YOUTH'S REQUEST TO CLEAN THE HALLWAY. AFTER OUR OFFICE ALERTED THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP AT IYC ST. CHARLES, THE YOUTH WERE MOVED AND THE HALLWAY CLEANED.*

OVERALL ENVIRONMENT





REPORTED ISSUES BY LOCATION

# IYC Pere Marquette

## Hunger

The most reported issue at IYC Pere Marquette was widespread hunger. Almost every youth stated that they were not served sufficient portion sizes for meals, leaving them hungry most of the time. This problem has persisted even though youth working in dietary services reported that large quantities of food were thrown away after meals were served. To address this issue, DJJ provided more substantive snacks on the living units to supplement meals.



## Flooding Issue

Another issue arose when the river flooded the roads leading to IYC Pere Marquette, resulting in temporary housing at an alternate site. Youth reported that during their time there they were not allotted enough phone calls to family members and the food provided by a correctional food service rather than their culinary staff was unpalatable.



# PROMOTING THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT JUVENILE OMBUDSMAN

*In 2019, the Ombudsperson and Deputy Ombudsperson promoted awareness of the OIJO pursuant to 730 ILCS 5/3-2.7-50. During this fiscal year we made 29 presentations to DJJ's intern classes, high school, college and law school students, community agencies and other members of the public. The conversations included information about the purpose of the OIJO, the rights of youth committed to DJJ, how to contact the OIJO, and the confidential nature of communications and services provided by the OIJO.*<sup>26</sup>

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Technical and personnel challenges resulted in the substantial delay in completing this fiscal year's report. There have been substantial changes in DJJ since the end of fiscal year 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/teenagers-why-do-they-rebel#1>
- <sup>3</sup> Total combined population of the nine highest committing counties outside of Cook County on July 1, 2019 was 2,416,696. Cook County's population was 5,150,233.
- <sup>4</sup> Winnebago, Champaign, Peoria, Sangamon and Rock Island
- <sup>5</sup> As of 6/30/2019
- <sup>6</sup> As of July 1, 2019
- <sup>7</sup> Appendix A: Visits and Peace Circles
- <sup>8</sup> The number of youth visits is undercounted because of missing data.
- <sup>9</sup> The Ombudsperson visited courthouses to support youth often far away from their homes and family support, and occasionally give testimony on their behalf.
- <sup>10</sup> In December 2018, former Governor Bruce Rauner commuted the sentences of six youth imprisoned in IDOC for Aggravated Battery to a Corrections Officer based upon individual staff members at IYC Harrisburg seeking retaliation for DJJ instituted reforms.
- <sup>11</sup> Appendix B: Phone Calls
- <sup>12</sup> We did not count repeated calls from the same youth for the same concern
- <sup>13</sup> Includes youth in community, residential facilities and other custody
- <sup>14</sup> DJJ implemented a policy that resulted in placement of only select 13- and 14-years-old youth at IYC Warrenville.
- <sup>15</sup> Appendix C: Complaints
- <sup>16</sup> As of June 30, 2019, he has been enmeshed in the juvenile legal system for more than 46 months for a charge that would have been a Class 4 felony if committed by an adult. Appendix C: Complaints
- <sup>17</sup> <https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-illinois#:~:text=Population%20Demographics%20by%20Race%20%20Race%20,%202014%20%208%20more%20rows%20>
- <sup>18</sup> <https://thecrimereport.org/2019/08/07/black-and-white-justice/>
- <sup>19</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/SiteAssets/Pages/Data-and-Reports/2016%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/SiteAssets/Pages/Data-and-Reports/IDJJ%202017%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/SiteAssets/Pages/Data-and-Reports/IDJJ%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf>
- <sup>22</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/IDJJ%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://voxeu.org/article/what-long-term-impact-incarcerating-juveniles> (2013).
- <sup>24</sup> <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2017/01/19/peds.2016-2624.full.pdf>
- <sup>25</sup> Of the ~27 months from his original commitment to DJJ (3 months after his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday) this youth served 25.5 months in DJJ custody.
- <sup>26</sup> Appendix E: Promoting the OIJO

Please find the Appendices for FY2019 Annual Report on our website at:  
[www2.illinois.gov/idjj/pages/independentombudsman](http://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/pages/independentombudsman).

**TEENAGERS ARE  
DIFFERENT.**

We should be too.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT JUVENILE OMBUDSPERSON FOR DJJ

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