



DIVISION OF YOUTH CORRECTIONS

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Report Highlights



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PURPOSE

To evaluate the processes used by the Division of Youth Corrections (the Division) to ensure the safety of youth, facility staff, and the community.

BACKGROUND

- The Division's mission is to protect, restore, and improve public safety through services and programs for youth offenders, ages 10 through 21. The Division's five key strategies state that it will provide the right services at the right time, delivered by quality staff, using proven practices, in safe environments, embracing restorative community justice principles.
- The Division oversees 11 state-operated secure facilities and 51 contractor-operated facilities that provide secure, staff-secure, and community-based settings.
- In Fiscal Year 2011, the Division spent more than \$132 million on state- and contractor-operated facilities. The average daily population of youth for Fiscal Year 2011 was 1,391.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Division should ensure that:

- Room assignments are appropriate by improving implementation of the vulnerability assessment instrument.
- Behavior management programs used by all facilities follow proven models.
- All facilities afford youth due process protections; stop the use of inappropriate disciplinary practices at one facility; and take personnel action, as appropriate, to discipline staff who implemented the inappropriate practices.
- Facilities properly document and report incidents involving sexual misconduct.
- Youth surveys are standardized and administered confidentially.

The Division agreed with all of these recommendations.

EVALUATION CONCERN

The Division could do more to ensure that (1) youth are safe in both state- and contractor-operated facilities, (2) youth are receiving treatment that is based on proven practices, and (3) youth's due process rights are protected.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

- In some cases, youth safety is compromised because facilities do not ensure that youth are placed with a suitable roommate. For example, facility policies at 44 percent of facilities we visited do not prohibit potential victims and aggressors from being housed in the same sleeping room. Additionally, facility staff do not always complete the vulnerability assessment accurately or consistently.
- The Division should take a leadership role in ensuring that all facilities use proven behavior management models. One facility implemented a behavior management program that led to an environment of bullying and intimidation among the youth. Additionally, depending on the facility in which youth are placed, some youth may be able to complete the first level of their behavior management program more than five times faster than other youth without performance benchmarks to determine if the various programs are successful.
- Facilities do not always ensure that youth are afforded due process rights. Specifically:
 - Of 32,669 major rule violations documented for Fiscal Years 2006 through 2010, 24 percent of youth were not notified timely that they were being cited for a major rule violation. In 59 percent of cases, youth did not receive sufficient advance notice of the disciplinary hearing associated with the violation.
 - One facility was using a disciplinary process that violated both state statute and Division policy on the use of seclusion as a disciplinary measure. Entire housing units were subjected to this process, and for an average of 4 days, youth were placed in the most intensive part of the process, which can include being locked in their rooms and allowed only very limited programming, such as education or interaction with other staff and youth. Youth were not provided any opportunity to appeal this disciplinary action and were not given written notice of the action, as required by Division policy.

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