



Cuyahoga
Hills Juvenile
Correctional
Facility
Interim
Inspection

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SECTION I. INTERIM INSPECTION OVERVIEW

CIIC Inspector Jamie Hooks conducted an interim inspection of Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility (Cuyahoga Hills JCF), DYS' minimum/medium security facility, on November 10, 2011. The visit consisted of a tour of the recently finished facility renovations, interviews with a cross section of youth, and follow-up of concerns identified by CIIC during its biennial inspection of Cuyahoga Hills JCF on March 7, 2011.

SECTION II. KEY FINDINGS

- **Youth compliments on facility operations and staff.** Youth were very complimentary of operations at Cuyahoga Hills JCF. As part of each interview youth are asked what changes they feel need to be made at the facility. Of those youth with suggestions, all were very minor things, like increasing food portions. Several youth said that no changes needed to be made because staff, in particular Superintendent Needham, already do a nice job of listening to youth ideas and keeping youth occupied with a range of activities and programs.

It should be noted that youth relayed no burning issues during interviews and seemed generally pleased with both programming and staff at the facility. Youth relayed that staff really care about their success and that staff were not merely there for a paycheck.

- **Youth safety.** Youth interviewed during the interim inspection were asked to rate their level of safety at the facility and all youth stated that they were safe or very safe.

Youth were also asked whether they believed gangs were an issue at the facility and whether they had ever been pressured to join a gang. Without exception, youth relayed that gang activity is minimal and if gang activity is discovered by staff, that it is not tolerated. When asking youth why they felt gangs were not an issue at the facility, they stated that it was because youth wanted to keep a minimum security classification and did not want to transfer to a higher security facility.

- **Facility renovations.** At the time of CIIC's biennial inspection of Cuyahoga Hills JCF on March 7, 2011, the facility was in the midst of an extensive building renovation to add twelve additional classrooms, a mini gym, game room, new staff offices, and new medical facilities. Structurally all renovations are finished, but the new graduate youth game room and medical services are not yet complete. The new classrooms were very large and allowed for a tremendous amount of natural light. Teachers seemed very happy with the new classrooms. Staff relayed that the mini gym was a great addition because it provides space for graduate youth to use during the day when the main gym is occupied by physical education classes. Overall, the facility renovations turned out quite nice.
- **SBBMS.** During CIIC's previous inspection of Cuyahoga Hills JCF youth relayed various concerns regarding the SBBMS. In particular, youth on level two of the phase privilege system stated that they were not receiving their privileges or that they were not

distinguished from youth still at phase level one. Youth also felt staff were inconsistent when awarding Character Coupons.

During the interim inspection all youth interviewed were asked their opinions of the SBBMS and no youth relayed any concerns similar to those mentioned above. Overall, youth were pleased with the system and were happy with recent activities, which included a Halloween party and Monday Night Football viewing parties.

SECTION III. FOLLOW-UP TO CIIC BIENNIAL INSPECTION (MARCH 7, 2011)

During CIIC's Biennial Inspection of Cuyahoga Hills JCF on March 7, 2011, the primary issue relayed by youth concerned the following:

LACK OF PROGRAMMING FOR GRADUATED YOUTH

Although it is commendable that a large number of youth at CHJCF have earned either a GED or high school diploma, there is concern that these youth now have an excess of idle time and lack programming options. Youth relayed that if they are not involved in the work program or pursuing college courses, their day is spent in the dayroom playing video games, watching television, or participating in recreation.

Staff relayed several suggestions during the staff focus group to increase the options available to these youth. Suggestions included increasing the number of college level courses available, partnering with local colleges, increasing community involvement by establishing relationships with local manufacturers, and establishing barber and automotive programs. CIIC staff suggests reducing idleness through greater utilization of the art program for graduated youth to decorate the hallways and dorms throughout the facility.

CHJCF Action Plan

- *Will ask Youth Council committee for new and different ideas for graduate youth*
- *Will encourage youth to participate in the work program and increase the number of jobs from 48 to 60 to include Intake Youth.*
- *Will encourage youth to attend the adult classes provided*
- *Increase advanced Art Classes*
- *Will add an Interviewing Skills Program*

Cuyahoga Hills JCF has made tremendous strides to enhance available programming and activities for graduate youth on its campus since CIIC's previous inspection. Graduate youth now have a variety of available options, ranging from community service projects to college level courses. Several youth relayed that if a graduate feels bored at the facility that it is not due to a lack of available opportunities, but due to choice. The following programs and activities are utilized at the facility for graduates:

- **College courses.** The facility offers two college courses (with the ability to earn credit) offered by Ashland College and Fifth Third bank in Financial Literacy and Introduction to Business. CIIC staff spoke with youth currently enrolled in the courses and they all relayed their enjoyment of them.
- **Advanced course work for college preparation.** Graduates are unable to earn college credit for the offered courses, but do receive a completion certificate. The courses offered include Algebra II, Trigonometry, Chemistry, Composition, Psychology, Street Law, and Philosophy.
- **GreenTech Physical/Earth Space Science Program.** The purpose of this program is to bring environmental consciousness to the science classroom through hands-on projects. During the interim inspection a participating youth expressed his enjoyment for conducting science experiments and that the program had sparked his interest in science greatly.
- **Off-campus community service opportunities.** Cuyahoga Hills JCF has partnered with several organizations in the community so that graduate youth that are eligible to go off-campus may provide community service. Youth provide service at a local nursing home, True North Ministries, Shoes and Clothes for Kids, and Ohio City Bicycle Co-op (where they will learn bicycle safety, maintenance and repair).
- **Jobs throughout the facility.** Administration relayed that the facility has also increased the number of jobs available for youth at the facility, including the creation of new positions, such as assistant positions for executive staff. Youth relayed that jobs are fulltime and help pass the time.